

about me



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Auersalo's signature aesthetic demonstrates an uncanny push-pull that both entices the viewer with its hyper-real rendering and simultaneously refuses direct visual description. Characterized by a brash originality and a willingness to take risks, the work reflects a stunning new take on the possibilities of illustration. Auersalo notes, "I believe there is always a new land to discover in the area of making an image. It's more about forgetting what you thought was cool than saving your ass with cheap imitations."

A central theme throughout many of his designs is a focus on portraiture and figurative works—in particular, the human face. "It is the one and only piece on our body that we never get tired of. Particularly, [the classical painting genre] of the portrait is one format that just keeps on rocking century after century. We are egocentric... humans get satisfaction by seeing pictures of ourselves, or rather, a picture of another human staring back at you," says Auersalo. Yet, Auersalo also fundamentally disrupts classical conceptions of portraiture. "I want to question the basic idea that there is nothing real in a drawing, a photograph, or a painting in the first place—like René Magritte proclaimed in his work: "Ceci n'est pas une pipe."

Rather than reinforcing the likeness of his subjects, he purposefully complicates and obscures their recognizability. His cast of characters features a plethora of bizarre veils—whether bandannas tied over faces, helmets covering heads, taped shut sweatshirt hoods, or even Halloweenstyle fake gag noses. They

appear like a ramshackle gang robbing your home with makeshift masks. Perhaps this is what simultaneously lends Auersalo's works an irresistible sense of intrigue and unavailability to the viewer.

"You normally want to get what you can't have. It's the most common way to tease and to make itself attracted. Even the most boring secret can reach everybody's curiosity if it's well wrapped and hidden," he says.

Indeed, Auersalo creates surrealist psych-edelic compositions that play with the notions of depth, artifice, and façade, both revealing and obscuring multiple layers. "Just to be able to draw something looking three-dimensional is boring. I like to highlight this by flattening down the image by using patterns and filters which create an illusion of both depth and flatness at the same time. I like it polished and clean, as well as sticky and dirty."

Often, his anti-portraits have a haunting, theatrical flair—lit with a super-bright, high contrast beam that mimics the low-budget special effect of placing a flashlight under one's face to tell ghost stories. Furthermore, their gradient, grey-scale tonalities share an eerie similarity with police composite drawings—at once uncannily hyper-realistic and inhuman. "Drama always works, even if it is not pleasant. To build a drama into the picture, I always go through it myself during the process. I like to draw a beautiful thing, and then when it's ready and gorgeous, I take a hammer and break it."

A perfect example of Auersalo's gothic pop sensibility would be his portrait of Alejandro Jodorowsky. "Jodorowsky used a lot religious references and his films contain always a lot of violence. I wanted to make the image based on the cover of *The Holy Mountain*, where appears the character which Jodorowsky acted himself as an alchemist." With his head in a shadowy void beneath a tall sorcerer's cap, Jodorowsky displays bizarre symbols on his cloak, such as a safety pin, a cross, and two human fingers taped to his chest. This self-aware didacticism seems to belie an ironic and novel approach to including iconic imagery. Rather than including the most recognizable symbol for Jodorowsky (his face), Auersalo chooses instead to literally "tape" the enigmatic symbols to the front of his figure.

When asked what he admires most in other creative work, Auersalo reflects: "I give respect for designers who can keep their work updated without losing their touch or changing their style and still being interesting and fresh." Perhaps this sentiment can be used best to describe his own work—imaginative, haunting, and fanciful creations that toy with and attempt to subvert traditional expectations of design and illustration.

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