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MATTI KUJASALO

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Matti Kujasalo (born 1946, Helsinki) is one of Finland's most widely known artists abroad and his extensive oeuvre has played an important role in international constructivist art. His work can be approached via geometric constructivism and concretism alike, while op art and minimalism also provide points of contact. The unique feature of Kujasalo's form of visual expression is the precision, tranquillity and airiness of his works. Although the paintings are executed in a highly systematic and spare manner, their essence points to a non-material world and a cosmic dimension – a combination that gives them fascinating properties that appeal to the viewer.

Following the principles of concrete art, Kujasalo's geometric compositions can be broken down into three components: colour, line and surface. A core aspect of the artist's work is a unique method that is both visual and numerical at the same time, forming the basis from which the precise designs of the paintings are created. The evolved technique, in turn, is based on the layering of painted surfaces of colours and masking tape placed on them; the designs gain form as the tapes are removed layer by layer from the painted surfaces. Finally, after the tapes have been removed bit by bit, the rhythmic and symmetrical geometric shapes of the small areas of colour come into view.

In recent years, Kujasalo has focused increasingly on colours. His previously predominant black and white monochrome has given way, and colours and their combinations now have an important role. The present exhibition, in fact, concentrates on works in colour; the large paintings are calm and harmonious, while the smaller ones contain strong and intense combinations of colours. Kujasalo's paintings have a strong appeal to the sense of sight: the tensions of the combinations of colour and the designs on the painted surface creates a special weightless 'cosmic' space that appears to be in a movement that is falling, throbbing, trembling and coming towards the viewer, all at the same time. The spatial nature of the two-dimensional visual space is created by the impression of depth of the multidimensional design, and this optical illusion, in turn, creates the illusion of a third dimension.

This exhibition includes both new works on show for the first time and paintings from recent years that have been displayed at the Finnish Aalto group exhibition in Busan, South Korea (2019) and Kujasalo's solo exhibition at Galerie Denise René in Paris (2018). Kujasalo's works have also been displayed extensively in solo and group exhibitions in Finnish and European galleries and museums. Donations have included his works in two important American art collections: the LACMA museum in Los Angeles and the Phillips Collection museum in Washington DC. Paintings by Kujasalo have also been acquired for the collections of the following museums and foundations, among others: Albertina, Vienna; Arithmeum, Bonn; EMMA Espoo Museum of Modern Art, Espoo; Forum Konkrete Kunst, Erfurt; the GASK Gallery of the Central Bohemian Region, Kutna Hora; HAM Helsinki Art Museum, Helsinki; the Jenny and Antti Wihuri Foundation, Rovaniemi; the Josef Albers Museum, Bottrop; Moderna Museet, Stockholm; the Pori Art Museum, Pori; The Saastamoinen Foundation Collection, Espoo; and the Sara Hildén Art Museum, Tampere. Alongside public art collections, there are also works by Kujasalo in many private art collections in Finland, Europe, Japan and the United States.

Päivi Lappalainen