NO REST BENEATH THE ROSE

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Peter Köhler

May 22–June 28, 2026

Helsinki Contemporary is pleased to present Swedish artist **Peter Köhler**'s first solo exhibition in Finland. *No Rest Beneath the Rose* showcases Köhler's skilful ink and acrylic drawings, which draw inspiration from myth and fantasy. Köhler has exhibited widely in Sweden, for example, at Moderna Museet, Teckningsmuseet, and Galleri Magnus Karlsson, and his works are held in both private and public collections in Sweden, Europe and the US.

Köhler describes his work as existing at the intersection of contemporary sociology, folklore, and magical thinking. Through his distinctive visual language, he explores how archetypal beliefs and ancient myths persist in the present day. His works challenge our perceptions of rational contemporary culture and the linear nature of time.

Although Köhler's works are rich in meticulous linework and detail, they are almost always created without preliminary sketches. The artist has described feeling as though he works almost like a medium: figures, creatures, and objects emerge on white paper as internal images that appear rapidly. While the themes and characters vary, Köhler's entire body of work can be understood as a single, continuous, flowing piece spanning many years. This fluidity of creation is particularly evident in his long accordion books, which are also included in this exhibition.

The exhibition's title, *No Rest Beneath the Rose*, refers to an old Scandinavian belief that the thorns of a rosebush keep the dead in their graves, separated from the world of the living. The rose also has a long history in Western culture as a symbol of secrecy. The Latin expression *sub rosa*, "under the rose," denotes confidentiality and a pledge of silence. During the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, roses were often carved into the ceilings of meeting rooms or placed above confessionals to remind people that whatever was said within those walls would remain private.

A rose in full bloom can also symbolize both the beauty of life and its transience. In Köhler's art, opposing forces—life and death, darkness and light—coexist side by side. With their kaleidoscopic quality, the works evoke a unique sense of time and place: the present moment and the past, as well as the human world and a magical underworld, are in constant motion and interaction.