



Assignment 2 – One Acre

Photography 2: Landscape

One acre

This assignment asks us to produce a set of images with greatest possible variety, taken within a small area of countryside. The essence is to find a variety of images within a confined space.

I had no grasp of how big one acre is so with the help of internet I figured out it's 64 m². I remember running 60 meter in school. It seemed long then, and I won't tell you my results, but it's not a big area. But it makes it an interesting challenge to capture the landscape within that defined area, with as much variety as possible.

The images in this assignment were taken in an area close to our summer house in Sweden, to which I have a strong connection. The images were taken over two days, in evening sunlight.



Link to map: <http://q.co/maps/5mtjc>

Land Matters

How will the viewer interpret these images? Would there be a different interpretation from someone who knows the Swedish landscape and nation, and from someone looking in?

In the book “Land Matters”, Liz Wells discusses how photographers engage with land and how the interpretation can depend on political, social and environmental attitudes.

In one of the chapters contemporary Scandinavian landscape photography is critiqued and analysed. She asks if there are there any characteristics for Scandinavian and more specifically Swedish visual practices, and if so what are they?

Because of the geographical position, with short days in the winter, and long days in the summer, the quality of light becomes an important part of visual art in Scandinavia. The Northern light consist of cool whites and blue. An example I can think of is the Danish “Skagen painters”, who are well known for their use of light.



Summer evening on Skagen's beach, P.S. Krøyer, 1899

Land is so important in the Scandinavian mentality. Wells explains that a man standing looking out over a landscape in a Scandinavian painting can mean “the pleasure of space and solitude”. A similar composition in a British painting is more likely to mean territorial power and wealth.

The Nordic countries are sparsely populated and the feeling of space is the feeling of freedom. But the different countries still have their individual characteristics and what would be considered the core of the nation’s perceived ideal landscape. Norway has mountains, Finland has lakes, Denmark has beaches and Sweden has woods.

Ideas into images

My intention for the images in this assignment is to communicate my feeling about the cultural heritage the forest symbolises to me, and how our society today is built on the folklore. The forest has a great impact on the Swedish psyche, even though we don't actively think about it. Up until 100 years ago most people lived in rural areas, and there is much space in this sparsely populated country. Allemansrätten¹ - the Right of Public Access - gives everyone the right to wander in the Swedish landscape, without destroying crops, plants and trees. Everyone has access to nature, which makes it a part of "us" and connects us to our ancestors and history.

We still carry the spirit of the unknown of the forest within us. There are many stories about spirits, fairies, gnomes, etc. and how they interact with humans. Some were helpful, some were dangerous. You had to be respectful to the creatures and they would be helpful to you or nasty if you didn't respect them. These stories maybe helped people to grasp the mystery of nature, which can't be fully controlled by humans.

Through these images I wanted to communicate the idea of the spirit of the forest that lives both inside of me and the collective mind of the nation. The spirit is depicted as something/someone intangible represented by a blurred figure, that you can almost see, but you can most certainly feel that the presence is there. I want the images to show the beauty and calmness of nature, and how we should be careful not to destroy its beautiful soul.

I grew up amongst the trees in the forest. The nature is in my soul and psyche. I like the quietness, the calmness, when walking in nature. Since I no longer live in Sweden I miss this even more.

The images also show how the nature's soul is a part of me since I'm taking the role of the spirit. The spirit could be anyone who is open to feel it.

Like Cindy Sherman I'm taking on the role as both object and subject. I set up the camera on the tripod, composed the image and the exposure settings, and then wandered off in front of the camera. My assistant pressed the button consistently to take a series of photos with slow shutter speed. The blurred figure creates a sense of not being able to fully see what this spirit of the forest is.

¹ http://www.sweden.se/eng/Home/Work/Life_in_Sweden/Climate_nature/the-right-of-public-access/

Inspiration

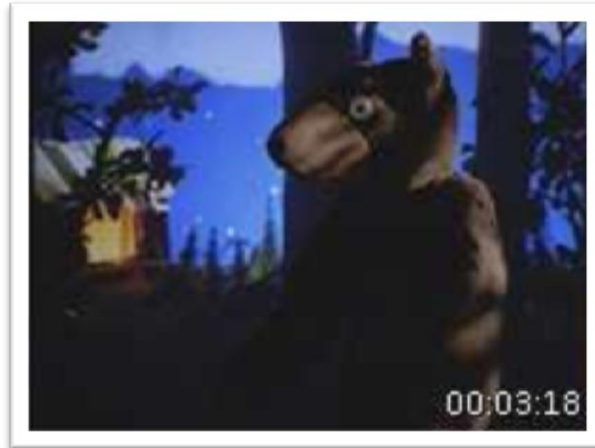
I wanted to create something “other worldly” in this set of images. I enjoy images and films which are not obvious and leave something to ponder about. I’d like the sensation that there could be more to discover under the surface and that there could be other creatures and spirits close to our reality even though they are difficult to notice.

John Bauer (1882–1918) is a Swedish painter and illustrator who inspires me. He illustrated stories with trolls, princesses and trees.



*One summer's evening they went with Bianca Maria deep into the forest,
John Bauer, 1913*

Good music and films always inspires me and one example of this is Björk's *Human behaviour* (1993). The song looks at how a non-human creature might perceive a human, and thereby implying that there could be other creatures to consider in our conception of our reality.



Human Behaviour

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EOepheinkCM>

Gregory Crewdson creates images which are dark and uneasy. Something is wrong, but we don't know what.

His scenes are theatrical and minutely composed. They remind us that the border between happy go lucky on the surface, and deeper black devastation is much more easy to cross than we think. Beneath the glossy surface we all carry thoughts, reflections and memories we'd rather let stay in the dark.



From the series Beneath the Roses, 2003-2005, Gregory Crewdson

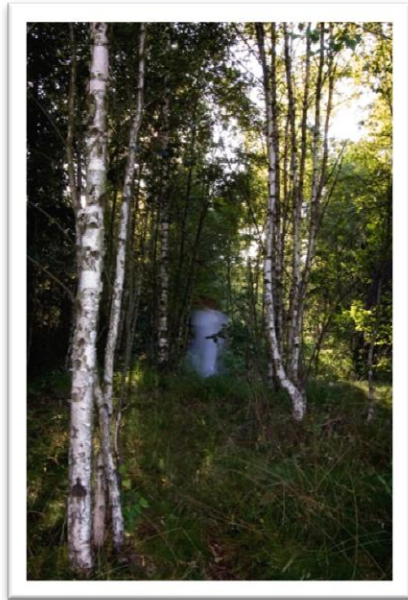
1 – Leaning birch



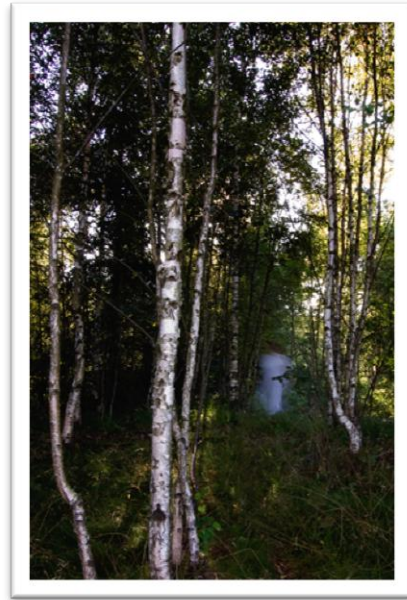
As an introduction, this image shows the vista of my acre. The sky is the dominant factor here and contains beautiful fluffy clouds, enhanced by a polarising filter. The birch trees are very common in the Swedish landscape. The tallest tree is leaning towards the centre of the frame in a precarious angle. It adds a bit of drama in the otherwise peaceful landscape and makes us wonder if it might fall. But wait – what is that little figure in the landscape with the back turned towards us?

Lens: 18-55mm F/3.5-5.6 G
Focal Length: 18mm
Exposure Mode: Manual
Metering Mode: Multi-Pattern
1/30 sec - F/16
Exposure Comp.: 0 EV
Sensitivity: ISO 200

2 – In the woods



Final crop



Old crop

Amongst the almost parallel lines of the trees, we glimpse a blurred figure. It's difficult to make out what it is.

I decided to recrop the image as I thought the composition could have been better if the figure had been framed between trees. The final crop looks cleaner and I think give a more efficient look.

Even though I didn't use a flash here the white trees contrast against the darker background.

Lens: 18-55mm F/3.5-5.6 G
Focal Length: 18mm
Exposure Mode: Aperture Priority
Metering Mode: Multi-Pattern
1/1.6 sec - F/22
Exposure Comp.: 0 EV
Sensitivity: ISO 200

3 – Surrounded by tall trees



The trees are so tall and dark, and the figure is so little but still clearly visible in the white. This image shows the scale of the figure and the trees.

The trees appear as diverging lines because of the wide angle focal length. I don't think that is visually a problem though, as it adds to the feeling of the trees leaning inwards towards the figure.

This one of the few images in this set where you can clearly make out the figure of the spirit of the forest.

Lens: 18-55mm F/3.5-5.6 G
Focal Length: 18mm
Exposure Mode: Manual
Metering Mode: Multi-Pattern
1/20 sec - F/22
Exposure Comp.: 0 EV
Sensitivity: ISO 200

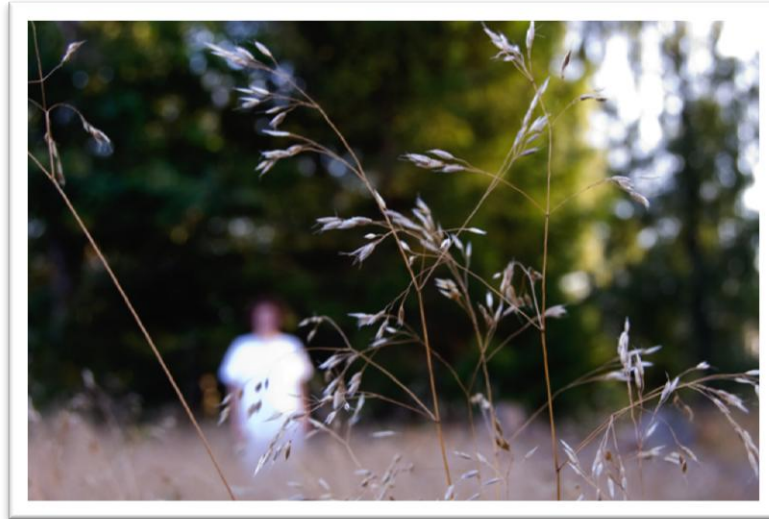
4 – Grass



I'm always drawn towards the texture of grass when I come across it in various locations. I feel though in this images, that it's a shame that the grass in the foreground is not more illuminated. A greater tonal range would have created a bigger impact.

Lens: 18-55mm F/3.5-5.6 G
Focal Length: 38mm
Exposure Mode: Manual
Metering Mode: Multi-Pattern
1/6 sec - F/22
Exposure Comp.: 0 EV
Sensitivity: ISO 200

5 – Looking at you



I feel this image is more successful than the previous, even though it contains the same components. I find it quite interesting to focus on the foreground, so that the grass becomes the main character, and what we might call landscape is solely a background. There are lots of interesting details to look at here, from the delicate grass to the bokeh between the branches of the trees. And the figure is facing us, looking at us, but we can't see fully what it looks like.

Lens: 18-55mm F/3.5-5.6 G
Focal Length: 42mm
Exposure Mode: Manual
Metering Mode: Multi-Pattern
1/13 sec - F/10
Exposure Comp.: 0 EV
Sensitivity: ISO 200

6 – Foot step



The assignment allows some close-ups if we wish, and here is one.

Here we can see a blurred footprint from the spirit of the forest who walked here.

I took many frames for this shot, with me walking back and forth in my bare feet. I can assure you it was a prickly affair, but it was done in the name of art.

Lens: 18-55mm F/3.5-5.6 G
Focal Length: 40mm
Exposure Mode: Manual
Metering Mode: Multi-Pattern
1/3 sec - F/32
Exposure Comp.: 0 EV
Sensitivity: ISO 200

7 – Small



This is a “traditional” landscape composition with foreground, a horizon line a third way up the frame and a big part blue sky with clouds enhanced by a polariser.

Maybe if something was added in the near foreground it would make the composition more interesting.

Lens: 18-55mm F/3.5-5.6 G
Focal Length: 18mm
Exposure Mode: Manual
Metering Mode: Multi-Pattern
1/40 sec - F/11
Exposure Comp.: 0 EV
Sensitivity: ISO 200

8 – Into the sun



This image was shot almost into the sun, and highlights are admittedly blown. This could perhaps have been rescued by a graduated filter (which I don't possess). But at the same time I don't consider it a huge problem. The backlit grass creates a nice foreground and rays from the sun can also be seen. That's an interesting aspect of photography, that it can capture things we don't normally see with the bare eyes.

Lens: 18-55mm F/3.5-5.6 G
Focal Length: 35mm
Exposure Mode: Manual
Metering Mode: Multi-Pattern
1/13 sec - F/22
Exposure Comp.: 0 EV
Sensitivity: ISO 200

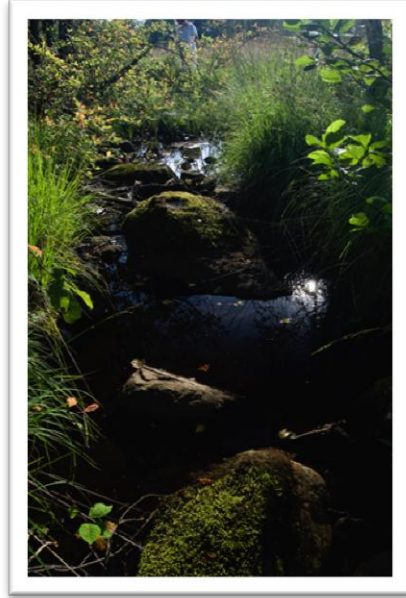
9 – Trunks



Both the two parallel tree trunks and the straws of grass, create diagonal leading lines towards something hidden in the background. It also helps improve the sense of perspective. The sun light illuminated the trunks and grass, which makes it stand out against the darker background.

Lens: 18-55mm F/3.5-5.6 G
Focal Length: 19mm
Exposure Mode: Aperture Priority
Metering Mode: Multi-Pattern
1/50 sec - F/9
Exposure Comp.: 0 EV
Sensitivity: ISO 200

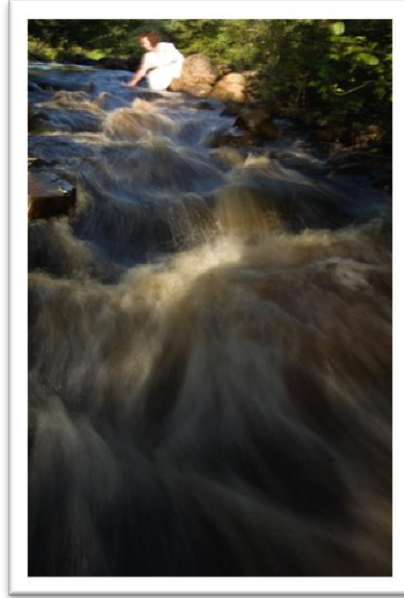
10 – Dark water



What lies beneath the dark surface of the water? This backlit image was composed by blocking out the sun of the frame.

Lens: 18-55mm F/3.5-5.6 G
Focal Length: 18mm
Exposure Mode: Manual
Metering Mode: Multi-Pattern
1/20 sec - F/10
Exposure Comp.: 0 EV
Sensitivity: ISO 200

11 – Stream

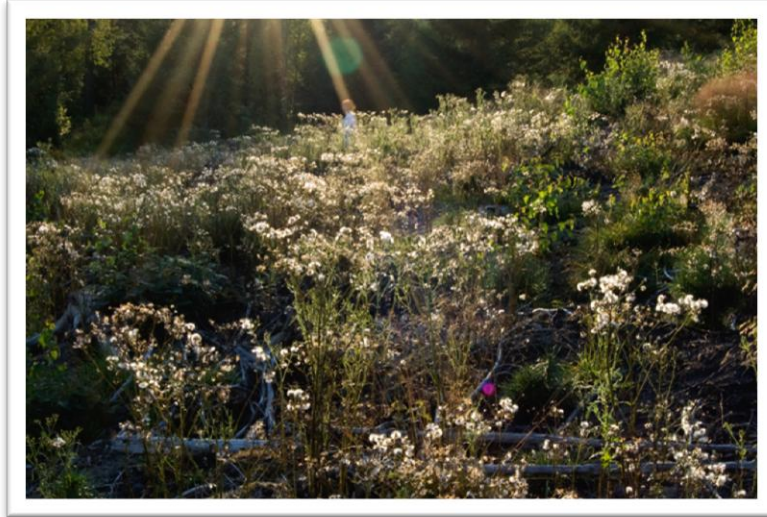


In order to take this image, I had to set up the tripod in the water, do the framing and composition, and walk across the stream trying to avoid getting too wet.

I like the idea of this image, but I think it could have been improved. Looking at this shot afterwards, I would have liked to have used an even slower shutter speed, to make the stream of the water look silkier. The composition is in itself a little bit complicated as the foreground is quite dark and the figure appears quite white. I also think that the figure shouldn't have been placed so closed to the top of the frame.

Lens: 18-55mm F/3.5-5.6 G
Focal Length: 20mm
Exposure Mode: Manual
Metering Mode: Multi-Pattern
1/3 sec - F/22
Exposure Comp.: 0 EV
Sensitivity: ISO 200

12 – Rays



This is another backlit composition, using a small aperture to increase the rays from the sun star. I did of course take many frames to get this image, and I chose this shot as it looks like the figure is beamed directly by the sun, as if it has a connection with universal powers.

I also like the purple and green dot created through the lens.

Lens: 18-55mm F/3.5-5.6 G
Focal Length: 34mm
Exposure Mode: Manual
Metering Mode: Multi-Pattern
1/10 sec - F/29
Exposure Comp.: 0 EV
Sensitivity: ISO 200