

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

Kerttu Saali: Lightbeams and a Blizzard

Galerie Forsblom, February 21–March 23, 2025

Kerttu Saali has adopted a darker palette and more intense style of expression in her latest paintings. Her characteristic curvilinear shapes and twisting lines stretch across the canvas, alternately converging and diverging to form abstract compositions, or sites, as the artist describes them. Her burgeoning shapes spill outside the canvas, taking on a three-dimensional, sculptural form as they merge with the picture frame, creating contrasts between the solidity of the wood and the ethereal, painterly elements. Saali's paintings suggest nature's cycles and growth processes, as if they were mimicking nature rather than just representing it. Their sensual quality invites the viewer to experience them holistically. The sense of sight awakens the other senses, invoking sounds, smells, and tactile experiences in the viewer's imagination.

Chlorophyll-scented, saturated greens engage in dialogue with translucent blues and whites, telling two sides of the same story. Saali chooses her colors intuitively, letting the composition unfold spontaneously as she strives to capture a particular feeling or mood that the colors awaken in her. She begins with mid-tones and steadily progresses in two directions, adding layers of darker and lighter tones, simultaneously adding brightness and moving deeper into shadow.

Even Saali's white paintings are never entirely monochromatic; the viewer's eye is drawn to subtle tonal variations that evoke wintry landscapes and northern nature, resonating with subconscious memories of Finnish art history. Saali in fact describes the imprints on the canvas as "memory traces". When she paints, she never analyzes what the traces mean: her creative expression emanates from a total sense of freedom, drawing inspiration from everything the artist has seen and experienced.

Kerttu Saali (b. 1994) graduated from the Academy of Fine Arts in 2023. She has exhibited in numerous group shows in Finland and internationally, and her work is held in many private and public collections, including those of the Vantaa Art Museum, the HUS Art Collection, the City of Tampere and Saastamoinen Foundation. The artist lives and works in Helsinki.