

Aki Turunen

February 7–March 9, 2025

*Tectonic Kiss*, **Aki Turunen**'s third exhibition at Helsinki Contemporary, showcases a selection of his new tempera, oil and pastel paintings. Turunen is an intuitive painter who draws visual ideas from the subconscious. Volcanic eruptions, kissing lovers and centaurs are among the signature elements repeated in his latest exuberant exhibition.

The title, *Tectonic Kiss*, refers to a collision of tectonic or continental plates. Encounters and attempts to understand the Other are central themes running through Turunen's exhibition, be they encounters between lips, tectonic plates or various kinds of creatures. For Turunen, the act of painting itself, the collision of colour and line, is a symbolic gesture that triggers shuddering shockwaves in the same manner as a tender kiss or a collision of continental plates. Turunen's visually rich body of work is a celebration of joy, pleasure and artistic freedom. The artist describes his process as a metaphoric "hole in one" gamble – risks must be taken, even if it potentially means wasting months of work.

In his latest paintings, Turunen consciously avoids direct literary references and pictorial quotations, but concedes to having drawn inspiration from his travels in Italy and his recent stay in Iceland, which is located on the Mid-Atlantic Ridge, the boundary between the Eurasian and North American tectonic plates. His literary sources of inspiration include Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's Romantic travelogue *Italienische Reise* (1816) and Susan Sontag's *The Volcano Lover* (1992), two books written at different times in history, but both evincing an equal fascination with Mount Vesuvius, the volcano on the Gulf of Naples.

Romantic art and philosophy foregrounded history, emotion, imagination, natural beauty and intuition. Inspired by Romantic ideals, Turunen explores the way many Romantic notions of art and artishood still live on today. Through his paintings, he celebrates art's inherent creative and speculative freedom as qualities unique to art, and as something that offers pleasure to creator and audience alike.

*Thank you to Arts Promotion Centre Finland for their support of the artist's work.*

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