

Interview of Jarno Vesala by Sebastian Boulter

On the occasion of Jarno Vesala's presentation of Video Installation 'Turn'

21.11 - 8.12.2018 at CHEAPART, Athens Greece

Curated by: Sebastian Boulter

Supported by the Finnish Institute at Athens

SB: Human being seems to be the basis in almost all of your works. As a sculptor and a video artist you often deal with situations when a person is by him/her self. With installations you create an environment for them and with lights and sounds a certain kind of mood.

Who are those people and what is their destiny?

JV: The starting point of my works is always a human being and his/her activities. Human being is always by him/her self. My works often have one character (a protagonist), and viewers are the "other" people. Characters in my works are people around me, familiar and unknown. I need a strong experience of a human to be able to handle it in my work. Many of my works include news of human destiny. Into these stories I might have added features of familiar people and environments. I try to create a strong scene in the work. I wish this to be completed by the viewer's own memories and experiences. Through these memories and experiences, the viewer builds his story for the characters of my works.

SB: The environments are often casual, but a bit frightening or pensive. What everyday life means to you?

JV: Casual elements are for example a light, a chair to sit on or food, to eat it. Everyday activities, such walking and sleeping, are done by both, the rich and the poor. I often use such everyday elements in the works, that touch most of the people on earth. For me the everyday life is repetitive, a recurrence of certain kinds of things. It can also be persistent and in a certain way safe.

I am interested in making casual and staged moments in my work. They can be about waiting for an elevator or watching a TV. When in such a kind of activity noting changes, it can become frightening. At such moment, life and death are built simultaneously. When a viewer looks at such a stalled activity, it creates an observation of everyday life. I want the viewer to question our day-to-day activities or just stop at a beautiful, casual moment.

With a help of these simple functions, it creates an important link between the viewer and the work. It creates a common scene or relationship between them. The everyday elements in my works can also be indicative. With these small or big elements, it can create an action or an event where the viewer participates the work consciously or unconsciously. When some kind of relationship has come into being between the character and the viewer, the everyday activity provided by the character becomes subordinate.

SB: Atmospheres created by lights and sounds often refer to dim and darkness or singing, lamentation and silence. How important in your works are the relationships between light and darkness, or the tone and silence?

JV: All of these are very important elements. I work mainly in low light and in the early stages of my work, it must also be completely silent. I start to build a work by adding elements slowly to the darkness and/or taking them away. My works consist of these small residual elements. The sounds and the lights create a rhythm to the work. They also give the work a duration and a cycle. I did not want to put talk on my work. I also try to leave out the relevance of language.

SB: In an unfinished book for young artists, Dürer cautions that too much exertion may lead one to "fall under the hand of melancholy".

Are your works about the melancholy or have you experienced melancholy because of over exertion?

JV: I always feel melancholy after intense work. After the completion of my work appears an leisurely and stagnation. Then I often wait horrified, what will happen this time. Yes, I have a lot of melancholy of waiting and longing in my works, but I often see there humour as well.

SB: Some sociologists argue that, motivated by capitalism and industrialism's degrading effects on human existence and perception, writers and artists of the 19th century turned more towards self-reflection. Therefore, the portrayal of everyday life was represented in their writings and art to a noticeably greater degree than in past works.

Is there self-reflection in your art in relation to everyday life?

JV: In contemporary art of the 21st century, self-reflection is not very sexy, but I do so. And I do also consider it very important and interesting but the most important thing is how to bring it up as an artist and what you want to tell to the viewer.