

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

Heikki Marila: *Paintings*

Galerie Forsblom, 24 November 2023–7 January 2024

Leading Finnish contemporary artist Heikki Marila presents a new exhibition themed around the trope of flowers. Rich in allusions to art history, the show is startling in its thematic monumentality. Marila painted his first floral compositions back in 2009, drawing inspiration from the opulent idiom of the 17th century Dutch still life genre. Marila has recently continued his explorations of the floral theme, which he finds banal in certain respects – yet this is precisely what makes it so intriguing.

Marila's recent renditions of the floral theme have acquired new layers of meaning. In his new works, flowers have become emphatically corporeal interpretations of aesthetic form and pictorial truth. There is tangible tension between their accentuated aestheticism and the artist's aggressive technique, which has him literally throwing the paint at the canvas – bombing it, if you will. The paint splatters on the canvas in fragmented clots, breaking up both the pictorial surface and the subject into shattered pieces. Marila throws himself into the physical act of painting. For him, physical gesture and the imprint on the canvas are indissolubly merged. It would not be an overstatement to say that the act is sometimes more significant than the subject.

The second series of works in the exhibition consists of translucent, watercolor-like compositions in which Marila employs line as a narrative device. By adding shape-framing contours, line engages in dialogue with the painted picture planes. Moving beyond mimetic representation, the paintings in this series subtly whisper rather than directly state what is being portrayed. Progressive abstractification is part of Marila's process. Flowers are still present, conveying layers of history that are manifest both as subtle details and abstracted variations.

Heikki Marila (b. 1966) has exhibited widely across Finland, the Nordic countries and Europe. He is represented in numerous major collections, such as the Sara Hildén Art Museum, the Wäinö Aaltonen Museum of Art, HAM Helsinki Art Museum, the Finnish National Gallery, the Jenny and Antti Wihuri Foundation, and the US-based TIA Collection.

A catalog presenting Marila's oeuvre will be published in conjunction with the exhibition.