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KARI VEHOSALO

*I Dream of Fire*

9 April – 3 May 2026

Kari Vehosalon exhibition *I Dream of Fire* is born as a reflection of the liminality, disconnectedness and informational uncertainty that characterise our age. In his paintings, our existence is disassembled, veiled in dark gauze, and reassembled within the layers of Vehosalon's supremely skilful brushwork, deep philosophical thinking and art-historical imagery, to reflect our shared reality back at us. The motivating force behind the works is empathy, the possibility of restoring genuine connection with others, a way of bridging the chasms and indifference that divide us.

In addition to canvas and copper plate, some of the paintings have now acquired new pictorial layers on glass panels. Architectural drawings and pictograms are laser-engraved onto glass with mechanical precision, with the body's physicality throbbing palpably alongside and beneath them: a soft embrace, a torso, an intensely staring gaze. Vehosalon's photorealistic painting technique is strikingly skilful, but the relationship of the works to the techniques of photography and imaging also acquires a dimension that goes beyond mere likeness: reminiscent of X-rays or negatives, the monochromatic paintings also display drips, scratches and multiple exposures, a burnt-out sky, and a roll of film, snapped right in the middle of the painting.

A dream-like logic prevails in the world of these paintings – instead of following familiar patterns, the plot changes in mid-course, becomes distorted and breaks off. The elevated, even oppressive stillness is shattered by a compulsively twitching movement in a forest clearing; shimmering moiré patterns and overlapping reflections cast doubt on what one sees and on one's place in front of the painting. Faces are covered, cropped or turned away, and instead of leading to identification, the works mirror and turn our gaze back on ourselves.

Like the child wriggling in its mother's arms in *Regarding the Pain of Others*, the paintings themselves seem to wriggle and resist appropriation. Distortions, engravings and reflections create obstacles and actual ruptures in viewing, that direct attention to these liminal disturbances. For it is precisely there, in the liminal *in-between*, dwell the secrets, uncertainties and mysteries, all the magic that leads us towards truth. Hesitation forces us to look more closely and summons suppressed thoughts from the depths of the mind to fill in the gaps and lay bare the unseen – Vehosalon's paintings reveal by concealing.

*Bathroom Painting* offers a chance to wash our hands of the surrounding madness under the watchful lens of a camera and a black umbrella familiar from Francis Bacon's paintings, in the dark. The fluorescent tube no longer lights up; the power supply has burnt out. Cars swerved off the road or engulfed in flames, a tent materialising amidst reflections in a commercial space – they all remind us of what a fragile thread our sense of security rests upon. The rumble of thunder draws near; fire is about to break loose.

– Aleksandra Oilinki

*Kari Vehosalon (b. 1982) has shown in numerous solo and group exhibitions in Finland and abroad, most recently at the Hämeenlinna Art Museum, Le Clézio Gallery in Paris, Vantaa Art Museum Artsi, and Amos Rex. An extensive mid-career retrospective was shown at the Sara Hildén Art Museum in summer 2021. In addition to private collections, he has work in several notable public collections, including Kiasma Museum of Contemporary Art, Helsinki Art Museum, Saastamoinen Foundation, Wihuri Foundation, and the Henna and Pertti Niemistö Foundation collection. Vehosalon was awarded the prestigious Ars Fennica prize in 2017.*