

Remembered Light

By Jonathan Cojuangco, 2004

As I entered the gallery on February 1st for the reception of Anders Knutsson's exhibit entitled "Remembered Light" there was no hesitation to sense the anxiousness of curator Dr. Rattner and then Mrs. Knutsson's greeting. On observing the blocked off windows I already apprehended the impression of paradox that embodied this art exhibit. There would be no literal sense to term "unveiling" in terms of this exhibit as with barely a moment to glance across the room I was informed that the lights would be turned off and that I should pay particular attention to the paintings. Making a quick circumference around the gallery, I took notice of the artist's specific attention to the use of warm colors, which generously fill in the bold shapes set apart by seamless and amorphous borders. At the end of the gallery, nine canvases painted each with a solid color are arranged in patterns. I had not taken even a fraction of the time I desired in lingering over the painting of a leafless Beech tree when the lights went out.

Within a moment the room became dark, but at the same time exploded with light. It was as if the world of light was the dark and indistinct film negative from which the world of the dark would develop. Pieces like "Winter", which had at first seemed like a blur of some Phoenix emerging from flames had become a brilliant display of bright cool blue settling and sandwiching a warm tongue. Metaphor broke down and weather it was a human tongue or tongue of flame, I could not decide, but it was that ambiguousness which created a level of abstraction only Knutsson could inspire. The paintings of the Beech trees radiated from one end of the room as the patterns of the nine squares at the other seemed to shuffle into a new pattern. I couldn't help but crack a smile in learning that that particular piece was titled "Changing Parts".

Anders Knutsson adds even more dimensions to his art by incorporating performance, both music and dance, into the phosphorescent experience. For this particular exhibit, members of the STAC performance team and music director Bruce Bennet was accompanied by jazz guitar in a short display of interpretive dance. Each student donned body suits decorated in the luminescent paint as they danced and posed in front of Knutsson's work to improv jazz. This is a favoured part of the exhibition by artist and guests alike. The gallery filled with waves of awe as Knutsson, equipped with a strong camera flash, would direct a student to pose in front of a painting, where Knutsson would set off the flash and the shadow of the person would be imprinted on the painting, kind of like human stenciling. Many consider ambiagrams to be psychological or scientific rather than artistic, something to muse over and appreciate for its cleverness or cognitive diversions rather than its aesthetic value, and justifiably so since not many consider them to be anything more than a plaything for the eye. Knutsson and luminosity has given the ambiagram an intense spin. The interaction among artist, art, and admirer has been completely redone as there is a lack of any kind of interpretive solidarity, or at least a lessening in hope of ever obtaining interpretation as Knutsson's work seems to have infinite ways of evading a precise meaning. Anders Knutsson, born and raised in Malmö, Sweden, originally worked as an engineer before dedicating himself to art. Very outward, he embodies the paradox of his work, intensely focusing on the internal and spiritual in his conversations. His affable personality intensifies the exhibit, adding warmth to his works.

His art testifies a higher appreciation for the nuances and even behavior of light. Even in simple pencil sketches, i.e. his pencil sketch of a cork tree or the painting of a beech tree in the exhibit display a precise attention to shadow and light that seems to pierce the simple notion of shade.

But as physical or empirical as the dynamics of Knutsson's work is, he is always quick to address the "spiritual content" of both his art and the self, an aspect he believes is the "energy or part of us which is who, what and why we are". He continues that unlike the conventional painting where light bounces off the paint and hits the eye, thus the necessity of light to be present to observe the painting, Knutsson's phosphorescent works deal with light that "comes out of the painting" focusing on the internal origins of the art.