

September 20, 2025 – January 11, 2026

Making Concrete and Conceivable

Sophie Tottie & Johan Widén



Welcome to the press viewing, September 19, 11–12 p.m.

Västerås Art Musuem, Karlsgatan 2

The artists will be present, along with curator Martina MacQueen.

We serve coffee at 10:45 p.m.; the viewing starts at 11 p.m.

For bookings to the press viewing, press photos, or requests for separate interviews, please contact Susanne Frost, susanne.frost@vasteras.se, 021-39 24 85.

The exhibition is produced by Västerås Art Museum. We also present a new essay by Annika Öhrner, writer and assistant professor of Art History at Södertörn University, about the exhibition and the artists.

Opening ceremony on September 20, 5 p.m. Stefan Jonsson, writer, literary scholar, critic, and professor of ethnicity at REMESO, Linköping University, opens the exhibition. The title *Making Concrete and Conceivable* is derived from Jonsson's book *Den otyglade skönheten. 5 saker konsten vet om demokratin* from 2022.

Background to the Exhibition:

In the late 1980's and early 1990's, the artists Sophie Tottie and Johan Widén made several trips to the United States, Italy, Egypt, and the then Soviet Union. In exhibitions like *ПЕТЕРБУРГ МОСКВА: Moika 22/Granovskaya 5*, shown in Leningrad and Moscow, their artworks converged in different constellations. This coincided with the fall of the Soviet Union, with Leningrad reverting to Saint Petersburg in the turbulent years of 1991–92.

Tottie and Widén share and discuss a set of fundamental questions in their artistic endeavors. Existential, political, and historical issues are points of departure in their works, and these issues, in turn, are often tied to specific places and contexts.

Now, for the first time since 1992, their art and respective methodologies meet again in the exhibition *Making Concrete and Conceivable* at Västerås Art Museum. Using the exhibition space, ASEA's former factory Mimerverkstaden, as an architectural guide in the selection, Tottie and Widén present a review of different ongoing and, sometimes concretely recycled, past artworks – combined with an unbiassed and open-ended discussion of how these works and different time periods can be brought into dialog with one another.

Sophie Tottie (b. 1964) examines individual experiences in relation to overarching structural systems. Addressing current topics with historical ties, she works conceptually with painting and drawing in an "expanded field." Her artworks are rooted in painting and drawing, but they sometimes take the form of photos, objects, videos, sound, and light in relation to different places. Having been based abroad for two decades, Tottie often works with both space specificity and mobility; the artworks relate to a given exhibition space, but they can also be moved, and be reworked, and take on new meanings in new places. This reflects how the work relates to the way in which historical events and current topics are intertwined.

Johan Widén (b. 1955) works with painting and drawing, as well as photography, and in combinations of these techniques. In his abstract paintings, the subject matter parallels the painterly act itself. Having traveled and resided in the Middle East for extended periods of time since the early 1990's, places – real or imagined – have been a vital starting point in Widén's work. His artworks can be seen as phenomenological ventures into aesthetic and ethical questions and reflections, based on, for instance, conflicts and complex cultural encounters and differences. For Widén, the incentive is not the explanation, but the very pursuit of the motif. A search for meaning in the midst of our world's complexity.

An Inspired Selection

In connection with their exhibition *Making Concrete and Conceivable*, the artists Sophie Tottie and Johan Widén, have taken on the Västerås Art Museum's collection and made a selection of artworks and artistic practices that in one way or another have been significant for their own work and artistic development. The visitor is invited, through the eyes of Tottie and Widén, to experience the distinctive light in Ivan Aguéli's landscapes, Eva Löfdahl's balance between the closed and the wide open, and Rune Hagberg's exploration of the meditative act of calligraphy – and everything in between.

Welcome!

MORE INFORMATION, IMAGES AND INTERVIEW REQUESTS:

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