

Observing Eye

Sanna Kannisto

5.4–5.5.2019

Sanna Kannisto's solo exhibition, *Observing Eye*, consists of photographic and video works created over the last three years. Kannisto's trademark bird pictures are now accompanied by video works and photograph collages that shed new light on the background to her working process and, for example, on ecological issues.

Kannisto's artistic approach is typified by the method she uses to separate the animal from its original context by constructing the shooting situation in a field studio and thus setting up the subject of the shoot for inspection in an artificial environment. Observation is central to the process and to the final works: Kannisto actively studies the bird and the bird simultaneously looks back. This interaction is repeated in the exhibition space, where the works bring viewers unusually close to birds that we perhaps ordinarily only hear through a distant song.

The exhibition's installation consists of five videos, a 10-channel acoustic environment, and a large black-and-white landscape picture. Temporality, along with the birds' movements and vocalizations are central to the installation. The birds fly about, peck at things, settle for a moment, look straight at us, and occasionally leave the field of view. The videos are shown side by side, simultaneously, so that the sound and rhythm created by the birds' movements form a constantly shifting whole. The landscape photograph behind the videos has a distancing effect, on the one hand, and yet also leaves a nostalgic, melancholy or even fairytale-like impression.

The collage works combine and juxtapose images, texts and diagrams about research on nature, research stations, landscapes, bird and environmental conservation and threats to their existence. What emerges is Kannisto's constant labour, which underpins her works: she takes photographs to preserve her memories, gathers various kinds of imagery, press clippings and old negatives. Highlighting ecological questions, such as the dwindling numbers of birds and insects, in the form of artwork is important to her right now.

Sanna Kannisto's production belongs to the traditions of scientific illustration, of staged photographs and still lifes. The appeal of her art is rooted in how close to her subjects she works: her relationship with nature, the way she sees and experiences it, is crucial to her expression, and collaboration with researchers is an important part of the artistic process. Kannisto does not simply show beauty, but sees it as a force and a means of persuasion – if something can influence emotions, it can also change people's behaviour.

The works that comprise the *Observing Eye* exhibition are a result of work done in Finland, Italy, Germany and Baikal, Russia.

Sanna Kannisto (b. 1974, Hämeenlinna) received the Finnish State Prize for Photographic Art in 2015. Her works can be found in numerous major museum collections, including: the Centre Pompidou, Paris; Fotomuseum Winterthur, Switzerland; Statoil Art Collection, Norway; and Museum of Contemporary Art Kiasma, Helsinki. The current exhibition is her third solo show at Helsinki Contemporary. In spring 2019, Kannisto will have an extensive solo exhibition at the Centro de la Imagen photography centre in Lima, Peru, and in the summer she will take part in a group exhibition of Finnish contemporary art at the Busan Museum of Art in South Korea.

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