

ELINA MERENMIES

*Heavenly Host*

8 September – 2 October 2022

In her solo exhibition Elina Merenmies continues her work with profound, human and eternal themes: emerging from within branches in the forest, among birds, rain and leaves, the impressive and gently ferocious views investigate the human condition and existence executed in the artist's precise, inimitable hand. In the works, we encounter Merenmies's rich inner world and its diverse, captivating and poignant characters.

The exhibition consists of new paintings and works on paper, most of them completed in the past three years, although some were begun much earlier. The process must be given time to evolve in peace. In many of the paintings, Merenmies returns to subjects going back decades – things that first sparked her soul: an encounter with an eagle in a park in Czechoslovakia more than thirty years ago, soul-seekers in the wilderness and the many saints of the Orthodox Church, but also people from the artist's immediate circle. The paintings are characterised by a distinctive, nuanced palette, with hints of traditional icon painting, as well as of the deep shades of green, blue and red typical of medieval art.

The images are indisputably regardful and sincere, with interior visions and experiences running parallel with everyday observations. We are in the presence of a flood of profound questions in which nature, humanity, saints and sinners all flow side by side. The show also includes seemingly timeless line drawings and portraits of sundry figures such as a "forever virgin", a monk's veil and an adorable gardener wearing a scarf on his head.

The large *Heavenly Host* continues Merenmies's series on the theme of the forest, but this time a group of glowing red angels is seen hovering above the tree's dense crown. Winged wheels and six-winged seraphs alight on the limbs of surrounding trees, their colours shining bright against the gentle grey landscape. At times the artist's life resembles the paintings she made years ago. Merenmies recounts with delight how little birds came peering in from the balcony door when she started painting the exhibition's large title piece: "There they were, looking at me, my *Heavenly Host!*"

*Elina Merenmies (b. 1967) has work in major public and private collections in Finland and in several Nordic art museums, including ARKEN Museum for Moderne Kunst, Uppsala Art Museum, as well as in private collections in Europe and the United States. She has shown her work in numerous exhibitions in recent years, including Amos Rex Art Museum (2022), Helsinki Art Museum (2022), Nordiska Akvarellmuseet (2019), Norrköping Art Museum (2017–18) and Serlachius Museum (2017–18).*

– Hanna Huitu