

Press release

SIGNS

Exhibition

The Wing

10 November 2006 through 7 January 2007

Information day is on Thursday 9 November from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., at which the artists Eva Koch and Sami Havia will be present throughout. Information event open to the public on Friday 10 November at 12 noon. Exhibition opening on Friday, 10 November at 6 p.m. Welcome!

A sign can evoke its meaning within a tangible environment filled with signs. In the exhibition SIGNS the works could be described by the words: 'be for me a sign of something'. They move through a profusion of basic symbolism, human facial expressions, sign language and gestures, in which the viewer can find both signs and significance. The basic elements of colour, shape and surface symbolise and create a bridge between the structures of art, philosophy and everyday life.

To interpret art, a viewer looks for meaning, purport, signs and signals – anything that will help bring them closer to understanding the work itself and the artist. Often, viewing a work of art can cause thoughts to arise which one may not be ready to face in everyday life. For a lucky observer, art will touch their most sensitive memories, their most beautiful moment, or induce a faint recollection of something they were almost ready to wrap in brown paper and stuff into the dusty attic of memory. A sign that triggers a series of events in a person's brain, taking them back into their own past, need not be obvious or even really visible; it need only be the slightest of visual prompts, virtually invisible yet an exclamation.

Human beings live in this world by instinct, surrounded by things, both familiar and strange. Even if we spoke every day of the uniqueness of life, the wonders and fleeting nature of it, we'd still not appreciate the present moment any more than we already do. That is why we look for meaning in simple things, signs to confirm our existence. Surrounded by such signs of life, in moments of desperation, people search for something bigger – even in imagined signs. The slightest movement of a person's head can be taken as a sign, as can an advertising poster in the street, or the stomach flu. Over time, we've learned to interpret the signs of nature, but as climate change causes unforeseen events our predictions become less and less valid. Some people want signs, look for and read into them what is not necessarily true. People live in a world of signs which they interpret, often arbitrarily. A green light gives us permission to cross the road, a smile from a person crossing from the other side is a sign of their good mood. People attribute behaviour to star signs, believing themselves to be wild as a lion or hidden like a crab.

The analysis of this plethora of signs and symbols is called semiotics, a philosophical study of semantics, or meaning, including that which is found in the signs we call words. The basic difficulty with language is how it can refer to something outside itself, which is what intentional thoughts, words and concepts are able to do. How does this external reference work and what are the scientific, theoretical and genetic explanations for language? The Pori Museum of Art will give free tours of the exhibition with sign language interpretation on 22 November at 6 p.m., 29 November at 2 p.m., and on 13 December at 6 p.m. Among the exhibits, Eva Koch's video work *Approach* (2005) features a sign-language choir, and a video from rapper SIGNMARK, whose instrument is sign-language song, is based on purely visual elements.

Artists: Stina Ekman (b. 1950, Sweden), Sami Havia (b. 1982), Eva Koch (b. 1953, Denmark), Leonhard Lapin (b. 1947, Estonia), Samu Raatikainen (b. 1971, Finland), SIGNMARK (b. 1978, Finland), Tereza Velikova (b. 1979, Czech Republic).

For more information about the exhibition, contact: Exhibition curator Laura Selin, phone 02-621 1089, e-mail laura.selin@pori.fi **For photographs, go to:** <http://www.poriartmuseum.fi> > tiedotusvälineet > lue lisää näyttelystä > lehdistökuvia