

Magazine

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The studio of... Inka & Niclas



Studio photo at storverkstan © Inka & Niclas

The Swedish artist duo Inka & Niclas travel the world to capture nature in its most perfect form. Their photographs not only celebrate the beauty of the landscape but also challenge us to reflect on our relentless search for the ultimate image. Their family plays an indispensable part in this process, literally growing into the photographs. This becomes especially clear in the long-running series "Family Portraits," where the outlines of the family shimmer across the water. For the children it has become a familiar ritual: traveling, changing clothes, posing and being photographed. “We like how the passage of time becomes visible as the kids grow, the earlier ones had two and something small on one arm, and now there are four standing.”

On Saturday 6 September at 2 PM Inka & Niclas will be present at Bildhalle for an artist talk. Their work is included in the group exhibition "**Nature, Perception, and Materiality**," featuring photographs from "Family Portraits" as well as works from the series "4K Ultra HD."

You work together in your studio in Sweden, how would you describe this place?

We live on the island of Södermalm in the south of central Stockholm. Just a 7 minute walk from our home, across the bridge to the mainland, we have a beautiful but slightly impractical studio in an old bank building from 1905. The main room has a 4 meter tall window, which is great for the soul. The window also brings a beautiful light on sculptures, but at the same time it doesn't really help when trying to figure out tiny color adjustments on a screen. We were recently faced with the task of temporarily storing the better part of a 5 room exhibition in there, so right now it's an organized mess.



Inka & Niclas, 4K Ultra HD XXXVII, 2025, Bildhalle

When did you start to work together and how do you divide roles?

We've been working together since 2007 and magically enough we still have separate brains. It's basically impossible to fully understand what the other one pictures, so we have to rely on trust and try to go along with what might seem strange at first. Beyond that, we've grown into different roles, the one who does a task faster and better does it. For example Inka is always the one location scouting because Niclas doesn't care about it, or comprehend maps at all, while it's the otherway around when it comes to working out the camera techniques.

Do you always work and evolve in the same artistic direction, or does one of you also pursue independent projects alongside your shared work?

We can of course go different ways in the sense that one of us is more interested in something than the other, such a technique or a specific topic or exhibition, but we always work together and we have no ambition in working separately. This is the way we know.

In your upcoming show at Bildhalle, you'll present work from your 'Family Portraits' project, which you've been developing for over a decade. What keeps you returning to this theme?

The work has its starting point in the modern rituals of traveling and photographing. Traveling because of photographs you have seen, taking a photograph as proof that you've been there, which in turn makes someone else go there to take a photograph to show. In the series the camera fails in its duty to capture us; it erases our presence yet leaves nature intact. What's compelling about the series for us now, is not the same as in the beginning, and honestly, we feel that it has started to live its own life, our own thoughts about the project aren't the most important. Interestingly enough, this has now become a very real ritual for us as a family. The kids were born into the project, for them it's as normal as anything else to put on the suits and take the position. We like how the passage of time becomes visible as the kids grow, the earlier ones had two and something small on one arm, and now there are four standing. The bar gets higher and higher though, naturally we want to top the last one and add something new, we only did two new ones this summer.



Inka & Niclas, Family Portrait XIX, 2021, Bildhalle

Can you tell us something more about these special suits. It looks like you travel with a lot of equipment, how do you manage to bring everything along on your trips?

Funny that you ask, it's horrible. We bring so much stuff: the custom reflective suits for the whole family, gear for photographs, gear for video and sound, lights and flashes. Preferably back-ups on all that, 200 AA-batteries and at least 5-6 or different chargers, computers and drives. On top of everything you need to stay away with a whole family for a month we are also really keen on keeping all doors open, so that unexpected things can happen. So we also have to bring all the stuff that we don't really, but might need, like extra fabrics, glue, ropes, tapes, sewing gear, camera gimbals, magic arms in bags of "nice to have". We buy and construct stuff along the way as well, this summer we crammed in a 95 cm fabric covered beach ball along with all of the above in the backseat of a small rental with the kids. We always manage to destroy gear since we are working in sand, seawater and rain. In that case we have to search for new pars, often really far away from where we are at the moment.

Indeed, as landscape photographers, you're very dependent of the weather conditions. Was there a specific trip that ended up different than expected?

It's very rare that anything goes as expected, everything constantly changes, both the conditions and what we are after. This summer we spent working in the south of Portugal. Portugal has these really yellowish sunsets and a lot of moisture in the air which we saw as a big problem two thirds of the trip, we wanted more soft pink for what we were doing. In the end we managed to do a photograph that has that apricot sky. Now we want more of that, but back in Sweden we have the pink skies.

You mentioned that nature is often perceived as something divine in Swedish society. When was the first time you experienced a mystical moment in nature?

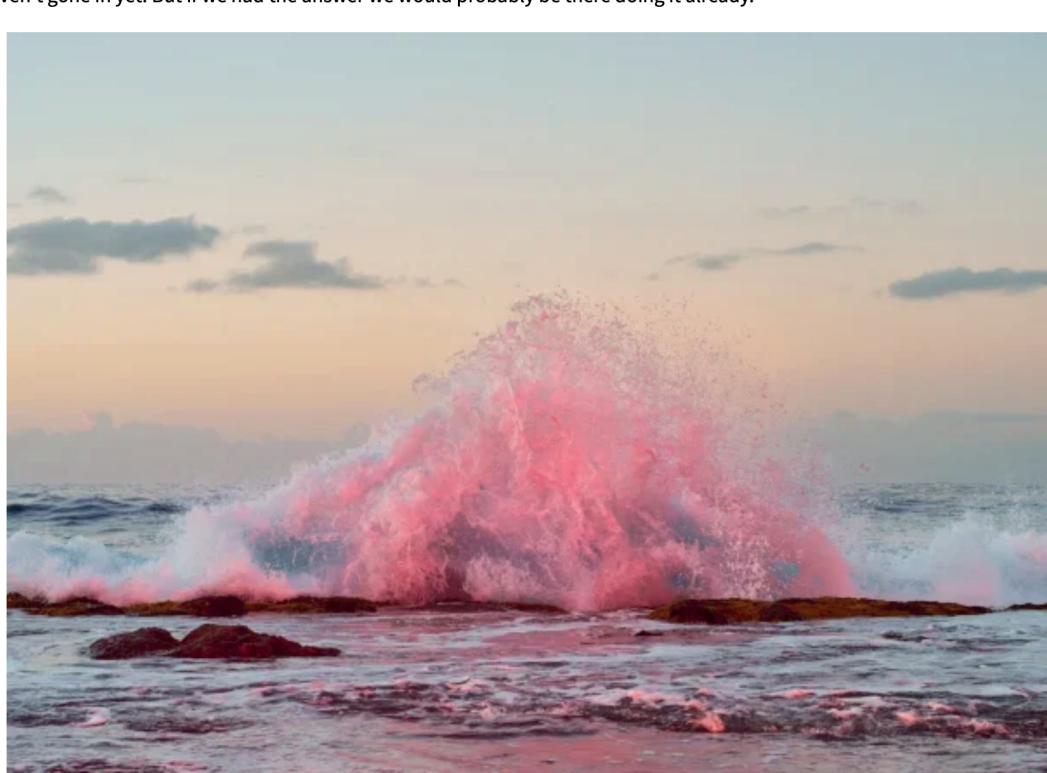
It's not really about extraordinary moments even though those also exist of course. It's more just about keeping quiet in the woods, or looking out at a straight, unbroken horizon at any given point.

Do you aim to challenge this mystical view of nature in your photographs, or is it your intention to celebrate and elevate it?

Both, preferably at the same time, maybe more reflect or meditate, celebrate absolutely. Some of the works are maybe pointing fingers, but the fingers are also pointing towards ourselves. Our work revolves around different mechanisms and phenomena in the relationship between human, camera, and nature. By twisting, displacing, and taking apart nature as it appears in images, we try to create an image-world that camouflages itself as the one we are used to seeing, but with its own rules. Hopefully we move the viewer to a place where not everything is obvious, where the boundaries are a little more blurred.

Are there any specific landscapes you would like to discover in the future?

No, it's more that we are constantly searching for the key to the next work, that could very well be a specific type of scenery or conditions that locks up something in a direction we haven't gone in yet. But if we had the answer we would probably be there doing it already.



Inka & Niclas, 4K Ultra HD XXXV, 2024, Bildhalle