

Quistrebert Brothers, Sirja-Liisa Eelma

Zoom

17.10.2025 – 17.01.2026

Jorge Luis Borges wrote that every writer creates their own predecessors by connecting figures scattered through history into a new continuity, enabling them to be understood differently than before. The same applies to artists as they discover not only predecessors from the past but also contemporaries who share their ways of thinking. Something similar happened when Sirja-Liisa Eelma came across the exhibition catalogue of Florian and Michael Quistrebert. The recognition of creative parallels led to this joint exhibition, whose title may allude, among other things, to a working method, in the sense of framing (cropping) an image or a means of communication. Both artists present new works that continue earlier lines in their oeuvre, establishing a dialogue between similarities without amplifying or deliberately aligning them. A key role here is played by the semantic potential of geometric structures – their capacity to reflect on the history and present of their artistic medium while also, like a traditional ornament, encoding essential processes through minimal means. Equally engaging is the combinatorial method that brings together a limited number of elements in various arrangements, avoiding visual overproduction and resisting today's flood of information, while introducing a meditative and hypnotic dimension to the art experience. In this way, the artists have created open forms that are subject to many different interpretations.

Continuing her exploration of painting as a mirror, Eelma engages with the paradox that “a mirror is not an image, yet the image lies upon its surface”. The central motif of her paintings may be a mirror, a window, or a painting within a painting – a suggestion of another possible image, a potential elegantly and deliberately left open by the artist. It is not a single image, and yet it encompasses all the images that might one day appear there. The subtle variation of colour tones produces a curious optical illusion: the juxtaposition of differently hued surfaces creates a mirror-like glow. As architectural elements, the frames mirror the contours of the painted image, recalling hymn boards or Gothic tabernacles and transforming Eelma's display into a cohesive installation. The Quistreberts' four-part work invites reflection on the spatial illusions of portrait painting and op art; the mystical dimensions of light and shadow, colour and geometry; and the symbolism of the number four – from the tricksterish card soldier to the blessed evangelist, and from cosmology and alchemy to anthroposophy. The exhibition also includes a work in dialogue with soundscapes and early 20th-century synaesthetic painting experiences. Together with Eelma's installation, these works empower the painting medium and the idea of the two-dimensional image more broadly, achieving a more immersive understanding of space.

Elnara Taidre

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Over the past two decades, the **Quistrebert Brothers** (Florian (b. 1982) and Michael Quistrebert (b. 1976)) have redefined abstract painting using a wide range of techniques – from raw oil paint, industrial car paint and modeling paste to epoxy. The French artist duo's deliberately decorative work explores the relationship between light, space, and architecture, creating an illusion of brightness and depth. Working with shadows and diffusions, they create effects of interruption and continuity, which the viewer recreates in their own way, based on the persistence of the retina; geometric forms often dissolve in the excitement of chemical instability. Both Florian and Michael Quistrebert graduated from the Ecole des Beaux Arts Nantes and have participated in exhibitions since 2006. The Quistrebert Brothers' works has been exhibited in numerous solo and group exhibitions in France, the Netherlands, and elsewhere. They have won and been nominated for several awards, including the Prix Marcel Duchamp in 2014.

Sirja-Liisa Eelma (b. 1973) is an Estonian painter whose minimalist conceptual work focuses on themes of emptiness, silence, and the relationship between the visible and the invisible. Her work is characterized by meditateness and gentleness, creating a space for the viewer to pause and reflect. Eelma is fascinated by spatial poetics, and her paintings and installations are often site-specific, built on the principle of apparent repetition of images and the play of shadows and motifs. Sirja-Liisa Eelma graduated from the Estonian Academy of Arts with a degree in painting (1996). In recent years, she has had solo exhibitions at the KUMU Art Museum (2024), Tartu Art House (2023), and Tallinn Art Hall Gallery (2021). She has also participated in group exhibitions at the Lasnamäe Pavilion of Tallinn Art Hall (XX and XXIII Spring Exhibitions of the Estonian Artists Association (2020, 2023)) and Zuzeum in Latvia (2022). Since 2021, Eelma has been a visiting lecturer at the painting department of the Estonian Academy of Arts, and since 2018, she has been writing an autoethnographic research paper at the EKA Doctoral School entitled "The Paradox of Emptiness. Painting Practice, from (Exhibition) Space to Changing the Surrounding Environment."

List of works clockwise

Sirja-Liisa Eelma, *Mirror. On the Desire to See. XI*, oil on canvas, 55×50 cm, 2025

Sirja-Liisa Eelma, *Mirror. On the Desire to See. I*, oil on canvas, 55×50cm, 2025

Sirja-Liisa Eelma, *Mirror. On the Desire to See. V*, oil on canvas, 55×50 cm, 2025

Quistrebert Brothers, *Firescape*, sprayed ink on burlap, 200×300 cm, 2020

Sirja-Liisa Eelma. *Mirror. On the Desire to See. XV* (Framed), oil on canvas, mdf, 90×50 cm (with frame 201×109 cm), 2025

Sirja-Liisa Eelma. *Mirror. On the Desire to See. VII* (Framed), oil on canvas, mdf, 55×50 cm (with frame 201×109 cm), 2025

Sirja-Liisa Eelma. *Mirror. On the Desire to See. IX–X* (Framed together), oil on canvas, mdf, 90×50 cm (with frame 157×109 cm)

Sirja-Liisa Eelma. *Mirror. On the Desire to See. XVII* (Framed), oil on canvas, mdf, 90x100 cm (with frame 157x109cm)

Quistrebert Brothers, *Valet 1*, acrylic on canvas, 100×60 + 30×30 cm, 2025

Quistrebert Brothers, *Valet 2*, acrylic on canvas, 100×60 + 30×30 cm, 2025

Quistrebert Brothers, *Valet 3*, acrylic on canvas, 100×60 + 30×30 cm, 2025

Quistrebert Brothers, *Valet 4*, acrylic on canvas, 100×60 + 30×30 cm, 2025