

Nanna Hänninen - Now is Now

At first sight, Nanna Hänninen's series of pictures *Now is Now* at Galleria AMA, 7-30.8.2015, left the viewer faced with a strange stillness. It would have been easy enough to quietly walk out, if something had not insisted on being looked at more closely, and for considerably longer.

In her previous works Hänninen has combined photographs and paint using a re-photographing technique that emphasizes the distinction between reality and the image.

This time, the photographs take the viewer into the past and into flashbacks, into images already once lost. Her use of appropriation – working from borrowed images – can be seen as one of the characteristic features of contemporary art. The use of borrowed, or in this case found, images is a kind of recycling of existing material, but the choice is always the artist's own, and that choice now gives rise to a narrative, albeit a fragmentary one.

The faces that peer out from the pictures are strange, and yet somehow familiar. It was as if I had seen these particular faces before, but where? Do they illustrate a story I have heard, or am I just imagining it? In reality there is silence, but I can almost hear words being spoken. The face of Gismund in one photograph unerringly brings to mind the father of psychoanalysis, Sigmund Freud. And a minor Freudian slip: Sigmund becomes Gismund. The picture is like a dream that creates its own reality.

I can't think about Freud without the unconscious. The unconscious is revealed in dreams, in snatches of speech, and in the way the body speaks to us in a variety of symptoms.

The titles of the photographs, too, refer to psychoanalysis and to concepts derived from it, as with *The Unknown* and the facial portrait of a woman *La Hysterie*. How well *Arrogance as Defence* hits the mark, with its man's face half-cropped outside the picture area, gazing beyond it, mute and dignified.

The cropping of the photographs is initially confusing, but gradually turns out to reveal only the essentials. The reference to psychoanalysis tells us that the past lives on in us in the present. In the ways we see and act now.

Unsent Love Letters portrays the difficulty of putting things into words, the silence stretching on to minutes or hours; the emptiness. Words that may never reach their target. Just as in the photograph *In Search for/of /?/ the Other* a crumpled sheet of paper is a tangible depiction of the fundamental human need to be confronted, heard and seen. And how empty and shallow would we be without that Other.

Perhaps what the pictures convey most powerfully is an aura of speechlessness. With great precision the artist crops her pictures, manifesting the unspoken in an image, whether it be the repressed unconscious or perhaps even that part of the unconscious that never gets as far as words, but is channelled from the past to the present in bodily sensations, postures and tenuous mental impressions. The exhibition could be seen as a summary of the history of psychoanalysis.

In the photograph *The Beginning Little Hans* looks at us, in front of him a future that has already been determined by the past. Hänninen combines images to create fragmentary narratives, narratives that communicate the unconscious indirectly and in the gaps. This whole series of pictures is characterized by understatement and restraint, combined with an intense power of expression.

The works magically bring us to a halt, facing the present moment, as they stretch time in the manner that the artist has caught forever in her photograph *Every Moment is a Moment*, of a cup hanging in the air.

The artist trusts absolutely in the ability of the picture to speak to the viewer. Soundlessly.