

Bus Riders – visit to art collector Tom Böttiger

For Bus Riders' fourth get-together of the year, we had the pleasure to visit passionate art collector [Tom Böttiger](#) and were guided through a substantial part of his collection which consists of both unknown as well as internationally acknowledged artists.

Tom told us about his passion for art by sharing his family's story, his grandfather was the head physician to the Swedish royal family during the 1940's, and he treated the king and his sisters when they grew up. It was regarded as a bit fancy to go to the same physician as the future king, and many members of the cultural elite wanted the same doctor. However, artists like Isaac Grünewald couldn't afford to pay for the care; instead they gave Tom's grandfather paintings as a method of payment.

Tom started to collect art in 1986 and never trades; he only buys art out of pure love for it. He is further convinced that it is the artists, the architects and the cultural elite who set the frames and structures of society, not the entrepreneurs nor the politicians.

Several artworks in the collection are made by Swedish artist [Martin Wickström](#). Wickström often plays with the theme of good and evil, partly as a result of working at a psychological institution at night and painting during daytime. A very touching painting was one of a Cambodian woman, killed and beheaded by

the Khmère Rouge. The Khmère Rouge photographed their victims. Wickström later saw a picture of this woman's head and made a full-bodied painting of her, thus giving her an eternal life on canvas in rather dark colours. The painting is a part of a diptych together with a painting of nature in Cambodia, and together they symbolize good and evil.



Another significant artist whom Böttiger has pieces by is [Lena Cronqvist](#), who also has themes of good and evil in her work. Cronqvist both paints and sculpts, often in a dark and what may be perceived as a bit scary way. Many of her works are characterized by children, she lets them appear in their full nature, which can be both good and evil. She



seeks to portray that children are not always as innocent as we tend to want them to be. We were asked to look beyond the motif to find more than you might do at a first glimpse. Cronqvist has a history of psychological illness and is known for not letting a piece go until she has signed it.



most famous pictures of Mandela of all times. Mandela also changed his mind on getting to know Gedda, and when his book *“Conversations with myself”* was published, it was Gedda who took the cover photograph.



Böttiger has a number of photographs by well-known Swedish photographer [Hans Gedda](#) in his collection. Gedda likes to get to know his objects before starting to photograph, often with the result that he only needs a few pictures to capture the personality of them. He had asked to photograph Nelson Mandela in Stockholm shortly after his release from Robben Island. The photo shoot was taking place at the Government Offices and the contact had been mediated by then Minister for Foreign Affairs Sten Andersson, who ended up holding the camera flash for Gedda. Mandela was however not in the mood of getting to know Gedda which resulted in, at the end of the session, a tired Mandela raising his hand to his forehead. Gedda managed to capture this, and it is to this day one of the

Gedda has also portrayed the royal family, and has shared the story of a photo session with the king who insisted on ‘warming up’ with some facial gymnastics. Gedda quickly picked up his Hasselblad camera and captured king Carl Gustaf with this face:



Another touching story is the one photographer [Martin Bogren](#) tells through his series *Ocean*. The series consist of 17 images taken on the shore in India. Bogren, who is an autodidact photographer, had travelled to India. One day, he saw a group of men on the shore by the ocean. It was their first time by the sea, and they had travelled for days to come to the shore. Bogren managed to capture their joy and excitement and their 'aha moment' when they saw the ocean for the first time. Tom has three pieces from the series that hang together, every one of them unique and moving:



On the way out, we passed a large photograph that appeared to be taken close to the savannah somewhere in sub-Saharan Africa. Tom told us about his friend Frank af Petersens, who used to be a happy go lucky man in the finance sector. It turned out that he has put that life behind him and started to engage with the wild life in Africa, especially



against the hunt of endangered species and the poaching for elephant ivory and rhino horn.

Norwegian artist and sculptor [Bjarne Mellgard](#) is represented in Tom's collection by a sculpture called "The sadistic skater", created after Mellgard had been left by a younger love. The dysfunctional love is portrayed by 2 men standing next to each other, one with a smaller head and larger genitals, and vice versa. Mellgard, who resides in New York, is thought to have a self-image as the new Edward Munch of Norway and is regarded as somewhat controversial after having touched upon themes such as S&M, racism and heavy metal music. This sculptor sparked conversations on unconditional and unlucky love.



The evening was inspiring and the art collection fascinating. Tom's passionate character charmed us all. There were many conversations on how to collect art and where to start. However, as Tom demanded our full

attention, the focus was on the art rather than on discussions.

