

Emma Ainala

24.5.–29.6.2024

**Emma Ainala** presents her latest paintings in her fourth solo exhibition at Helsinki Contemporary, *Delulufesting Dimension*, which embarks on a freshly nuanced and deepening exploration of her signature themes: femininity and the gaze.

Ambiguous figures in flamboyant interiors are recurring tropes in Ainala's richly detailed paintings. While their content invokes the short-lived fads of the digital era, their exquisite, painstaking execution is time-consuming and meticulously planned. Her work also alludes frequently to art history. Sometimes she might combine allusions to the mystical worlds of the Renaissance painter Hieronymus Bosch with references to hyper-specific TikTok trends in one and the same painting.

The term "delulufesting" is the artist's own portmanteau word of the internet slang terms "delulu" and "manifesting", both of which refer to the blurring of boundaries between reality and fantasy. "Delulu" is a term describing the delusional belief that one can influence one's destiny through sheer willpower. "Manifesting" meanwhile describes the practice of willing something into existence purely by thinking aspirational thoughts – by focusing your thoughts on a desired outcome as if it were already true, you can supposedly make dreams come true in real life as well.

Ainala's latest paintings depict lavish, manor-like interiors inhabited by female figures that are hybridized with mythical creatures. It remains for the viewer to interpret whether we are looking at "dreams come true", fantasy scenes, role play, or nightmares.

Womanhood and girlhood are long-standing themes in Ainala's oeuvre. The figures in her latest paintings are portrayed in princess-like gowns and wedding veils, sometimes blending in with the ornate interiors. The figure's gaze is usually averted or her eyes are closed, or the head and eyes might be absent altogether. Bridal gowns and veils are trappings associated with the new #bridalcore fashion trend that is on the rise on social media.

Ainala's paintings are packed with a teeming array of symbols and allusions. Their interpretation is ultimately left up to the viewer, as her paintings seem to pose more contradictory questions than offer solid answers.

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*Delulufesting Dimension* takes us to a dimension where the digital and material worlds collide, and where reality is hybridized with dreams, wishes, and delusions.

That said, every artist must inherently embrace a near-delusional conviction in a positive outcome. When painting or preparing an exhibition, the artist must cling to the unshakeable belief that something will eventually manifest out of thin air. The artist must be able to picture the desired outcome and invest boundless trust in a process that is inherently indeterminate.

**Emma Ainala** (b. 1989, Helsinki, lives and works in Savonlinna, Finland) graduated from the Finnish Academy Fine Arts of Uniarts Helsinki in 2013. She had her first solo museum exhibition at Mikkeli Art Museum in 2017, followed by another one at Jyväskylä Art Museum in 2019, and Hyvinkää Art Museum in 2020. In spring 2018, she was invited to take part in the prestigious Spring Exhibition at Copenhagen's Kunsthalle Charlottenborg. Her works have been widely exhibited in Finland and in Europe. Her works are included in collections such as the art collection of the Saastamoinen Foundation, the Niemistö Collection and Mikkeli Art Museum's collection.

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