

G A L E R I E F O R S B L O M

Hannu Väisänen: Schillmark's Dream

Galerie Forsblom, 14.5.–6.6.2021

For the past three years, Hannu Väisänen has been working on a series of paintings based on the oeuvre of Nils Schillmark (1745–1804). According to the artist, he has subconsciously been working on this series for over 50 years, ever since he saw *The Strawberry Girl* at the Ateneum Art Museum at the age of eleven, an experience he describes as having made an indelible impression on him. Later, while studying at the Finnish Academy of Fine Arts, then located in the Ateneum building, Väisänen often visited the museum and always stopped to admire Schillmark's paintings.

Nils Schillmark is regarded as Finland's very first professional painter. Väisänen became fascinated with him for many reasons. For one, his work offers the earliest fully evolved sample of Finnish art, at a time when Finland was still under Swedish rule. His oeuvre also bears witness to the arrival of international influences in Nordic art in the late 18th century. History, especially art history, is an important source of inspiration for Väisänen, and this Schillmark-themed exhibition is not the first occasion the artist has created an entire exhibition around art's debt to history.

Väisänen's new show at Galerie Forsblom coincides with his solo exhibition at the Ateneum Art Museum, which features a selection of works also inspired by Schillmark. The content of the Ateneum exhibition is entirely different from that of the Forsblom show, which additionally offers a foretaste of Väisänen's future work.

Väisänen is a multi-talent who works across many artistic disciplines: he is a visual artist, writer, set designer, costume designer, director, and illustrator. His work is found in major Finnish public collections, and he has created public works for clients including the Finnish National Opera, Kontula Church, and Oulu Cathedral. He is the winner of the 2007 State Prize for Visual Art and the Finlandia Prize for literature as well as the State Prize for Literature in 2015. He is based in the South of France.