

“It’s a fantasy below the surface.”

“How does the fantasy begin?”

“It just flows, without thinking.”

The Fantasy World of Ann Frössén

The automatic flow of a black stroke on a white surface; a canvas brought to life. This is the magic Ann Frössén releases when she creates one of her *dessins*, which are small, intimate paintings she nurtures into being, consistently creating them as if she was writing in the pages of a personal journal. Emerging freely from the artist’s mind without any preconceived notions, each painting has a unique personality and stimulates imagination, playfulness and participation.

The very first of these small paintings was inspired by a studio where Frössén spent two months as an artist-in-residence at Cité des Arts in Paris during 2006. The limited working space of the studio interrupted Frössén’s practice of creating larger-than-life paintings about her fascination with the sea. However, the situation encouraged an opportunity for her to experiment with painting on a more petite size of 20 centimeters, a sharp contrast to her typical working size of over 200 centimeters. It was a change that Frössén had never considered prior to the residency, yet the experience opened the way for her to discover a fantasy world below the surface of her artistic identity and it is a world in which she invites everyone to be a part of.

Within this realm, Frössén brings together black and white to create a visual discourse that encourages one to navigate in between the contrast and fill the blank spaces with their own creativity and ideas. One can follow a linear thread like a map and begin their own journey, float amongst a universe of spirals and black holes or feel the pulsating beat from nerves that spread life forward. Organic patterns of lines and dots expand or recede in every direction, creating exciting twists and turns in a limitless atmosphere of imagination and they fuel a continuation of the fantasy beyond the canvas edge.

“Imagination alone can animate the canvas,”¹ wrote the Modernist painter Max Liebermann and is an observation that is undeniably confirmed through Frössén’s series of paintings. In Liebermann’s opinion, even if a work of art is perfectly executed, it would be devoid of significance without the dimension of feeling which for him was the imagination of the artist and even the viewer. Through Frössén’s works, these notions take on a contemporary relevancy whereby her fantasy world not only engages the viewer within a celebration of uninhibited imagination; it simultaneously challenges one to take a respite from our technologically-minded world which in many ways has blinded us from seeing what lies waiting to be discovered below our own surfaces.

Anne Klontz, Independent Curator

¹ Max Liebermann, “Imagination in Painting,” in *Art in Theory 1900-2000. An Anthology of Changing Ideas*, eds. Charles Harrison and Paul Wood (Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishing, 2003), 31.