



Johan Willner

Boy Stories



Boy Stories - Johan Willner

"Memory is a place where one hears only echoes and sees shadows. Memory is the cataract of sight and the tinnitus of hearing. It tears at the cobwebs."
- Carl Emil Englund

In the series *Boy Stories* (2006-2012) Johan Willner travels back in time, to a place where something happened, to a moment that he has carried with him. The photographs depict memories from his childhood. As with all of us, memories are reshaped and colored by time and yet their origins remain constant. Willner's highly detailed photographs depict cinematic scenes based on his memories, dreams, perceptions, and illusions.

"My work began with a single image, a memory. It was probably the strongest image I have ever envisioned, and I wanted to try to take a photograph of it.

For many years, I have been on a quest for images. I have photographed people, cultures, landscapes, and religions. I have tried to express myself through others. But, this image I have carried with me.

In my mind's eye, I see a boy. He sits in a car and his head is bleeding. His classmates surround the car and glare at him, mocking him. I remember that he did not cry, that he never lost face. "- Johan Willner

It is memories like this that motivated Willner to reflect upon what happens to the images that we carry with us, and how time affects what we remember. *Boy Stories* is an investigation of childhood memories as much it is a document of the past.

Willner's photographs depict the Swedish "folkhemmet" (a political concept that played an important role in the history of the Swedish Social Democratic Party and the Swedish welfare state). Environments that many Swedes identify with, such as sterile dressing rooms, soccer fields, schools, and hospitals. But there are also images of Old Sweden, traces of cultural inheritance passed down through generations.

Johan Willner works with staged photography, inspired by the documentary tradition. Willner recreates memories in minute detail, so much so that we may perceive his photographs be actual documents of reality.

Johan Willner (1971) is based in Stockholm and graduated with a master's degree in art from Konstfack, Stockholm (2006). Willner has also studied at the International Center of Photography (ICP), New York. Hatje Cantz is publishing the book *Boy Stories* in conjunction with the exhibition.

Curator: Maria Patomella

EXHIBITION INFORMATION

Title: Boy Stories

Number of photographs: 25 (sizes 180x154cm, 110 x 87cm, 140x174cm, 104x129cm, 84x104cm)

Sound installation in connection to the "Blue Picture". Text written by Johan Willner and read by actor Shanti Roney.

For more information please contact the artist: johanwillner@hotmail.com

tel: +46 703202150

More info on: www.johanwillner.com

























Johan Willner - Boy Stories









Small white label with illegible text.







Small informational text block located to the left of the first photograph.



Small informational text block located to the left of the second photograph.











Audio Piece- “The Blue Picture”



I return. I can smell it, clearly. The air is redolent with sweat and mold. Naked bodies are compared with each other. I remember the taste of nose blood. Red streaks, like smoke, wind their way in the water running over the cold clinkers, and on down into the stainless steel floor drain. There is a hook on the wall that is mine, that is me. I don't think I chose it—why would I have chosen that one in particular? It just turned out that way; there was a system. There were twenty-five of us who were to find our places and I learned my place where I hung among the others and the others with me. What does it actually mean now? That I had learned which place was mine? I should have stood up for myself. Maybe I was too delicate; it was the same for us. The new Sweden was being built, Folkhemmet (the people's home); the Swedish welfare state was expanding and it was the same, the same for everyone. High-rise, low-rise, and a local shopping center: schools and gymnasiums, changing rooms, brick walls and stone floors, wrought iron railings, streaks of pine, durable materials made to withstand an atomic war. Hooks and children: we were the children of the welfare state, born into the Swedish model. A library, a coop supermarket, and a state-controlled liquor store, it was a system that suited most and applied to all. It's still there inside me. It's sitting pretty.

I watch my children grow up now. The hooks on the wall are still there though their owners have changed.

Memories come flooding back and I know: I don't remember what you remember and you don't remember what I remember. Everything becomes the here and now. It is not the memories; it is the reconstruction of memories. I'm aware that everything is recast by time.

Like pressed flowers in between acid-free sheets of paper: flowers that dry, and become hard, brittle. Time. Everything becomes fixated in another guise, each time in a new form. Some colors fade away. The stalks, the leaves, the green that turns to brown. Some colors remain, intensified by the others fading, like the blue.

Time changes us, changes what we remember about ourselves so that we reformulate. What occurred then is impacted by what happens today and what will happen tomorrow. History is “renovated,” seeks an identity, and makes sure it fits in. The blue picture emerges, and the smell makes itself felt.



Johan Willner

Boy Stories

HATJE
LANTZ

Hässelby
via Frithiofsplatsen

Akalla - Hjulsta
Kungsträdgården



Johan Willner
Boy Stories



Exit
Kungsträdgården →

KUNGSGATAN



Johan Willner
Boy Stories

