

JOHAN NOBELL  
*INJUDICIOUS GARDENING*

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*If yellow betokens infidelity,  
I am an infidel.  
I could not bear a yellow rose ill will  
because books said that yellow boded ill,  
white promised well.  
However, your particular possession,  
the sense of privacy,  
indeed might deprecate  
offended ears, and need not tolerate  
effrontery.*

(Marianne Moore)

In her poetic method Marianne Moore brings together numbers of variegated cultural artefacts; she sweeps up fragments of newspaper articles on anything from polio vaccine to the Brooklyn Dodgers, inventories of the time's "most exact clocks", obscure sports references, technical expositions on organ pipes, children's drawings... Of this, Moore creates poems that appear as strange pyramidal compost heaps; you can walk round them, consider them from different angles; all the time you find something new, you imagine new layers and fragments.

Johan Nobell is another collector of various unsorted junk. Nobell's narrative has always been placed in burnt-out landscapes where various types of industrial process seem to have been going on for ages, some form of extraction or refinement. Slagg, mold and erosions create forms and associations that become new fixed geographical points. In Johan Nobell's paintings you find inventoried a specific American mythology and geography. In earlier works like "Meerschaum", "The Geography of We", "All Seeing Eye" and "Shipwreck" he encompasses a landscape in which the exact is mixed with representations of the unknown and the intangible. The Old World meets the New World, in which the desire to establish a new reality based on rationality and science is confronted with the irrational: a land (America) is cultivated literally over the earlier inhabitants "The

Geography of We"); a land in which the new heraldic symbols are filled with hocus pocus and occult kitsch ("All Seeing Eye"); and in which the puritan New England mentality suddenly breaks out into witch-hunting Salem ("Shipwreck").

In his new paintings Nobell has abandoned this possibly post-apocalyptic landscape. He has gleaned the mutated forms of life that have germinated there and laid them out for inspection, dissected them to reveal their inner arrangement. *Injudicious Gardening* forms itself into a

herbarium created out of products left over from a landscape ravaged by exploitation and ruthless processing. Here instead there is a stress on surface, on the microcosmos Nobell is mapping. His narrative three-dimensional space has been replaced by a surface that is considerably harder to decode. If Nobell earlier related to among other things George Herriman's wilderness in the surrealistic comics Krazy Kat, then his new work could be set against the paintings of Roger Brown (1941 - 1997), an artist reckoned among the *Chicago Imagists*. Brown's work deals often with the city of Chicago; in his interpretation it is flattened out like a colored city plan punctuated with threatening and apocalyptic portents. Prominent Chicago architect, The Swedenborgian Daniel Burnham, saw the modern Chicago he wished to create as a mirror image of the heavenly Jerusalem Emanuel Swedenborg beheld in his visions. Nobell often shifts from the frozen surface detail to a larger narrative. In conformity with Swedenborgs cosmology there is always a correspondence between the small details in man/nature and the larger overarching context.

JOHAN NOBELL Born in 1963 in Gammelgarn, Gotland, Sweden. He now lives and works in Stockholm. Nobell is educated at the Valand Academy of Fine Arts, University of Gothenburg.

Nobell's work has previously been shown at Galleri Hammarén Gothenburg; Stephane Simoens, Knokke, Belgium; Pierogi Gallery Brooklyn, USA; Bendixen Gallery, Copenhagen, Galleri Arnstedt, Östra Karup; Dhondt Dhaenens, Deurle Gent Belgium; Andréhn-Schiptjenko, Stockholm among others.