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Aki Turunen – Snowflake Oleander

20 November – 19 December 2026

We are delighted to announce Aki Turunen's second solo exhibition at SCHWARZ CONTEMPORARY. *Snowflake Oleander* presents 14 new works by the Finnish artist.

In the exhibition *Snowflake Oleander*, Islamic miniature painting and the beauty of its pictorial tradition are a source of endless interest to the painter Aki Turunen. While the ornamental details and compositions with the hierarchical perspective refer to history of art, Turunen equally employs his painter's knowledge that draws on the phenomenological tradition and experience of the world. This world is one of elegance and eclecticism.

In the cornucopia of Turunen's elements, snowflake patterns that are, in the Islamic tradition, symbols of sacred geometry and the philosophical appreciation of divine order in nature, evoke a sense of uniqueness and singularity. Blossoming trees and flowering plants are prominent symbols in Islamic art, representing the beauty, renewal and divine order of Paradise and the cosmic process of creation; the pomegranate, a repeated motif in the exhibition, is the fruit of paradisiac prosperity and eternal life. Besides plants, there are animals and natural phenomena whose richness lies both in their visual and mythological connotations. The dolphin and Pegasus are figures of messengers that echo not only Islamic culture but also the art of the Italian Renaissance, while the winged creature known as Al-Buraq ("lightning") receives the form of a supernatural, white steed, whereas the sun and the moon point to the alchemistic tradition with their masculine and feminine symbolism. *Rosa dei venti* (compass rose) shows the direction of the winds – of *Ponente* (westerly wind) and *Tramontana (*northerly wind). The ubiquitous ultramarine blue river is an important component of Turunen's coloured universes, the stream being not only a visual, compositional motif but also reminiscent of writing, where the meandering river meets the curved forms of calligraphy.

Compared to his previous series of paintings with their abundant fantastic details and bright colours, Turunen now pursues a new direction, perhaps a more serene one than before. While his paintings continue to be populated by mythological characters, animals and figures referencing art history and literature, the colours are now muted and subdued. Yellow, blue, orange, green and pink remain in Turunen's palette, but he has moved towards a more harmonious, even meditative scale. The paintings reveal that his working has also begun to orbit around questions related to space: how can an empty space gain an active value in a painting? Is there a possibility to create a void within a painting – or does everything in it amount to creating a coloured surface and an interplay of differences between the painted elements? There, tensions and intensities grow between the perceived emptiness and the space filled by creatures and other objects – so that everything can be taken as equal parts inside the spaces ruled by colour.

In the exhibition *Snowflake Oleander*, Aki Turunen presents 14 tempera paintings on wood panels. The panels were made of linden wood by an Italian workshop near the town of Vicenza, in the Veneto region. The employment of the wooden supports, usually used in sacral art and manufactured in specific formats as icon boards, is what literally forms the ground for these paintings. The tempera technique challenges the artist, as this kind of paint dries extremely quickly, leaving little or no time for corrections. Painting thus means taking a permanent risk. However, as Turunen describes it, the alacrity needed and the lack of sketching on the board has made the painting process even more rewarding than before, when associations and the free spirit provide the basis of the work. Turunen starts to paint without any preliminary drawings and lets the painting itself suggest unexpected solutions, leading in entirely new directions. While intuition has always played a role in his working process, at the present, even more than before, he enjoys the feeling of openness: the freedom of painting without any predetermined form.

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