

SCHWARZ CONTEMPORARY

Press Release - January 2015

JANNE RÄISÄNEN

We are very pleased to announce *JaNoir - TechNoir*, the first solo show by Berlin based Finnish artist JANNE RÄISÄNEN at SCHWARZ CONTEMPORARY.

„Actually there are no mistakes, there can be no mistakes; not in contemporary art.“
(Janne Räisänen)

The exhibition title is typical for the works of Finnish painter Janne Räisänen (born 1971): *JaNoir - TechNoir* opens up numerous associations and eludes any final interpretations. First of all, there are the wordplays: ‚JaNoir‘ sounds like ‚Januar‘, Noir=black=schwarz (like the gallery) ‚Ja‘ might also stand for ‚Janne‘, ‚TechNo‘ for the fact that the techno and club scene plays a role for Räisänen – as for so many in Berlin. And these are just a few of the ideas this title can trigger; every visitor will have ideas of her or his own. Referring to his works, Räisänen says that often he doesn’t know their ‚meaning‘ and is happy when beholders see things that he had not even thought of. “That is perfect”, he comments.

Janne Räisänen’s work titles, in Finnish, English, or German, don’t explain anything either, but open up a field of associations. At most, they name pictorial elements that in their combination remain quite surreal and are far from unambiguous. The titles offer a peephole into the picture and allude to a narrative that even Räisänen is not always aware of. In *Mitalisti haaveilee autohatusta* (2014), the title tells us, a man adorned with medals dreams of a car in a hat. Three medals, hair or hat, and an unusually stretched-out car are indeed shown in the painting. But how do they form a whole?

And what kind of animal is this in front of *Pfifferlingszeit* (2014), and what is it doing? “Each title is more of an inside joke. And a play with words”, says the artist. In his essay in the catalogue recently published by Salon Dahlmann, Mika Hannula calls the hinted-at narratives in Räisänen’s paintings “small-big stories”. This neologism of something small-big suits his works well – big stories in a small form, or vice versa. These works derive their charge from contrasts, such as the contrast between emptiness and density, between depiction and free forms, between bright contrasts and monochromatic colour compositions.

Räisänen starts with sketching on the raw canvas – unprimed and even without a stretcher, roughly cut and tacked directly to the wall. This is actually how he would prefer to present the canvases in exhibitions in order not to lose any of the original power, and not to enclose them in a frame. In his everyday work routine, he always starts by drawing before turning to the canvases. He works directly on

the canvas with very thin oil paints as well as ink, drawing very carefully with paint. "Colour must at first be very sensitive", he says. Only later, when the colours become denser, is the canvas primed with transparent glue to prevent the oil from penetrating it too deeply. In the course of working on a painting, this glue may well be used as an additional material.

The work on the paintings always begins without any figuration. Only after a while do figures or objects emerge from the abstract compositions, which is often surprising for the artist himself. In conversation about a blue dog in one painting, Räsänen is still quite surprised and wonders where it came from among all the colour fields. This interesting interplay between abstract and figurative painting is still evident in the finished works: gestural colour fields and an impasto application of 'pure' colour are next to clearly outlined animals and human figures, even if these are not represented in naturalistic scale or colours. (Mind you, 'finished' is a state that is particularly hard to describe or indeed to reach for Räsänen. He returns to his canvases over months, revises, changes, and discovers things. One might almost think it is liberating for him once the paintings go to an exhibition, because this provides a natural end, as it were, to a painting process that otherwise would be potentially endless.) Before he starts, Räsänen does not have a particular plan for his paintings in mind. He describes it as a struggle with the work, with the figures. We may imagine it as a happy struggle - an overabundant play with associations and sudden events that continues in the mind of the beholders when they extract their own interpretation of the paintings from the intimate stories and mysterious work titles.

Text: Clemens von Lucius

Translation: Wilhelm Werthern

Opening reception on Thursday, 22 January 2015, 6 to 8 pm.

The exhibition is on view until 7 March 2015.

For further information, please contact the gallery at mail@schwarz-contemporary.com