

## SWEDISH PROVINCE

### JAN TÖVE: BETWEEN TRACTOR AND FLOWERED WALLPAPER

Jan Töve's photographs of his Swedish homeland are memories, documents of change and casual inventories of a time in the present day. To produce *Faraway/Nearby*, the Swedish photographer and journalist spent about a decade making repeated visits to the province of Västergötland in order to create portraits of the landscape and its inhabitants in the capricious rhythms of natures.

Berlin, September 21, 2017 – By the time he reached his teens Jan Töve (\*1958) was already interested in photography. He moved to Stockholm to study and from there, traveled the whole world on a persistent search for the perfect motif. Yet, what is it like to return to the place where you grew up? To the country, far away from hectic cities, from one's own life and creative work?

The Swedish photographer and journalist, Töve sought a world that seems to have fallen out of time. A hair salon covered in thematic wallpaper, where the perfectly styled permanent wave is created; or a small hunting lodge in ox-blood red set in the middle of an apparently idyllic snowy landscape, where freshly shot, bleeding game lies. During various seasons of the year he depicted both landscape and inhabitant alike, finding an idiosyncratic rhythm of his own. He's interested in how people deal with their surroundings, with traditions, with the challenges of nature. "*Faraway/Nearby* is an odyssey in photographs. I've devoted myself to a landscape that has been part of me since I was a child, regardless of how near or far." Töve succeeds in capturing a visual balance between the present and the past, decay and future, portraying, for example, a pierced young woman driving a tractor, sitting self-confidently behind the wheel.

"Landscape photography is often too romantic. There is rarely an upsetting moment, or one in which something goes wrong and disturbs the perfection," writes the feuilleton journalist Lena Kvist in her accompanying essay, criticizing the glorification of nature in the usual kind of landscape photographs. "Representing a different approach requires courage. Landscape photography is a favorite theme and can be easily consumed by the masses. Jan Töve's style is far from this. His pictures can be beautiful, but they also have the courage to admit ugliness."

Töve's attentive gaze is focused on the detail that is often disclosed upon second glance. "The artist's worst enemy is blindness to home. Jan Töve has an imperturbable feel for his environment and a keen eye for the landscape he grew up in," says Kvist. As a series, the eighty large reproductions in *Faraway/Nearby* reveal recurring structures and forms: a red, for instance, that threads through the whole book. Perhaps the signal for a stubborn situatedness, a desire to be here, to stay here?



**JAN TÖVE  
FARAWAY/NEARBY**

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graphic design by Andrew Cowie  
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