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MUU KIRJOITTA – MUU WRITES

Finland is a nation of art lovers, with visual art events and venues attracting some 4,6 million visitors annually. Visual art is available for enjoyment the year round in all sorts of places, from established institutions to small galleries and pop-up exhibitions. New exciting venues are being set up all the time. Yet the number of discriminating texts about art is dwindling. This deplorable lack has also been noted at Artists' Association MUU, the second largest organisation representing professional artists in Finland.

MUU Writes is a group composed of artists who share an interest in writing. It has been meeting for a couple of years already to discuss the role and potential of writing in contemporary art. Now the group has set themselves the task of publishing an essay on every exhibition scheduled in MUU's program autumn 2018, to be released both online and in the gallery. The project seeks to offer a creative alternative to art criticism, with artists writing about the work of a colleague.

TAIJA GOLDBLATT – PLACES AND TRACES

Text: John Gayer

Taija Goldblatt's illustrious new black and white video HIDDEN offers viewers a stream of pictures, the interplay of which is eye-catching and engrossing. Assembled out of multiple kinds of superimposed images – drawing, animation and webcam footage all have a role here – the work not only presents a rich and constantly shifting panorama of complex visual information, but also generates curiosity that invites ongoing inspection. In fact, watching the work unfold is not a passive affair. It presents a number of invigorating challenges.

The beginning of the video depicts a crisp, thin and slightly jagged white line that appears to steadily scratch its way up and over a scene of a snow-covered roadway. As it progresses, that background vanishes into a sea of darkness before another view of roadways emerges. That single line is soon joined by others and a random network of lines begins to form.

HIDDEN provides numerous fuzzy glimpses of edge lands, those transitional zones that are sliced up by roads and dotted by incongruous forms of architecture that lie just outside urban areas. It also throws up scenes of beaches, silhouetted trees, an array of solar panels, a container harbour and tire tracked yards. These views are also conditioned by the likes of fog, the glare of lamps, fading light and a pattern of tv scan lines. At one point, an invisible hand uses an invisible stump of charcoal to blacken much of what can be seen, and at another, a screen of barely visible hatch marks hovers over several scenes.

Goldblatt's layering of elements forces viewers to contend with the implied sense of depth her method has created. In some respects, the distribution of images recalls a theatrical performance where the action is happening at the front, back and middle of the stage all at the same time. Peering at and through these strata raises the question of what to zero in on. The clarity of the images, which varies greatly, and their transient nature complicates the observing process. Such qualities make the work all the more intriguing and prompt repeated viewing to get a better sense of the work's pictorial content. what is there.

Now and then, the flow of images is interrupted by a close-up view of hands packing feathers onto an anonymous person's head. The figure's evocative and unusual appearance suggests frailty and an intense need to avoid detection. Though pinpointing why is difficult, there is something very compelling about the feeling in the eyes that look out from this cloud of plumage and the way in which the structure of the feathers and their arrangement visually and conceptually correspond to the nature of the elements portrayed in the work. These characteristics call up the beginning of the video, especially that line that scratches its way across the first images. It introduces the metaphor of scratching of the surface, which proposes the notion of limitations. HIDDEN not only confirms there is so much we cannot see or know, but also highlights the enticingly mysterious nature of that zone.

Taija Goldblatt: Hidden

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