

Nordic Noir

10.5.–15.6.2025

Fabienne Audéoud, Emanuele Marcuccio and Marc Asekhame, Erkki Pirtola, Hanna Rochereau, Kaare Ruud and Matilde Westavik Gaustad

Embracing its setting in the long-disused waiting room of a suburban railway station, 'Nordic Noir' seeks to explore themes of dystopian familiarity; when horror and the uncanny emerge from what is known, and most intimate to us. Artists Fabienne Audéoud, Emanuele Marcuccio and Marc Asekhame, Erkki Pirtola, Hanna Rochereau, Kaare Ruud, and Matilde Westavik Gaustad each explore how the mundane and the unusual might intersect and intertwine through their distinct and collaborative artistic practices.

Through the artworks presented here, the exhibition asks a series of questions around forms of the habitual; what shadows, or echoes, linger behind the quotidian, and the domestic. Drawing from German theorist Walter Benjamin's ruminations on city life in the 19th century, the exhibition poses the interior spaces of buildings as encapsulating their own detective story. For Benjamin, there was always a body hidden somewhere, and in the crime stories that inspired this reading, the murderers are always the bourgeoisie. 'Nordic Noir' seeks to provide a re-reading of these notions, rooting the exploration of its themes in the contexts of contemporary art, and contemporary life, today. Though in this exhibition, there are no corpses on view, the artworks carry their own buried bodies, so to speak. Together, the works bring to the fore a sense of the familiar and safe that may suggest security, but which, on closer viewing, reveal a more complex, distant and horrifying nature through their symbolic and material character.

Suspended from the ceiling near the centre of the gallery space, Norwegian artist Matilde Westavik Gaustad's three tapestries—woven in varying tones of red and adorned with the form of a cross—both obscure and reveal a view of the exhibition space. The softness of the woven cotton and wool meets the sharpness of the rectangular shapes, combining the intimate and the civic in an indecisive form somewhere between banner and tapestry. Notions of passion and viscosity, even the grotesque, are at play here, as also seen in the artist's video work elsewhere in the room. This exploration continues in the contradictory qualities of Norwegian sculptor Kaare Ruud's works: a series of untitled chairs exploring the design of objects through a process involving a kind of sabotage. Wavering between utilitarianism and uselessness, the recognisable working-class monoblock form, made of thermoplastic, is stitched together with cable ties—the industrial debris uncannily crossing the boundary that separates the intimacy of the interior from the exterior.

A new large-scale painting by French painter and sculptor Hanna Rochereau, continuing the artist's formal analysis of interior motifs through the themes of repetition, desire and fetishism—or rather, what is left of them. Often painting from photographic images found or taken by the artist herself, Rochereau's palette of muted, even subdued tones heightens the sense of loss and distance, recalling early analytical Cubist hues, against the whitewashed

SIC

Vanha Helsingintie 24
00700 Helsinki
www.sicspace.net
info@sicspace.net

gallery wall. An unsettling dimension to her painting is present, suggesting an indeterminate sense that something is awry. The notion of luxury goods, the world of retail and contemporary lifestyle signifiers also informs Fabienne Audéoud's work, with the artist's sculptural series of variegated weapons—from grenades to 19th century revolvers seen in westerns, yet fragile and small in scale—reflected in a collection of perfume bottles installed on a vanity desk.

The charismatic and the ghostly alternate in five photographic works by Italian artist Emanuele Marcuccio, created in collaboration with photographer Marc Asekhome. They present us with a carefully constructed mise-en-scène of props and models, reminiscent of commercial photo shoots in the entrepreneurial city. Finally, across the room from the photographic series, three works on paper by Finnish visual artist Erkki Pirtola offer a contrasting view of image production in everyday life, highlighting its more fragile yet intense aspects. These works attentively observe everyday forms and people, rendering them eternal on paper.

Bringing Walter Benjamin's ruminations into the contemporary, Italian philosopher Paolo Virno coined the term 'familiar horror' in 2005. Discussing the Freudian notions of the 'heimlich' (the 'homely') and the 'unheimlich' (the 'unhomely', or the uncanny), Virno elaborates on these intertwined concepts in the context of the postmodern metropolis. He describes a 21st-century cityscape accelerated into new magnifications of modernistic disorientation. While the term 'heimlich' refers to the intimacy of the familiar, according to Freud, it is within this intimacy that the most powerful sense of terror can emerge. Virno takes this notion further, exploring the concept of 'homeliness' within postindustrial modes of production. The artworks in the exhibition allow us to reflect on Virno's logical conclusion on the current political upheaval: "We are now dealing with 'blood and soil in plastic'". Against this backdrop, 'Nordic Noir' presents a set of artworks that reflects on the profoundly changing political realities in relation to our most intimate and domestic environments.

The exhibition explores contradictory qualities in the formal aspects of the artworks: between high and low, soft and hard, inscrutable and intelligible, aesthetic and utilitarian, while questioning notions of contemporary markers of lived life, domesticity, and bourgeois aspirational economies. By interrogating forms of the uncanny and the habitual, the exhibition merges the thematic framework of noir fiction with crafted objects, raising questions about the unobserved nature of domesticity, notions of 'bad taste', and the psychopathology of the human condition. Mounted in an abandoned railway station—a place of movement, transition and change—designed by Finnish architect Thure Hellström in the 1930s, it also evokes the seemingly distant past of the time of its architectural creation, when Finland was experiencing a resurgence of right-wing nationalist movements and the impending moment of the Second World War. The staging of 'Nordic Noir' in the neoclassical boxes of the building itself bridge the past and the present, the exhibition in the gallery echoes the current political situation and vast socio-political upheavals of contemporary life in a state of seeming historical repetition, proposing a double entente of anxieties in the home and in the wider cultural environment that envelops us.

Curated by Sini Rinne-Kanto

The exhibition is supported by Saastamoinen Foundation, Oskar Öflund Foundation, Nordic Culture Point, and the Finnish-Norwegian Cultural Foundation. Erkki Pirtola's contribution to the exhibition has been realised in collaboration with Galleria Halmetoja and the Erkki Pirtola Estate.

SIC

Vanha Helsingintie 24
00700 Helsinki
www.sicspace.net
info@sicspace.net