

GALERIE FORSBLOM

Toni R. Toivonen: Death is a Painting

Galerie Forsblom, August 19–September 18, 2022

The chemical process brought about by the decomposition of animals in the artworks of Toni R. Toivonen (b. 1987) creates forms with the discernible features of a horse. The creation of the form is influenced by happenstance as well as by the physique of animals placed on brass. The process is based on the decomposition of matter but it records traces of the disintegration process, thereby creating a continuum for life. Art has taken Toivonen to the edge of moments in which birth and death literally co-exist. Such as when the artist immortalized fate in an artwork with a mare and foal still connected by the umbilical cord. Thus, Toivonen not only takes the history of art to the extreme of its iconic thematic but also poses the question: can death be beautiful?

Through his latest works, Toivonen has delved even deeper into examining the concepts of life and death. Despite the naturalness of the subject, the artist has sometimes found himself in some macabre situations. Such as last Christmas, which Toivonen spent filling the abdominal cavity of a horse with 500 kilograms of molding material. The abstract form extracted from the interior of the horse provided the mold for Toivonen's latest bronze sculpture. A mold that the animal itself spent 30 years building. In this piece, Toivonen has transformed empty space into a physical presence in a certain kind of inverted state that is arresting as a consequence of its sublime sculpting material and that awakes a quiet respect for both life and that particular animal.

In Toivonen's latest works the animal is harder to discern and identify because during the lengthier process the animal has already merged into its environment. Only the abstract idea of the animal remains, so in a sense the animal has been transformed into a painting. The artworks display and reflect how we are alive, and ultimately therefore tell us more about life than death. Toivonen's photographs are also presented at the exhibition. Linking a photograph with three-dimensional artwork has been an element in Toivonen's work from the very start of his career. The photographs echo the same process, providing another perspective of the same work. They capture the moments not imprinted on the brass but that nevertheless have intrinsic artistic value.

Toni R. Toivonen graduated from the Academy of Fine Arts in Helsinki in 2016. He won The Art of Basware global competition in 2014. He has exhibited in prominent venues including London, New York and Berlin. His work is found in collections such as the Museum of Contemporary Art in Krakow MOCAK, the Kiasma Museum of Contemporary Art, the Saastamoinen Foundation, the Sara Hildén Museum of Art, Vantaa Art Museum, the Wihuri Foundation, the Nelimarkka Foundation, and the Handelsbanken Collection in Sweden.

The animals used in the artist's works died of natural causes.

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

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