



JARMO MÄKILÄ: BOYS' GAMES 15 June – 02 September 2012 Hall, Wing, MEDIApoint, Lobby

Media Day	Thursday	14 June at 11.00
Artist Talk	Friday	15 June at 12.00
Opening	Friday	15 June at 18.00

Jarmo Mäkilä was born in 1952 and spent the best part of his childhood in Rauma on the West coast of Finland. His work in recent years has been devoted to discovering interesting paths back into his boyhood years. So diverse has been his approach that his paintings actually compose a multi-generational panorama of the psycho-history of Finnish boys in the 1950s. The cavalcade of his paintings and scale models leads us into the vast backyard of post war boyhood. Mäkilä deliberately views the past through the veil of present fantasy, which could already have been present “back then”.

Mäkilä approaches boyhood from two directions: showing boys either in the middle of wild nature or in a variety of interiors. These two ways of treating the motif produce interesting differences. By using dissimilar ways of painting, light is shed on two entirely different worlds. In the forest the boys are possessed by wild mythical thinking, perform animal sacrifice rites and undergo endurance tests. Oaths are sworn, their potency enhanced by the powerful light filtering through the trees. Mäkilä brings the forest to glow in a medley of brown and grey-green hues. The gang of boys and its activities are submerged in the changing colours of the forest: in the dark, mist, smoke and light. As the gang retreats, it fades into an ever deepening grey fog.

The illusory space of Mäkilä's paintings present the world of tomorrow's men from which girls, women and mothers are totally excluded. There is only the trampling generation and gender of boys. In the 1950s, girls belonged to another culture about which little was known. In the boys' world dialogue was substituted by likeness and like-mindedness.

The key work in the exhibition, *Jytty – Devil's Dance* (2012), takes the measure of Tyko Sallinen's Expressionist *Jyttyt (The Barn Dance)* painting from 1918. The tempo of the dance, however, is somewhat different. The boys vary in dimension. One heavy-set boy dances on top of an oversized skull. The child drummers in men's clothes are still children. Larger than life heads stare in from the high windows, eyes goggling in curiosity. Mäkilä comments: “You were always sneaking a look”. You had to get in, poke your nose in everywhere, go to the fair. The funfair was over in the wink of an eye, “closed down” when Mäkilä's best friend got run over by a car. This is shown in *Circus Boy* (2012).

Mäkilä's scale models of his family home are spectral. The “uncanny” experience fuses with the Brechtian effect of alienation: there is my homey home, but it's shrouded in a horrid spider's web, or frozen, or too high and spinning with withdrawal symptoms.

Jarmo Mäkilä's paintings nail boyhood memories to the present day through the thick interpretative layer of the present. History is “over there” and we cannot reach it except by shaping our own interpretation of it in the present. Jarmo Mäkilä elegantly frees himself from the realities of his own boyhood in the direction of fantasy, yet well captures the grotesque nature of that time when intelligence and discretion never met. A great drummer emerges and he drums memories flat and smooth. Mäkilä's paintings impart the idea that boyhood is like an aimless drum march that lasts a lifetime.

Altti Kuusamo

More information :

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