

# SCHWARZ CONTEMPORARY

**AKI TURUNEN – La luna fuori le mura**

**September 8 – October 21, 2023**

We are delighted to announce Aki Turunen's (\*1983, Helsinki) exhibition 'La luna fuori le mura' at SCHWARZ CONTEMPORARY.

It is the first solo exhibition in Germany of the Helsinki-based artist, in which we will show four canvases, five smaller formats on wood, and five framed works on paper created for the exhibition.

Turunen's works emerge from a combination of his intuitive visual language and profound knowledge of art history. Enigmatic mythical creatures, dragons, princes, horsemen and knights, lute players, and colorful, larger-than-life butterflies appear in his works, seeming to flutter from medium to medium, always revealing themselves to us anew as recurring motifs in similar form within the wood, paper, and canvas works. In subtle ways they differ from one another, yet we recognize them again and again with a sense of familiarity on their adventurously playful expeditions.

The phases of the moon are omnipresent, new moons, waxing moons, full moons, waning moons everywhere - it is not always clear whether winged dragons are about to devour moons or lush, ripe fruit with their tongues. Often the artist's choice of titles in Finnish, Italian or English already hints to pictorial content: 'Kaikki kuut' ('all moons'), 'Ripe moon' (reminiscent of fruits), 'Rio delle lune' (moons reflected in water in the 'stream of moons') or the exhibition's title 'La luna fuori le mura' ('The moon outside the city walls').

Correspondingly, in the paper work 'A vernal mirage', which opens the exhibition with bright pastel colors, small moons are hidden in a sea of flowers: a cheerful figure crosses a deep blue pond bordered by colorful flowers on a crocodile-like winged creature. What exactly was Turunen thinking when he titled the work in the spirit of a springtime mirage?

The large-scale work 'A seeing wall' is dominated by Moorish-like architecture. On the left of the picture a little prince with a dark shadow, carrying his crown in his hands along high city or castle walls through a nightly atmosphere. Still invisible to him, but already revealing itself to us, an oversized butterfly waits behind the corner of the wall rising out of the pictorial space.

Narratively traveling through space and time and to the next medium, the two beings face each other again in the tempera work on wood hanging to the right, which gives the exhibition its title. Now surrounded by walls, we become witnesses of a lovingly intimate scene in which the prince presents the butterfly with a single, deep red tulip. Peering through the small archway, we are surprised to find that beyond the courtyard, dark night already reigns.

In the paper work 'La luna fuori le mura (mattina)' we also encounter the same scene, this time on a framed sheet colored with tea: morning light dominates the scene and again a fine, increasing crescent moon shows through the small archway on the left, although it has now become daylight there as well. Half-hidden by the walls, trees with oversized, plump oranges can be seen in the picture's background.

Turunen, in a recent interview conducted by Kathrin Becker, speaks of his enthusiasm for myths and legends and the art historical influence of Italian Renaissance art on his work:

'My recent exhibition 'La luna fuori le mura' is inspired by a small predella by Domenico Veneziano from 1445-1448. In this predella, Saint Lucia is executed with a sword after all her tortures. [...] The painting embodies all my current interests: the use of scale and perspective, the representation of three-dimensional space, and the use of archaic but elegantly stylized figuration. [...] My painting 'Kaikki kuut' or 'All the Moons' uses the painterly ability to represent the fourth dimension of time. All the four moons, different times of the month, shine simultaneously over the spatial corridors where the symbolic butterfly and the two-headed winged dragon meet. Renaissance paintings with multiple panels often make use of this representation of time, where the past and present of a narrative are seen simultaneously.'

In the rear gallery room, next to 'Rio delle lune', hangs the equally large-scale work 'A dress rehearsal for a crusade': one involuntarily smiles at the little crusaders trying to extinguish the flames of the three dragons in front of the gates of their castle while remaining calm; the small tent in the center of the work could be part of a theater set and one wonders what exactly is being rehearsed or staged here - it does not look like a serious fight for survival. Even though the playful often dominates Turunen's works, they also raise existential questions: Is art about protecting the inner child? Is beauty important and where do we need it? What can we learn from the past? What does it mean to be human?

The opening will take place on Thursday, September 7, 2023, from 6 to 8 pm.

The exhibition will be accompanied by a catalog with an interview with Aki Turunen conducted by Kathrin Becker.

We will be happy to send you further information and images:  
mail@schwarz-contemporary.com or +49 - 30 - 612 89 902