

GALERIE FORSBLOM

Riiko Sakkinen: Cheeseburger Nostrum Cotidianum

Feat. Salon de Peinture Grand-Popo, Nour Hourani and Arthur King Factory

Special Guest Star: Samuil Angelov

Galerie Forsblom, 23.9–23.10.2022

Food is a frequent subject in Riiko Sakkinen's art, but the new exhibition is his first devoted wholly to alimentary themes. Sakkinen tackles this topic in his distinctive parodic style, examining various eating-related issues through a lens of incisive social critique. The connecting ketchup-colored thread is the exuberant way Sakkinen simultaneously parades a multitude of beliefs, ideologies and values related to food, from consumerist capitalism and its multinational conglomerates to food's role in various religions and rituals – not to forget the famine crisis, the West's dieting obsession, and various ethical perspectives on food – the list is virtually endless. Sakkinen weaves together this medley of perspectives into a seamless pastiche, consciously ignoring the conventional way a gallery exhibition should be presented. It features a mix of both old and new art, plus a selection of pieces created in collaboration with others.

As befits the theme, the exhibition is itself fraught with contradictions, for instance in how it concurrently addresses such extremes as famine and fine dining – as if it were natural to speak of the two in the same sentence. Sakkinen does so effortlessly, and in a very concrete way – there is even a collection station in the gallery space where visitors can donate canned and dried food. In return they will receive a can of pea soup signed by Sakkinen. After the exhibition, the donated food will be distributed in Ukraine by a charity. Swinging to the other extreme – fine dining – Sakkinen invites visitors to partake in art tastings alongside wine tastings, with sommelier Samuil Angelov recommending wines to be enjoyed while viewing selected works of art, transforming the viewing of art into a multisensory experience with more than just a visual component.

Also featured is a selection of pieces by the Salon de Peinture Grand-Popo, a venture founded in Benin, West Africa in 2018, first as Sakkinen's assistant team, then a commercial portrait business and finally an artist collective. For this exhibition, sign-painter Louis Houenoude executed a series of food-themed paintings conceived by Sakkinen. The images depict foods that Houenoude himself has never tasted but are commonplace in the Western world, such as pizza, sushi, ice cream and hamburgers. Houenoude painted the foods based solely on photographs provided by Sakkinen, without any personal experience of their flavor or texture.

The show also includes a piece by Nour Hourani, who took part in a workshop for young refugees led by Sakkinen in Aleppo in 2011. The workshop dealt with various lists and their meanings and history. Hourani, a Palestinian refugee, wrote a list of foods eaten by poor people in Syria. The foods listed by Hourani might seem quite fashionable from a western perspective, but Hourani looked upon

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them as embarrassing poor folk food.

The show is rounded out with a selection of ceramics made in Talavera de la Reina near Sakkinen's home village in Spain. The town is famous for its ceramic heritage. A local artisan studio, Arthur King Factory, crafted the hand-painted ceramic donuts and decorated them with Sakkinen's texts.

Riiko Sakkinen (b.1976) graduated from the Fine Arts Academy of Finland in 2002, after which he relocated to Spain, where he is currently based. He has exhibited extensively both in Finland and internationally. His work is found in numerous major collections including New York's Museum of Modern Art, Helsinki's Museum of Contemporary Art Kiasma, Helsinki Art Museum HAM and the Gösta Serlachius Fine Arts Foundation.