



KOSTIA 3:30

Stills from a movie by
Mikael Olsson and Andreas Roth.

Elvis Costello famously said that writing about music is like dancing about architecture. Mikael Olsson and Andreas Roth's short movie "Kosta 3:30" presents a similar dilemma. It is a movie about a house. Or, to be precise, a group of connected row houses. But it isn't a documentary. Rather, it is a portrait of a building.

The row houses were built for the foremen at the Kosta Glassworks factory in southern Sweden. They were designed by architect Bruno Mathsson, more famous for his bent-wood furniture. Mathsson only built a handful of houses during his career, making the row houses in Kosta unique. However, the buildings were deserted decades ago and have been in a state of decay ever since.

When Olsson and Roth started their project, the future of the buildings was uncertain. But since, the local authorities have started restoring them, with the aim of creating a visitors' center at the site.

That is a good thing, of course. But the broken glass panes, the dust, the cobwebs, the shattered mosaics – those are some of the main characters of the movie. Just like the Romantics realized, we find beauty in the sublime, the passing of time, man's insignificance – just think of the ruins of ancient Greece or the palaces along the Canal Grande in Venice. Who would like to see them all fixed up and pretty?

So you might say that Olsson and Roth have created a memento mori, expressed through architecture. The ghost of Bruno Mathsson looms heavily in the shadows. But "Kosta 3:30" isn't a sentimental movie, nor is it a bio-pic. The images are static close-ups, never revealing the exterior in its entirety. Both Olsson and Roth are visual artists, and the film was obviously created with an art audience in mind – other viewers might find the long, monotonous shots boring. There certainly isn't much drama going on, when a red car passes in the background it creates a startling effect.

There is no voice-over. The movie will tell you nothing about Bruno Mathsson, Kosta, or the fate of the houses. There is no linearity, seasons change inexplicably outside the tinted windows. The building is portrayed as a state of mind, rather than a fixed object.

The soundtrack, by Garsten Nicolai, is just as sparse and minimalist as the images. You certainly can't dance to it.

Over the next few pages, Merge presents a series of stills from "Kosta 3:30". If you ever get a chance to see the movie in its entirety, do not miss it.

– Bo Madastrand

KOSTIA 3:30



KOSTIA 3:30



Bo Madestrand - Kosta 3:30

Elvis Costello famously said that writing about music is like dancing about architecture. Mikael Olsson and Andreas Roth's short movie "Kosta 3:30" presents a similar dilemma. It is a movie about a house. Or, to be precise, a group of connected row houses. But it isn't a documentary. Rather, it is a portrait of a building.

The row houses were built for the foremen at the Kosta Glassworks factory in southern Sweden. They were designed by architect Bruno Mathsson, more famous for his bent-wood furniture. Mathsson only built a handful of houses during his career, making the row houses in Kosta unique. However, the buildings were deserted decades ago, and have been in a state of decay ever since. When Olsson and Roth started their project, the future of the buildings was uncertain. But since, the local authorities have started restoring them, with the aim of creating a visitors' center at the site.

That is a good thing, of course. But the broken glass panes, the dust, the cobwebs, the shattered mosaics – those are some of the main characters of the movie. Just like the Romantics realized, we find beauty in the sublime, the passing of time, man's insignificance – just think of the ruins of ancient Greece or the palaces along the Canal Grande in Venice. Who would like to see them all fixed up and pretty?

So you might say that Olsson and Roth have created a memento mori, expressed through architecture. The ghost of Bruno Mathsson looms heavily in the shadows. But "Kosta 3:30" isn't a sentimental movie, nor is it a bio-pic. The images are static close-ups, never revealing the exterior in its entirety. Both Olsson and Roth are visual artists, and the film was obviously created with an art audience in mind – other viewers might find the long, monotonous shots boring. There certainly isn't much drama going on, when a red car passes in the background it creates a startling effect.

There is no voice-over. The movie will tell you nothing about Bruno Mathsson, Kosta, or the fate of the houses. There is no linearity, seasons change inexplicably outside the tainted windows. The building is portrayed as a state of mind, rather than a fixed object.

The soundtrack, by Carsten Nicolai, is just as sparse and minimalist as the images. You certainly can't dance to it.

Over the next few pages, Merge presents a series of stills from "Kosta 3:30". If you ever get a chance to see the movie in its entirety, do not miss it.

Text published in Merge Magazine 2007:1 (18)