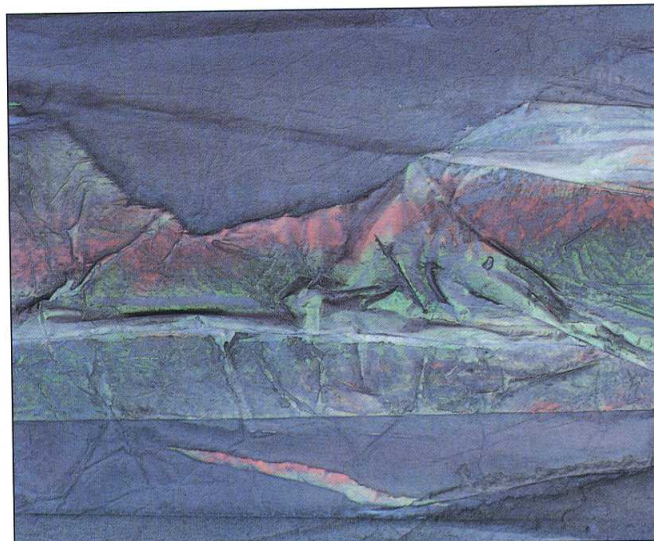


Margareta Sjödin & Hanna Hellsten



Alabaster Face by Sjödin

The Landscape Within



Ice Scape (collage on paper) by Sjödin



Margareta Sjödin painting on a winter day in northern Sweden.

At Härnösand, in the northern part of Sweden, the hours of winter daylight are short; a prescience of dusk lingers even at high noon. The ice and snow are shrouded in shades of grey-blue, the trees ticked black. It is a world held in suspension by winter—still, yet straining toward the edge of motion. And it is the first world of artist Margareta Sjödin.

Sjödin, who has lived in Malibu, CA, since the mid-1970s, grew up in Härnösand along the Baltic Sea. In many of her paintings, collages, and sculptures one senses the connection between Sjödin and her homeland. She attributes the essence of her landscapes to the region, saying, "To be born in Sweden, especially in the northern part, makes your soul like the long, dark winter, but also playful, like the short summer."

Sjödin has had sixty solo exhibits, a remarkable endeavor considering she first began concentrating on studio arts

in the early 1970s. Prior to that, Sjödin's artistry took place in television, film, and theater. She was a popular actress in Sweden for fifteen years, playing roles ranging from Solvejg in the stage presentation of *Peer Gynt* to that of a traditionally cast blonde in *Partaj*, a popular Swedish television program. After leaving Sweden with her husband Bengt Hellsten and daughter Hanna, Sjödin studied acting in Los Angeles, CA, under the tutelage of Lee Strasburg.

No matter what her area of interest, Sjödin has always been involved in the arts. This involvement brushed off on her eldest daughter Hanna Hellsten, who is an exhibiting artist in her own right.

Born in Stockholm, Hellsten was two when her parents moved to California. Growing up, she was encouraged to take part in all things artistic—dance, music, theater, painting. Thus far, the result is an emerging young artist with a bachelor's degree in studio arts and

English literature from Pepperdine University.

Hellsten has worked with a variety of artists in the Los Angeles area and has exhibited both solo and in collaboration with others, often with her mother. The two have become quite a duo, but each retains a refreshing individuality.

Viewing Sjödin's and Hellsten's work side by side is a study of contrasts. Hellsten's paintings are large and full of movement; *The Fish in the Net*, for example, swirl and thrash on the canvas. Her art is urban, on-the-go, and looks to the future. Sjödin's, on the other hand, is supported by an underlying stillness, the general constancy of the earth despite its ever-changing face. Even in *The Riot* series, pieces obviously fixed in a violent urban milieu on their surface, the works reach down to universal roots.

Sjödin describes the difference between her work and that of her daughter in geographic terms, "When you grow up in California you learn to see everything big, like Hanna, but for me, growing up in a small town in Sweden makes me more aware of the details."

Creating art is not the sole activity



Hanna Hellsten and Margareta Sjödin, who holds Birch Bat, in front of Hellsten's *Fish in the Net*.

them an opportunity to stay with her in Malibu and would introduce them to the southern California art community.

Sjödin also owns a gallery in Malibu, exhibiting the works of many international artists, some of whom are Swedes, including Sigvard Bernadotte, Anders Sandström, actor Leif Ahrle, and glass-artist Eva Englund.

The gallery and Sjödin's home, known as "The White House," were among the few buildings spared in the recent fires that devastated much of the Malibu area. Her husband Bengt Hellsten was able to save their house, as well as a neighbor's, by pumping water from their swimming pool onto the home and Sjödin's studio. The studio, which caught fire six times during the ordeal, was severely damaged by the blaze, and the fam-

ily's gatehouse was destroyed; with the buildings went several of Sjödin's pieces and those of other artists as well.

Sjödin and Hellsten opened their next collaborative exhibit at the Nordic Heritage Museum in Seattle, WA, on January 12, 1994. After closing on March 27, it will travel to Chicago for an

April exhibition at the Swedish American Museum Center. A Sjödin piece will also be auctioned at Sotheby's in New York, with the proceeds going to benefit the Sigvard and Marianne Bernadotte Research Fund for children's eye care.

One can sense, especially in her collages from the *Floating Ice* series, that Sjödin has never left northern Sweden behind. She pulls the audience along with her, toward the foothills and into the landscape of the interior. As she says, "I keep my landscape inside myself where ever I go in life. It's just part of me, the dark and the light."

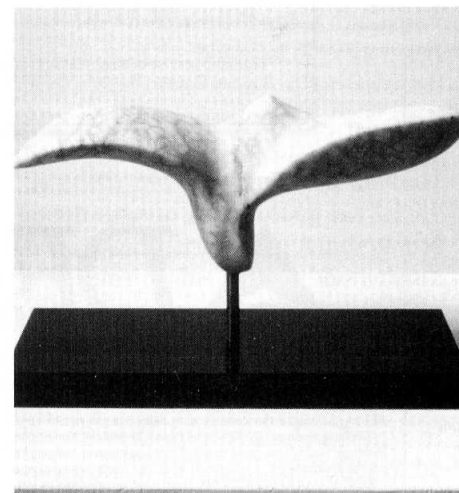
—Anna Fellegly

Anna Fellegly is a graduate student and editor at the University of Minnesota-Minneapolis.



Fish in the Net (mixed media) by Hellsten

with which Sjödin is involved in the art community. She is the founder of SAM, Swedish Art in Malibu. With proceeds from the exhibitions of well-known Swedish artists, she hopes to grant scholarships to Swedish artists who are prospering but unknown to the international art world. Sjödin would give



The Bird (marble) by Sjödin