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PÄIVI TAKALA

My Precious

5.–29.9.2024

Päivi Takala's solo exhibition *My Precious* opens the door into a quiet room filled with light-infused paintings and thinking in motion. With a critical yet gentle eye and soft brushstrokes, Takala observes and contemplates the human way of being with other living things. Her painting process for this show crystallised into the question: how can one portray both the human tendency to dominate and exploit natural beings, and the eternal longing to be touched by nature?

In *My Precious*, the title work of the exhibition, three floating hands grasp the image of a horse printed on a silk scarf. The humanity embodied in that gesture sums up many aspects of our time and our sometimes foolish relationship with the environment, and how that relationship increasingly emerges through images, symbols, and imagination. Viewing the painting, one can almost feel the soft, moving muzzle of the large animal in one's hand, even though the stylised image of a horse's head printed on the silk scarf is several conceptual steps removed from a living, breathing creature.

In the series of paintings titled *Dear* mounted in the large gallery, the image of the horse further transforms into a latex horse mask, a stripped empty shell, or a crude fantasy of an animal, persistently touched by a hand from one work to the next. The uniform green-beige background of these works was borrowed by Takala from English painter **George Stubbs'** equestrian piece *Whistlejacket* from 1762, which served as the starting point for the painting process of the exhibition.

In the diptych *With*, two almost identical people with headscarves are painted from the side. At first glance, one might overlook the profile of a horse formed by the scarves. However, this simple shift in the perception of the image sets many things in motion. The horse's head, printed on the scarf, wraps itself around the human figure, as if merging into the two-dimensional painted sitter. As one views the work, one can almost feel the soft touch of the silk.

The pale, faded palette of the paintings is a nod to the early Renaissance frescoes that are precious to Takala and to which she time after time returns. Something of the frescoes' breathing surface and peace experienced in front of them has been transferred into these new works, whose soft, shimmering surfaces and minimalist composition resonate with the artist's contemplative, conflicted silence. From one painting to the next, eyes gaze, figures are veiled, hands move, touch, stroke, press.

– Hanna Huitu

Päivi Takala (b. 1970) studied painting at the Berlin University of the Arts 1994–1998 and art education at the University of Art and Design Helsinki 1990–1996. She has work in major Finnish and international collections, including the Helsinki Art Museum HAM, Kiasma, the Saastamoinen Foundation, and the Malmö Art Museum, as well as in private collections in Finland and abroad. Takala has exhibited her paintings in numerous group exhibitions in recent years, including the Saastamoinen Foundation Collection exhibitions at EMMA (2022–2024 and 2020–2021); the Riga Bourse Art Museum (2017–2018) and Aboa Vetus & Ars Nova Museum (2017–2018), as well as in various summer exhibitions across Finland. Her previous solo exhibition, Birdlife, was showcased at Galerie Anhava in 2021. In addition to her creative work, Takala has also taught painting at the Academy of Fine Arts since 2014.