

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

## **Leena Luostarinen**

Galerie Forsblom 14.1.–6.2.2022

Leena Luostarinen (1949–2013) undoubtedly ranks among Finland's most acclaimed contemporary artists. She was a pioneering postmodernist whose big cats, sphinxes, Balinese shadow puppets and lotus flowers have earned an iconic place in the Finnish contemporary art canon. She made her artistic breakthrough in the eighties with her powerful neo-expressionistic paintings, leading a wave of women artists who made a lasting mark on the Finnish art scene.

Luostarinen was an exquisite painter and vivid colorist. Her pure, intense palette invokes deep torrents of emotion, offering a glimpse into the artist's subconscious world. Her brushwork exudes a spirit of romanticism, with space and atmosphere being the focal elements in her compositions. Her choice of subject matter reveals her interest in Asian and Mediterranean cultures, and her rich allusions span a vast territory both geographically and historically.

Luostarinen's debut in 1973 coincided with a moment in Finnish art history when young artists consciously rebelled against old traditions, but it was not until the eighties that Finnish art truly shed its old skin by adopting new international influences. Expressionism was the byword of the eighties, an era when artists sought to restore sensuality and materiality to Finnish art. Although Luostarinen undeniably spearheaded this movement, many of her paintings come closer to romanticism than expressionism. Her mythical motifs and symbols allude to earlier artists such as the French Romantic painter Eugene Delacroix.

Leena Luostarinen won numerous awards and accolades during her career, including the 1995 Pro Finlandia medal. She was decorated with the title of First Class Knight of the White Rose of Finland in 2007. Her work is found in all major Finnish public collections.