

# Genesis

Lena Sjöstrand

Folder in conjunction with exhibition  
"Genesis" at Lund Cathedral, The Crypt,  
Lund, Sweden.

Erla S. Haraldsdóttir's paintings for Lund Cathedral take as their starting point one of the stories of creation from the Book of Genesis (*genesis* is the Greek word for "beginning" or "origin").

The structure of Haraldsdóttir's work follows the seven days of creation, while its form draws inspiration from a series of medieval drawings by Icelandic artists. As is common for her work, Haraldsdóttir approaches the subject matter at hand via the work of anonymous colleagues. By setting up a series of rules for her own work, she then tries to reach deeper, gradually moving inwards towards the core of the subject.

The paintings made for Lund Cathedral are more abstract than the artist's first series on the theme of creation. It's as if she had shifted from contemplating a scene to painting the subject from within the point in the biblical text where light comes into being, where water is separated from water, where dry land emerges and the earth brings forth plants. What we see is a meeting between the Creator and the creative artist in which the story of creation unfolds through the image of man. The ability to create is part of our likeness with God, part of the connection between man and God.

The Hebrew word used for the Creator's achievement can mean both "create" and "play". In play, we use our imagination to test, deepen and transform reality. Haraldsdóttir's return to the subject of creation is clearly marked by the exploration and experimentation characteristic of play.

Through the act of painting, Haraldsdóttir accesses images and moods that otherwise

remain concealed. The paintings hold traces of her own story, merging with Icelandic landscapes, myths and symbols.

In *Lund Cathedral*, Haraldsdóttir's paintings appear alongside other representations of the biblical story of creation, for instance on the canopies on the northern side of the choir and in sculptures by anonymous artists from the 1300s. Experiences from different eras are thus woven together. Visitors discovering the works in the crypt thus take part in the process of creation, in a work in progress.

## I början. Igen.

Jonatan Habib Engqvist

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