

Pija Lindenbaum manages to give the story of lonely Britta even more warmth and pleasure than Lindgren grants in the original text.

The illustrator and the picturebook genre give us a story of a girl that is *less lonely* than in the original text. Some of the longing for the doll is gone, because the reader sees that the main character will be given a doll before he or she sees the book cover or reads about the wish for the doll in the opening scene. The paratexts provide, as I have already mentioned, a softer and more gradual introduction and ending to the story, but it also takes away some of the thrill of wondering whether the main character will ever get a doll of her own or not. This is my main criticism of this picturebook. Astrid Lindgren's authorship is filled with books and stories about lonely children who somehow manage to become a little less lonely – often by finding the powers within themselves and by “a little help from their friends”, or rather: with a little help from *new* friends.

In this picturebook, the contrast between the lonely and bored girl in the beginning of the story and the girl with a happy life and a doll of her own, a doll that is also her best friend, is somehow minimized. The contrast is less striking in the picturebook than in the original story, and that makes the story a bit less exciting to read, or at least a bit less typical of Astrid Lindgren.

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Elina Druker

The animated still life

Ingrid Vang Nyman's use of self-contradictory spatial order in Pippi Longstocking

Ingrid Vang Nyman's illustrations to Astrid Lindgren's books about Pippi Longstocking seem to contradict customary perspective logic. In her interior images, Vang Nyman displays curiously assorted objects, animate and inanimate, in a range of textures, colours and shapes. The elements in her compositions are often presented at tipped angles, where everything is observed without overlapping perspectives. Why this constant defiance of gravity, the free distortion of proportions and multiplicity of details? Everything seems to be in motion, in a state of flux and turmoil, pointing to the adventurous potential of everyday places and objects. In this paper, I discuss Ingrid Vang Nyman's use of pictorial effects and her way of playing with perspective and spatial order, and I will place this technique in the larger context of art history.

Compositions of stillness and motion

The interiors in Vang Nyman's illustrations become repositories for seemingly random things, common household objects, toys and treasures. All items, whether junk, gold coins or porcelain cats, seem to have equal status and importance. The organizing principle of the things remains mysterious. Pieces of clothing, fruit, toys, pebbles, plates and cups parade together, almost as if they were suggesting other stories. Pippi also owns a large cupboard filled with various curiosities:

It was a huge chest with many tiny drawers. Pippi opened the drawers and showed Tommy and Annika all the treasures she kept there. There were wonderful birds' eggs, and strange shells and stones, pretty little boxes, lovely silver mirrors, pearl necklaces, and many other things/--/.(Lindgren 1950, 24)

Pippi's collections resemble curiosity cabinets, or "wunderkammer", filled with objects, toys and treasures, arranged in puzzling combinations. The objects refer, as the "wunderkammer" essentially does, to faraway places and cultures, collected by Pippi and her father during their travels round the world, and thus suggesting other stories and adventures unknown to the reader (see illustration 1).



III. I. Astrid Lindgren. Känner du Pippi Långstrump? III. Vang Nyman. Stockholm: Rabén & Sjögren, 1947. © Saltkråkan AB, Lidingö. Bilden återges med tillstånd (Do you know Pippi Longstocking)

In her illustrations Vang Nyman organizes these everyday objects with a playful lightness, creating joyful and absurd still lifes. The swarms of objects serve to further distort the sense of space and contribute to the jumbled disorder. Still lifes, or *nature morte*, are traditionally studies of form, scale, texture and shape. The implication of "stillness" in still life compositions has to do with a lack of motion. However, there is nothing still about these seeming still lifes. Instead, Vang Nyman's images seem to be animated, or at least propose the possibility of movement and vitality. Also, in the composition of the object and the surrounding room, there is dynamic which further creates a shifting, a certain sense of unsteadiness and playfulness. The playful and stunning arrangements of objects correspond to the turmoil and unruliness that is so fundamental to Pippi as a character.

The naive drawing style, striving for simplicity and using of directness of both form and colour relates to the wildness associated with Pippi. Many late 19th- and early 20th-century European artists were drawn to certain qualities about so-called "primitive" art, such as its non-imitative nature, its powerful and inventive stylized forms, and

its more direct quality, which contrasted with their impression of the refined art of the European academic tradition. Whether we consider cubism, fauvism, and naive or “primitive” art, these influences are evident. There is also a link between the interest in children’s art and in primitivism within the modernist context. Many modernist painters emphasized qualities of immediacy, impulsiveness, and purity, which they identified as essential to “primitive” art, and found similar qualities in art by children. The aim of capturing a childlike liveliness is what drove many of the modernist artists. A similar interest is also evident in Vang Nyman’s illustrations. She embraces the irrational, childlike, naive and playful. This approach is not restricted to the choice of motive but is also reflected in the compositions and structural elements of the images as well.

Picturing performance

It is of course not merely the inanimate objects that shift and move in Vang Nyman’s illustrations. The drama of the interior reflects the overall drama around Pippi. In the chapter “Pippi plays tag with policemen”, two police officers have come to collect Pippi to take her to a children’s home. She, of course, rejects their proposal and instead turns the situation into a game. When the policemen chase Pippi to the roof of her house, the entire scene is distinguished by movement. Her climbing on the roof is described in an acrobatic manner. After running, laughing and whooping across the roof, Pippi hurtles straight into a tree, shouting: “Now I’m going to dive”, (Lindgren 1950, 45) (see illustration 2).

The illustration shows Pippi in the middle of a casual leap from the rooftop to the tree, her pose triumphant and mischievous. At the same time, the police officers’ postures are comically awkward, almost animal-like, standing uncomfortably on all fours. The body language of the characters and the scene are spectacular, similar to that of a pantomime, or a gymnastics performance, and generally characteristic of Pippi’s behaviour. Even the house seems to be moving in this image, its windows and doors flung open and the porch wall bent. The overall effect of the pictorial organization is one of distortion rather than of composure.

As Kristin Hallberg points out, it is the modern, liberated and active child who is depicted by Vang Nyman, demonstrating the pedagogical ideas of the 1930s and 1940s in Denmark and Sweden. Vang Nyman’s child characters are often depicted as playing, the focus of the images lying in the child’s activities and in the dynamic inte-



III. 2. Lindgren, Astrid. Pippi Långstrump. III. Ingrid Vang Nyman. Stockholm: Rabén & Sjögren, 1945. © Saltkråkan AB, Lidingö. Bilden återges med tillstånd. (Pippi Longstocking).

rations of children playing together. I would like to propose that a similar kind of shift in focus is used in the constitution of the pictorial space. Focus on play and the child's activities leads to expressive and unusual spatial constructions and perspectives (see illustration 3).

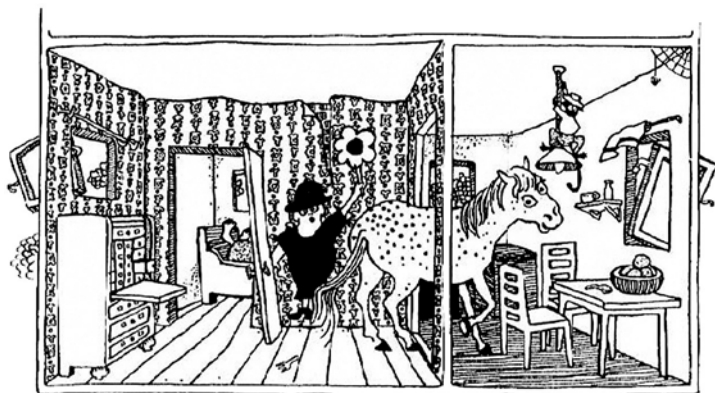
Some of Vang Nyman's images are as games in process. The game of "Don't touch to the ground", played by Pippi, Tommy and Anika in Pippi's kitchen in *Pippi Longstocking* (1945), is a familiar indoor children's game, in which the players try to avoid touching the ground. The players stay off the floor by standing on furniture or parts of the room's architecture, such as window sills or door frames, and by moving from one piece of furniture to the next. Looking at a room from the perspective of "Don't touch the ground", changes the standpoint:

The only thing one had to do was walk around the kitchen without once stepping on the floor. /--/ You began on the drainboard, and if you stretched your legs enough, it was possible to step onto the back of the stove. From the stove to the woodbox, and from the woodbox, to the hat shelf, and down onto the table, and from there across two chairs to the corner cupboard. Between the corner cupboard and the drainboard was a distance of several feet, but, luckily, there stood the horse, and if you climbed up on him at the tail end and slid off at the head end, making a quick turn at exactly the right moment, you landed exactly on the drainboard. (Lindgren 1950, 150–152)

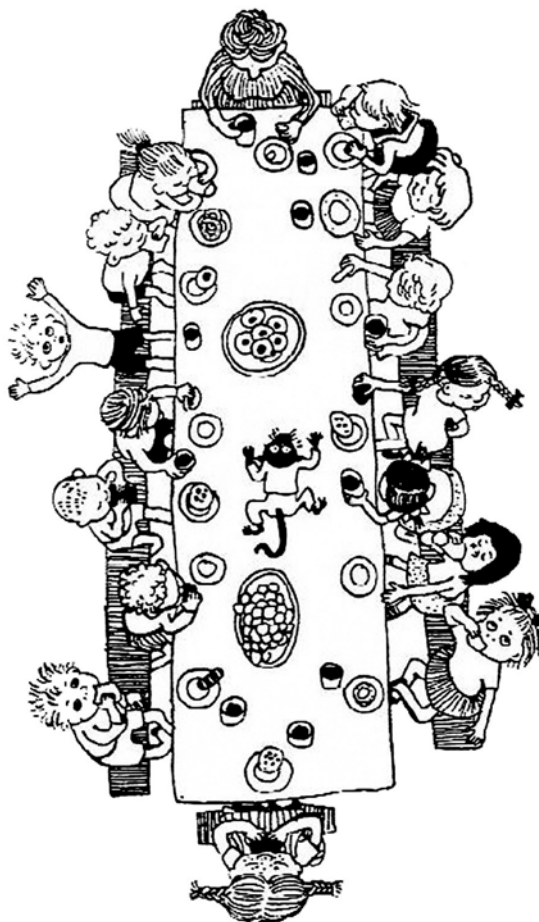
The ongoing movement and direction forward expressed in the text is turned into a peculiar kind of spatial order in the illustration in the picturebook *Do you know Pippi Longstocking* (1947). The way the objects are arranged in the image reverses the ordinary foreground-background relationship. Trying to avoid the floor, and focusing on the potential pattern of climbing or dangling on things instead, changes the spatial framework. It is a standpoint based on the rules



III. 3. Astrid Lindgren. Känner du Pippi Långstrump? III. Vang Nyman. Stockholm: Rabén & Sjögren, 1947. © Saltkråkan AB, Lidingö. Bilden återges med tillstånd. (Do you know Pippi Longstocking)



III.4. Lindgren, Astrid. Pippi Långstrump. III. Ingrid Vang Nyman. Stockholm: Rabén & Sjögren, 1945. © Saltkråkan AB, Lidingö. Bilden återges med tillstånd. (Pippi Longstocking).



III.5. Lindgren, Astrid. Pippi Långstrump går ombord. III. Ingrid Vang Nyman. Stockholm: Rabén & Sjögren, 1946. © Saltkråkan AB, Lidingö. Bilden återges med tillstånd. (Pippi goes on board).

of the game and the movements performed by the children. It is a composition of a game taking place, a whimsical choreography of potential places to step on. Like the frame of a painting, the composition defines the edges of the room and the borders for the game, further emphasising its rules and limits.

The expressive and inventive spatial constructions as well as the focus on play, the anti-authoritarian and reversed point of view, all place Vang Nyman's work in a larger artistic context. The way pictorial perspective is used, in particular perspective that has been toyed with, has often signalled a shift or a turning point in art history. Rather than attempting to create a naturalistic illusion of depth, Vang Nyman plays with the spatial order, further reinforcing the self-contradictory arrangement of the image. Studies of domestic interiors, as well as still lifes, play a specific part in modernist painting. It was through still life and interior studies that artists like Picasso and Braque developed their revolutionary explorations of the spatial organization, and it was here the development towards a flattening of dimensions to single-plane colour surfaces began. Vang Nyman's work reflects a number of influences: the ornamental quality of Near Eastern as well as Asian art through the use of striking colours with unvaried surfaces, cut-down shapes, and heavy contour lines. Her interiors and compositions of objects display a tendency towards distorted use of space.

A similar kind of investigation of the construction of the image is evident in the image of Pippi's home (see illustration 4). The front wall is removed, showing us the interior of the building. The illustration works like a cross-section of image, creating a sensation of entering an interior space. Even here the coordinates of normal perspective are unsettling and wobbly. We see several rooms simultaneously almost as if we were looking into a doll's house or a theatre stage. We get a glimpse of someone in the bedroom, their feet sticking out. Pippi's horse is entering a room on the right side, placed in between two rooms, further emphasizing the remarkable spatial construction of the image. In the middle of the picture we see a female figure, painted on the wall by Pippi almost like a silhouette. According to the text, the lady is holding a flower in one hand and a dead mouse in the other. "Pippi thought it a very beautiful picture; it dressed up the whole room" (Lindgren 1950, 132). The image of the lady hovers between being a flat pattern and a rounded physical presence. She stands for everything that Pippi's house does not – order, rationality, adulthood. Even the wallpapers seem to be coming loose from the walls, showing parts of the brick wall underneath. Again, it is the

illusory perception of surfaces and depth that is being investigated in these illustrations. The characters seem to be wandering between different places, constantly in motion, or as in the case of the painting of the lady, shifting between surface and depth, at once inside and outside. As Victor Stoichita demonstrates in his study *The self-aware image*, art work with self-reflective qualities often thematises the status and boundaries of the painting.

Transforming the perspective

Also the picnic scene in *Pippi goes on board* (1946) displays the setting of a picnic in a stunning way, seen through a “bird’s-eye” perspective. The entire composition is clustered around the enigmatic axis of the table, a flat rectangle surrounded by children. The diners are seated around the table, the observer’s attention is drawn to the lower midpoint of the composition. Pippi, sitting opposite the teacher. The room, or in this case – the garden – is transformed into plane constructs: flat, but symmetrical, drawn with thick, black outlines. The flatness of modernist art marks the end of perspective depth and distorts traditional representation. In painting, the dinner table as a motif, similar to the still life of objects on a table, is usually shown as a horizontal form, observed from the front. Here the dinner table is depicted in a vertical direction at a strongly tilted angle. The lines of the interior, the floor, ceiling or walls are absent (see illustration 5).

This abandoning of the illusion of depth shifts the focus to the defining conditions of the medium, the fact that pictures are created on flat surfaces of paper or canvas, or that a book consists of pages gathered inside covers. When tilting the perspectives, Vang Nyman shows the scenes from multiple angles, giving us, not a realistic portrayal, but an interpretive one. The use of twisted perspective shows a challenge to the traditional concept of an orderly constructed pictorial space that mirrors the world in a naturalist manner.

Modern artists tried to break free of the strict perspective rules, and although never suggesting total abstraction, Vang Nyman modifies the traditional concept of pictorial space in her illustration. She is clearly influenced by the Oriental tradition of using flat surfaces and deviations from the linear perspective. This alternative way of depicting depth on a flat surface means that the perceptual juncture is in the foreground rather than in the background. Furthermore, Chinese and Japanese painting is based on non-naturalistic premises, such as contemplation and internal realities, rather than external, naturalistic manifestations. When Vang Nyman tilts the image to il-

illustrate the game of "Don't touch the ground" or uses the "bird's-eye" perspective to show the children gathered around the dinner table, she paints the three-dimensional world almost as a two-dimensional pattern, deviating from the traditional, linear and naturalistic perspective. Instead, we are given the impression of entering another, playful, dynamic and sometimes mischievous world, with focus on the child character's activities and perceptions.

In her interpretations of Astrid Lindgren's texts, Ingrid Vang Nyman uses child's play, a game of tag or puzzling collections of items as an organising principle for her pictorial order. It is the vivid expressiveness that brings a highly individualized style to Vang Nyman's illustrations. The visual overload of details, whimsical spatial order and the constant movement are both chaotic and playful, interplaying with the liveliness and energy of the text. Inanimate objects become animated, situations are portrayed of unexpected and stunning angles. Vang Nyman's individual and humorous expression, together with her extraordinary spatial depiction, is highly innovative, related if anything, to modernist painting and, within children's literature, placing her among the pioneers in illustrating Nordic children's literature.

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