

Marianna Uutinen's practice is grounded in process-based abstraction. Painting is approached as a material event rather than an image. Working primarily with acrylic, she pours and spreads paint in thin layers, often onto plastic, allowing it to dry into flexible skins that can be peeled, dragged, folded, and mounted. The result is surprising, it's neither painting nor sculpture alone; it moves off the stretcher and into space, insisting on surface as something active, physical, and transgressively corporal.

The title of her newest exhibition, *Who's Afraid of Red Stains and Yellow Snow?*, is a deliberately "contaminated" echo of Barnett Newman's *Who's Afraid of Red, Yellow and Blue* (1966–70): a canonical statement about the autonomy of painting. These Newman paintings have been attacked by viewers with knives twice, almost destroying the paintings and peeling them away from the stretcher bars into the lived space of viewers. Marianna Uutinen's attacks on surface show us what's hidden, a whiff of what we would otherwise never smell.

The phrase "Red Stains" also acknowledges Mike Kelley as a point of reference for Uutinen. Directly so, since she lives with a Kelley edition above her bed. It nods directly to the artists' *Red Stain*' (1986), where abstraction becomes a test of projection and unease rather than pure form, aligning with Kelley's broader preoccupation with the psychic charge of materials, the uneasy traffic between high form and compromised content. Finally, "Yellow Snow" functions as a dry, pointed adjustment of modernist purity: a reminder that "surface" is never innocent, and that what appears pristine can be altered – chemically, culturally, psychologically – often by contact alone.

In the big flesh-pink work titled *'Tonic*, the color and plasticity leave the frame and envelop the viewer. Huge folds of flesh cover one another, overtake each other like waves. The color of wilting flowers so infatuating, it's nearly sickening. It sucks you into its folds. The paintings' sexuality bursts into life, their materiality is human. A poem of cracking, undulating skin.

Uutinen's practice is built on the conviction that everything eventually erupts to the surface, the undercurrents of meaning laid bare. Her work is connected to the gestural, the unconscious. The painting's surface liberates the mind, it's where the ego goes to die. This approach, which may initially read as slick, fashionable, even "too much," is precisely the point. In a present shaped by smoothness and surveillance, where the boundaries between artificial and real blur, and experience is increasingly "performed" through images, Uutinen's work breaks open what's been closed off. The fold is central to this vocabulary: it holds oppositions in suspension without resolving them. Beauty and discomfort, the desirable and repulsive, real and fictive.

The work shown isn't straight-forward. Like David Wojnarowicz, one of her influences, explores intimacy in the arms of strangers among ruins, Uutinen uncovers vulnerability behind polished surfaces. The colors, all the layers used to express the unspeakable, don't hide but amplify it. Her works are erotic but they also have darker, carnal quality. She frightens and arouses simultaneously. The painting's language is subversive; beautiful and slick at first, the delayed appearance of their nature is surprising.

The work *Float*, shown in the nordic pavilion of the 1997 Biennale, invokes the shedded skin of some kind of being. The muddy folds and creases give no indication of its characteristics. Without gender and author, it stands by itself, it becomes a trace of something else entirely. Going to the studio every day to rip something out of the paintings, Uutinen's works speak of something intensely personal, yet not of herself. The story told instead is one of wounds and tares, of its own landscape, the humanity contained within the paintings.

This exhibition brings together works from the 1990s, when Uutinen developed the draped, folded language central to her oeuvre, and shows it side by side with recent paintings. Reinforcing the work's relevance today, this pairing also speaks of dedication. To see a language, a way of expression, that speaks to us so clearly, extended through time. We are confronted with the continuation of an unconscious vocabulary that's been consistently transgressive yet comforting.

Artists are not static, and neither is history: age, duration, and the long view matter, especially when a body of work anticipates a material language that's so important across art and fashion today.

The 1990s, in particular, have become newly influential today: a decade that continues to shape contemporary approaches to the body, representation, critique, and identity after the foundational feminist interventions of the 1980s. Uutinen can be read alongside these post-feminist reconfigurations that occurred in the 1990s and continue till today, not by adopting a fixed, gendered positionality, but by insisting on a more ambivalent field where subject and object, self and image, continually exchange roles, where gender and identity disappear in the painting's folds and creases. Uutinen's body of work is ready to be re-contextualized for a younger generation of artists and viewers. Hua International is honored to be the stage on which this happens.

Text: Eric Mathias Wesemann