



© Thron Ullberg, Barbro Osher, 2016.

May 19, 2016 07:00 UTC

Barbro Osher this year's Portrait of Honour

Saturday 28 May will see the unveiling of the 2016 Portrait of Honour at Gripsholm Castle. This year it depicts Professor Barbro Osher, the Swedish Consul General in San Francisco and a generous philanthropist. The portrait was taken by Thron Ullberg, who faithfully captures both the model's modest air and her work as a patron of the arts.

Barbro Osher was born in Stockholm in 1940, but has long lived in San Francisco, where she is Sweden's Honorary Consul General. Together with her husband Bernard Osher, she is one of the most generous philanthropists in

the USA. For several decades she has also been a leading patron of the arts in Sweden through the Barbro Osher Pro Suecia Foundation, which focuses largely on Swedish-related culture and education. She has actively supported several cultural institutions, including the Royal Swedish Opera, the Jewish Museum, Nationalmuseum and Moderna Museet. In addition to supporting a whole host of different cultural providers in Sweden, through her foundation Barbro Osher has also contributed to several important Swedish-American projects.

Barbro Osher has previously talked about the joy of giving that has been such a major part of her family life. Her uncle Bengt Julin was a well known collector of applied art and contemporary design, and long after his death his foundation continues to help young applied artists and to fund key acquisitions for Nationalmuseum. Barbro Osher's grandfather Richard Julin began work in the post room at Stockholms Enskilda Bank, but worked his way up to become director and board member of that same bank. He lived by the same motto as his granddaughter – "if you are provided for, you should provide for others".

Barbro Osher has a particular passion for applied art and design. Without her support, it would not have been possible to save the cultural heritage of the 20th century in our country. In the US donations are made to cultural institutions as a matter of course, not least by people with ties to the business world. In Sweden, however, her level of engagement is almost unparalleled. The Swedish debate has tended to revolve around tax deductions and gift tax, but Barbro Osher has shown that she has been driven instead by a strong personal hunger for culture ever since her teenage years. For Barbro Osher, culture thus has a deeper existential significance; it opens up a world beyond the everyday.

Thron Ullberg (b. 1969) is one of Sweden's leading portrait photographers. He started out studying art history, but soon switched to photography. Ullberg has expressed his love of the old photographic craft and often works with a large format camera and traditional negatives, which he chooses to process digitally. He belongs to a generation of photographers who have drawn inspiration from advertising and fashion photography, as well as film and video. This lends his work a certain theatricality. The portraits are carefully staged. Sometimes, he places his models on something that raises them off the ground, and sometimes he drapes them in items that provoke particular visual associations. Ullberg's portraits include examples of intimacy and distance, the personal and the formal.

His portraits are often commissioned for a specific context – for the press, mainly glossy magazines. They may have artistic aspirations, but they still retain the mark of the context for which they were created. The famous face is a key factor for the radiance of the portrait. Ullberg has previously been represented in the Swedish National Portrait Gallery and contributed several portraits to the exhibition *Gränslöst/Crossing Borders* 2013–2016.

Press coverage

The portrait will be unveiled at the Gripsholm Castle Association's annual meeting on Saturday 28 May at Gripsholm Castle. Media representatives wishing to attend register in advance with Timmy Cox, First Supervisor Gripsholm Castle, The Royal Court, timmy.cox@royalcourt.se or +46 (0)8-402 85 70.

Press contact

Hanna Tottmar, press officer Nationalmuseum, press@nationalmuseum.se, +46 (0)767-23 46 32

The Swedish National Portrait Gallery at Gripsholm Castle, the world's oldest national portrait gallery, was founded in 1822 and is managed by Nationalmuseum. A number of works are added to the collection each year, including an annual Portrait of Honour, donated by Gripsholmsföreningen, depicting a distinguished Swedish citizen.

[Nationalmuseum](#) is Sweden's premier museum of art and design. The collections comprise older paintings, sculpture, drawings and graphic art, and applied art and design up to the present day. The museum building is currently under renovation and scheduled to open again in 2018. In the meantime, the museum will continue its activities through collaborations both in Sweden and abroad as well as temporary exhibitions at the Royal Swedish Academy of Fine Arts, Fredsgatan 12 and Nationalmuseum Design at Kulturhuset Stadsteatern in Stockholm. Nationalmuseum has partnerships with Svenska Dagbladet and the Grand Hôtel Stockholm, and acknowledges the support of FCB Fältman & Malmén.

Contacts



Head of Press

Press Contact

Hanna Tottmar

press@nationalmuseum.se

+46 (0)8 5195 4400