



PEONY, LILY AND ROSEWOOD

In the Maire Gullichsen and Modernism Series

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Flowers and plants were popular motifs in art already in the classical period. Bringing flowers as a present is an ancient tradition; flowers can express love, apology, or congratulation for an achievement. Flowers have their own refined language that, in our times, has been almost forgotten. In fine art, flower paintings emerged as a genre in the late 16th Century, and The Netherlands became the centre of the flower and still life style in the 17th Century. Artists would specialize in different motifs, and flower and fruit painters were the most well-known ones. The still lives were often very symbolic and reminded the viewer of the transience of life.

Symbolic meanings have always been attached to flowers. White lilies and irises represent purity, innocence and the Virgin Mary. Lilies are also funeral flowers and may be associated with death. The first reference books on the language of flowers were French, and they were often published anonymous during the first decades of the 19th Century.

The earliest Finnish still lives date back to the 18th Century. In the 19th Century Finnish art, a division into “minor” and “major” motifs reigned. Minor motifs were considered appropriate for female artists and these motifs included paintings of children and other portraits, still lives, and especially flowers. By the early 20th Century, male artists too started to favour the flower motif, and the art trends of their time were present in their paintings. Today, photography, video, and computer graphics add a new dimension to the genre.

In addition to the traditional flower motif still lives, the exhibition showcases bouquets, wildflowers, and fantasy flowers. The oldest painting dates back to 1919 and belongs to the Maire Gullichsen Art Foundation’s collection. Additionally, there are works from the Pori City Art Collection, deposited collections and a piece owned by the artist. The analogy of works from diverse eras and of various techniques provides the viewer new insights into the flower motif.

Additional information:

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