

Kiasma

A black and white close-up portrait of a man with dark, wavy hair and a full beard. He is looking slightly to the left of the camera with a thoughtful expression. The background is plain and light-colored.

37 · 2008 vol. 11

Watching and seeing

Dare to experience

Knowing art

Meet the Monsters

Editorial

I DON'T QUITE GET IT...

I don't quite get it, I think daily as I open my eyes and look around: it literally is a wonder-full world. Wonderful life produces amazing art – in both of them it's all about living and experiencing, not achieving and understanding. "I don't quite get it" is also a comment often heard around contemporary art. "The most important aspect of art is the personal experience", responds **Berndt Arell**, the Museum Director of Kiasma, in this magazine.

Kiasma celebrates the opening of its second decade by focusing on the basic themes of art and art museum. The museum's mission is to make experiencing art possible and effortless, thus making it easy for the viewer to create and open up to his or her own experience.

Even though all the ways to see, perceive and experience are equally correct, many hints of different approaches assist in getting more out of the experience. In the beginning of the year Kiasma introduces various viewpoints to image and – as we're dealing with contemporary art – the lack of image. The collections exhibition *Image and After*, the intimate photographs of **Nan Goldin** and the gargantuan paintings of **Julian Schnabel** all titillate the viewer to really see what is being looked at.

According to a professional art viewer a good art work gets you to react in several levels: it makes you ponder things and causes pure pleasure. Welcome to celebrating Kiasma to react, think, see, wonder, ponder, realize, feel, understand, enjoy – experience!

□ Milla Unkila

PEIRI YIRANEN / CMA



Watching and seeing

in the Image and After collection exhibition



Hanna Haaslahti: White Square, 2002

“What’s this picture of?”

A picture is often assessed in relation to visible reality. In myths telling of the birth of the visual arts, the creation of a picture is presented as a substitute for reality: on a wall, a girl draws the outline of the shadow of her sweetheart who is going to war; a sculptor makes himself a sculpture of a woman for want of a real woman; a painter fools birds into pecking at painted grapes, and so on. A picture has been set the task of recording and presenting reality as it appears to human beings, and of acting as a substitute for reality. This task, called ‘representation’, often remains in people’s minds when they look at pictures.

A photograph shows this relationship to reality perfectly: it shows the reality set before the lens just as it is, without human interference. A photograph says: “This has been”. The many trends of the art of the painter are actually always in some relation to photographic presentation: They can try to compete with photographs in the imitation of reality, or, conversely, they can completely deny any relationship with it. ▶



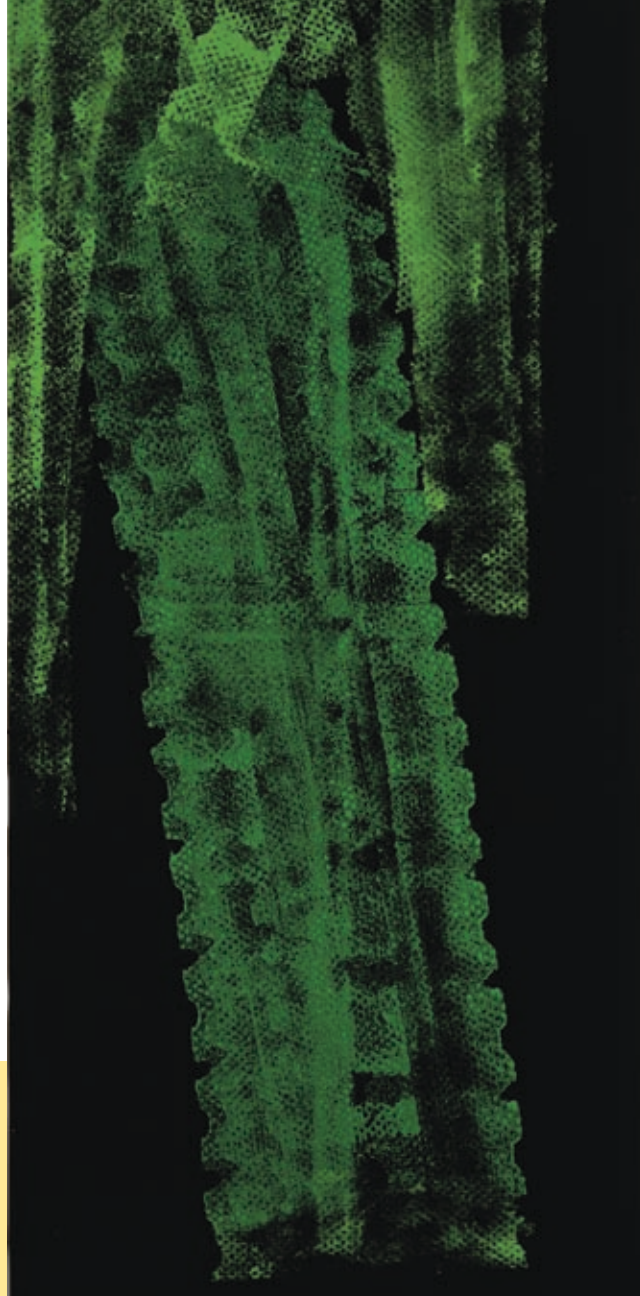
Mirror, mirror on the wall

Viewing contemporary art is never about merely observing art. The artistic experience is coloured by the mood, conceptions, and knowledge of the viewer. When going to a museum of contemporary art, visitors have preconceptions about the exhibitions and artworks they are about to see. Sometimes the visitors may drift into the museum a little unsure of what will happen – contemporary art is typically considered to be challenging for the viewer

FACING THE IMAGE

At first glance, we take in a work of art as a whole. We observe its shape, size, and colours. Examining its surface reveals various details, such as the material of which it consists and the subject matter. The eye actively seeks recognisable forms and possibly written words. We try and interpret whether the piece tells a story or whether the composition on the painting’s surface remains a group of non-figurative shapes.

Visual art is not sensed only through the eyes; the sensory experience is always more complex. Contemporary art often incorporates sound, and



Marianna Uutinen: Toy, 2005

sometimes even smells. The artwork may rouse the sense of touch, even if we don’t touch it. We don’t need to touch the rough surface of a painting or the smooth surface of a photograph to know how they feel. The information we receive through our senses is always related to our previous knowledge, feelings, and experiences.

We try to understand the language of a work of art by comparing the elements we can identify in it against the meanings we have previously learnt, and the expectations we have for it. In practice, our vision complements a flawed set of information: when perceiving depth on a two-dimensional surface, we are really only seeing a composition created on a canvas.

Whenever a work of art features human figures, the viewer is more likely to feel closer to it. **Julian Schnabel**, for

A PICTURE IS A PICTURE

Abstract art is the art of the rejecters. Abstract art is thought of as independent: an abstract picture neither presents nor represents anything; instead it turns attention on itself, the picture's own characteristics. Instead of the picture's subject matter, the viewer's attention is directed at the elements that make up the picture: forms, composition, colours, picture surfaces, materials, the painting as an object. In an abstract picture, a circle is no more the sun than the colour green depicts grass; they are merely a circle and the colour green.

Because an abstract picture is based on its own elements and materials, it is thought to be pure art, art in itself without any relationship to external reality. Similarly, the creation of the picture is the treatment of its surface, its division into parts and its construction. The viewer does not necessarily need to think about what **Marianna Uutinen's** work (Toy) might depict, it can just be studied as the result of the act of painting: from it, you can see how the painter has spread the paint. ▸

PETRI VIRTANEN / OMA



Julian Schnabel: Son of Hawk, 1974–75

example, has painted portraits of his family members. In the mind of the viewer, the brush strokes on the surface of these paintings form human figures, although the objects are distorted in their proportions and colouring. In other words, instead of portraying the figures as they would appear in reality, he has portrayed them the way he wanted to. What we see on the canvas is how the artist sees and depicts things through his own idiom. Such an idiom may be easily understandable to a viewer, but also, if seen for the first time, strange and distant. ▸



COURTESY OF JULIAN SCHNABEL STUDIOS

Julian Schnabel

5th Floor, 8 March – 13 April

The debut exhibition by Julian Schnabel (b. 1953) at the Mary Boone Gallery in New York in 1979 was a sensation which overnight transformed him from an unknown restaurant chef to one of the most sought-after stars of the art world. He became the controversial icon of 1980s American art; a bad boy and 'enfant terrible' of the New York art scene, maligned by critics and loved by collectors, who was renowned as much for the huge size of his works as for his eccentric personality.

Exhibited at Kiasma is a retrospective of the works from 1980s to this day from the productive artist. Julian Schnabel created his early works on unusual materials, filling vast water-tight tarpaulins with objects added into thick paint layers: with broken dishes or hand-picked, aged "things" with their own history. The calm and even ascetic visual language of his newer works is a complete opposite to these "saucer paintings".

Julian Schnabel is also a film director. He has said that he will use any tools available to express his own desires, but considers himself to be a painter, irrespective of what technique he is using. In 1995, Schnabel wrote and directed the film *Basquiat*, and, after this success, two more films, *Before Night Falls* (1999) and *The Diving Bell and the Butterfly* (2007). For the latter, he won the award for Best Director at the 2007 Cannes Film Festival.

□ Satu Metsola



Nan Goldin: Self-portrait on the train, Germany, 1992

Nan Goldin

4th floor, 1 February – 13 April

Nan Goldin (b. 1953) made her breakthrough in the 1980s with photographs which gave an individual and political face to the New York 'underworld' of the time, overshadowed by drugs and AIDS and breaking down the barriers of sexuality.

Consistently, Goldin has photographed herself and the extended family of her friends throughout the decades and different life situations, from USA to Europe and Far East. In her pictures and series the private moments grow into biographies that expand and become the history of a whole generation, different sub-cultures, sexual identities, women and gender minorities and changing social atmosphere.

She doesn't present a gallery of stereotypes or freaks, but portraits of her beloved. The images convey the trust between the photographer and her targets as the most intimate moments are opened to the public gaze. People in the pictures grow old, build identities, some become ill and die, some stay and live on.

In her passionate and uncompromising subjectivism, however, Nan Goldin is in a class of her own: she is an inseparable part of the world she depicts and its intimate situations, not merely an outside observer.

□ Taru Tappola

FROM A PICTURE TO A PICTURE SURFACE

A photograph deals with picture surface in the same way as does abstract art: in principle, it is an equal, flat surface everywhere. The effect of both abstract art and photography is that the understanding of the picture is decisively altered. For example, to American artist, **Julian Schnabel**, the surface of a picture is a platform on which you can do almost anything. On it, he combines everything that he can: gesture painting, representational picture material, symbols, text, etc.

Abstract art leads you to think of the painter's canvas as a venue for events, as a field where things happen. So it is not a window on the wall, but rather the wall itself, or the floor, or any surface upon which you can work. In itself, painting is working and activity. This idea is taken further by American 'action painting', a movement that greatly influenced Schnabel as he was developing. To him, the painter's canvas is a space and platform for action, where new worlds can be gathered together. Often the size of the painting surface is so vast that treating it is real physical labour. Creating the picture is not based solely on the sense of sight but also on close contact.

PIRJE MYKKÄNEN / OAA



NEAR AND FAR, IN AND OUT

Sometimes a work of art will set unwritten rules as to how it ought to be viewed. For example, **Hanna Haaslahti's** *White Square* requires the viewer to become part of a computer-based shadow game. The viewer's body becomes part of the work and is, in fact, elemental to its function. A work of art can draw viewers closer or it can push them away. **Anu Tuominen's** minute work *The Basics of Measuring* has to be viewed from a very close distance to fully appreciate the detail and precision of measurements. With other works, the viewer is all but forced to step back, to be able to form any kind of comprehensive view of the whole. The gigantic size of Julian Schnabel's paintings can be an overwhelming experience, and they seem to swallow the viewer inside them, if viewed from too close a distance.

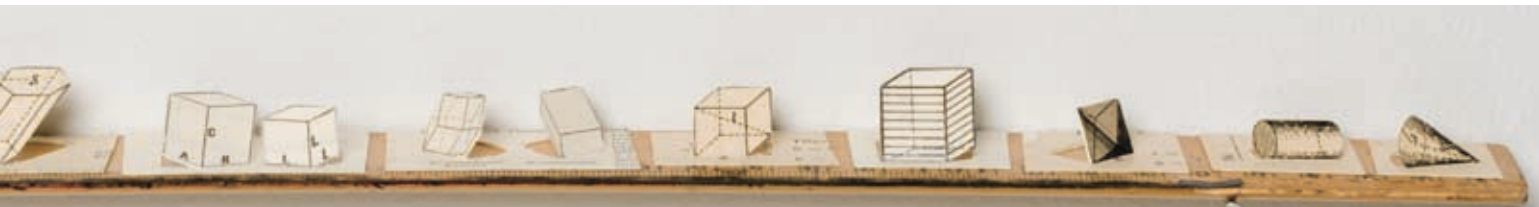
Works may also deliberately play around with distance and make viewers conscious of their personal observation process. In **Sami Lukkarinen's** work, when viewed from far away, the image he has picked out from the IRC Gallery

The idea of a picture has also been changed by digitalisation. Both painting and, in particular, photography have been thought of as mirrors of reality, and their relationship to reality as analogous, uniform. A digital image, then again, is based on calculation, its relationship to reality mathematical.

Sami Lukkarinen's painting *No. 7* deals with this relationship. In the picture, information concerning reality is reduced by abstraction: details are concealed beneath uniform picture squares. At the same time, the painting is like a digital image, in which pixels containing information are reduced in number, the purpose being, for example, to make the subject difficult to recognise. In many ways, the relationships between the picture and reality have been reversed: the picture shows a photograph (in analogue form like the painting), but a digital image rather than an analogue one. The subject matter too toys with the tension between the photograph's power of proof and voyeurism, what it says and what it leaves unsaid, what it reveals and what it conceals. ▽



Sami Lukkarinen: No. 7, 2007



Anu Tuominen: The Basics of Measuring, 1998

appears to portray a man showing off his body, but from closer up, the image breaks down into a series of small squares forming a colourful and complex, yet regular, whole.

SEEKING MEANING

Sometimes the feelings art produces are difficult to put into words. Art can trigger an unexpected mood, sensation, or physical reaction – or just hints of these. As weak signals, associations and images may go completely unnoticed, unless the viewer allows enough time to concentrate on and listen to his or her own thoughts, reactions, and experiences.

Sometimes avoiding figurativeness may have been the idea of the whole artwork. Sometimes the key to interpretation is in the name of the piece. In general, using words is a strong tool for steering the interpretation of a work of art. Words seem to have more consolidated meanings than images, which may be sending multiple messages. In visual art, words are, however, always just a part of the work; the image is not there to illustrate words; the image speaks for

itself. A work may be seen to contain a composition of letters, asking the viewer to take onboard a certain line of thought. The words are there to lure the viewer and the result is the association the artist sought after.

The idiom of contemporary art is diverse and often characterised by its intention to confuse and mix previously familiar ways of reading imagery. The traditional aim of art, the striving towards beauty, may be secondary or irrelevant to the message a contemporary artist wants to communicate. This is the case, for example, when looking at **Nan Goldin's** photographs. The pictures portray ordinary people in everyday situations. They seem like snapshots that could be found in anyone's home album. But when put on display at a museum, framed and hanging on the wall, they will be interpreted through the idiom of contemporary art. This does not mean that the images are above the mundane, but rather that they freeze moments of everyday life to be observed, in the name of art. ▽

IMAGE AND INFORMATION

Different conceptions of pictures emphasise different aspects of a picture. A picture can be thought to contain information on external reality (semantic), on the picture itself (syntactic) or on the creator of the picture (expressive). In truth, all pictures have all these dimensions, but it is a question of where attention is focused at any given time.

A representational, photo-like picture points to something outside itself. It seems transparent like a window, because the intention is not to focus attention on how it was created. Then again, sometimes an artist takes care to ensure that the viewer will definitely notice the characteristics of the surface of the picture, or the traces he has left and the choices made, even when the subject matter is representational.

So, contemporary artists often question the direct relationship between the picture and its subject, and show how, between the picture and reality, there is always something, at least some interpretation, choice or point of view. They have a special way of expressing their views on the different languages of the picture: the subject of a work of art might be the relationship between the picture and reality, or an idea about what else the picture is.

□ Kaija Kaitavuori

LISTEN TO PICTURES, SEE YOURSELF

The world we live in today is flooded with images. Our eyes have learnt to sift through them very quickly. A deeper understanding of the visual arts, however, requires that we stop and consider the images we see. A work of art could be approached like a new acquaintance, someone with whom to engage in dialogue, so that we get to know that person better. Works of art offer visual hints and food for thought, from which viewers can pick out the most familiar elements, and use these to start the thinking process. How and when we arrive at the final conclusion about the artwork is up to each viewer. Sometimes works of art can remain mysteries.

Viewers of contemporary art will reflect their own experiences, attitudes, and ways of observing their environment on the artworks they encounter. Looking and seeing involve emotions and sensations which are unique to each individual viewer. In other words, "understanding" a work of art is essentially about listening to one's own thoughts and mental processes. In this respect, art and interpreting art is like looking into a mirror.

□ Päivi Matala



Nan Goldin: Piotr and Jörg on their hotel bed, Wolfsburg, Germany, 1997



Julian Schnabel: Matelda (Map of Heaven and Hell), 1988
488 x 488 cm



New and renewed

The popular meeting point of Helsinki downtown, Café Kiasma, is now even more attractive. The new furniture designed by architect **Vesa Honkonen** is produced in cooperation with the Swedish company Källemo. The line of furniture will also be on sale, but Kiasma has the exclusive rights to the special green colour of the chairs.

The Intro 3 space in the 3rd floor is refurbished into a lounge for all museum visitors. Kiasma and the Friends of Kiasma organised a design competition for young designers in autumn 2007. During the anniversary year the space will be remodelled according to the winning design *Cubby Hole* by **Arihiro Miyake**.

Clothes make the man – and party. In Kiasma the museum guards celebrate the anniversary dressed in brand new uniforms. The stylish grey outfit is designed and tailored by **Jaana Sarpaneva** and P&M Design Oy that specialises in working costumes. □



ARIHIRO MIYAKE
P&M Design



3D illustration / Vesa Honkonen Architects,
assistant and 3D modelling: Tiina Olli / Vesa Honkonen Architects



BEEN TO KIASMA YET?

Kiasma in Kivikko

The histories of Kiasma and the district of Kivikko are intertwined. In the early 1990s, the City of Helsinki and the Finnish State agreed to an exchange of land, so that the City constructed the new building of the contemporary art museum for Finnish National Gallery in the district of Töölönlahti, and, in return, the State gave to the City the area of Kivikko, which was planned for residential construction.

Now, ten years later, Kiasma is celebrating its anniversary by entering into co-operation with the Kivikko Society and the residents of the area. Activities are planned together with the people of Kivikko – events and exhibitions will be held both in Kivikko and at Kiasma. □

Lumukko at work

Collaboration between Kiasma and Deloitte will take art where its invigorating impact is often most needed – in the workplace. **Pekka Kauhanen's** *Lumukko* ('Snowman'), a piece over two metres in height, with three arms, will spend this winter in the lobby of Deloitte House, together with three video works from Kiasma collections: **Lilibeth Cuenca Rasmussen's** *Family Sha la la*, **Maria Friberg's** *Blown Out* and **Anders Tomren's** *Exploded Views*. □

Pekka Kauhanen:
Lumukko, 2003-2004



Museum takes over the street

Gallery Alkovi, an art project launched in the Kallio district of Helsinki, is an eight-metre long display window with changing exhibitions operating 24 hours a day as a seamless continuum for events at the street. During the year, a series of exhibitions will be produced in the Gallery Alkovi in cooperation with Kiasma and **Otto Karvonen**. The set of exhibitions continues the theme of Kiasma's anniversary exhibition *The Fluid Street* making contemporary art an active part of the city and its life.

□ *Galleria Alkovi, Helsinginkatu 19*



Kiasma in Berlin

Berlin Fellehus will house an exhibition of Finnish contemporary art from Kiasma's collection, opening in March. Part of Kiasma's 10th anniversary festivities, the exhibition will feature artwork from ten Finnish contemporary artists.

The display will provide a forum for art, people, and thoughts to come together. During its ten years, Kiasma has reached the significant position of a forerunner in contemporary art. The exhibition will highlight the "memory" of contemporary art, the shared narratives of Western culture, through which our visual environment and understanding evolves.

□ *The Finnish Embassy, Fellehus, Rauchstrasse 1, Berlin, 3 - 30 April*

Update becomes Remake

The thought of a new beginning is always enticing. It often emerges when changes are taking place, during transitions – and now in Kiasma, because the museum is celebrating its first decade. The past is long enough to provide some perspective, while in many respects, focus is already on the future. New beginnings also imply a return, repetition, and life cycles. Is this really new, or is it an update, a remake, or a cover version?

Remake is a series of works, interventions, and projects discussing various facets of the museum. A completed work of art, how it is constructed, how a collection is built, the concept of the museum, as well as things like the museum's sponsorship programmes and Kiasma's public image, are all issues about which you can learn more.

□ *Remake from 11 January, Room X*

Free parking

The friends of art who drive have now all the more reason to come to Kiasma. EuroPark and Kiasma are offering free parking at P-Elie for Kiasma visitors. Access P-Elie either from Kaivokatu or Töölönlahdenkatu and bring the parking ticket to the Kiasma ticket office. With your museum admission, Kiasma will give you an hour of free parking!

□ *See map at www.kiasma.fi*

“People need to experience art personally. If you truly encounter a work of art and confront yourself, some small change is likely to take place. Art changes society by changing the individual – through personal experiences and perceptions,” says **Berndt Arell**, Kiasma’s Museum Director.

Daring to experience

Kiasma’s anniversary year will provide the public with personal experiences: “People always experience art on a personal level even though in some fields of art, it is possible to arrange for several people to have the experience simultaneously.” Berndt Arell feels that the only true level of experiencing art is the personal level: “Since we can’t build individual exhibitions for each single visitor, we endeavour to build a wider ranging exhibition so that as many people as possible find something that touches them personally.”

The Museum Director feels that a museum should offer a safe and enjoyable environment and create the kind of atmosphere where viewers dare to perceive things themselves and be receptive to art: “I hope that the visual arts have real meaning in people’s daily lives. I hope that a visit to an exhibition leaves a lasting impression in the same way as when you read a good book, watch a movie or go to a concert. Our job is to ensure that the visual arts offer an equally experiential and impressive option of encountering art.”

TIME HOLDS THE KEYS

Kiasma’s concept of time makes it an extraordinary museum. Many museums display new art from the 1900s but time at Kiasma starts from the 1960s – Kiasma has always concentrated on the contemporary, in the literal sense: “You can see this when the people working at Kiasma talk

“I seek out art that contemplates important issues. Interesting visual art sheds a new perspective on things that are close to my heart.”

about the art of the 1970s-80s, they refer to it as the history of contemporary art and not as contemporary art itself.”

At best, we easily relate to contemporary art, the art of today, as it often deals with the things we see around us all the time. But experiencing contemporary art can also be daunting because it creates things that perhaps do not even yet exist. Older works of art are often familiar, maybe from the pages of a schoolbook. When people later see a familiar work for real on the wall of a museum, the encounter is easy – they come face to face with something they know.

Unlike with older works of art, we do not have a definitive relationship with contemporary art; instead, each new experience re-establishes the relationship. As is often the case between two complete strangers, the encounter between contemporary art and the viewer becomes easier when the new acquaintances are introduced to each other: “One way to make contemporary art more familiar is to present its history – to display works that the public has perhaps come across already. I believe that our public has been hoping for new art of a more classic genre; people want to see works from the end of the last century that are in some way familiar.”

During Berndt Arell’s time, Kiasma will offer visitors the opportunity to acquaint themselves with



the classics of contemporary art – to get to know the history of contemporary art. Kiasma's role is to portray the entire period of contemporary art, a period that includes the present: "We have to look at history to see why we are where we are now."

POWER AND RESPONSIBILITY

"I don't find art as such interesting. By that I mean I'm not interested in the internal discourses of art. What is stimulating is art that converses with people's reality, that engages in dialogue with society and people. Art that teaches me things about myself is thought provoking. Of course, as a museum director, I join in the internal discourses of the art world because that's how we develop art and the way we look at it, but that's not what matters to me most. What interests me is how art can have an impact on social matters, politics, our common life, my life."

Because Kiasma is a prestigious institution, its opinions carry weight: Kiasma makes the voice of art heard in social discourse. Only an institution of this stature can make it possible for contemporary art to have any relevance in society. Kiasma's position as an opinion-leader in Finnish contemporary art is both a burden and an opportunity: "Everyone working here wields a lot of power, which is part of the mission of a national gallery. We're not part of the fringe art world, we're the most powerful element in the mainstream. We have to accept that we are a major actor in the field of contemporary art in Finland and shoulder the responsibility this brings with it."

Kiasma's role as a major museum, an institution, is to display all contemporary art – including the mainstream. This is, of course, how things are done in other fields of art as well: institutional theatre performs classics and publicly funded orchestras play popular symphonies. Berndt Arell stresses that as a major museum,

"We have to accept that we are a major actor in the field of contemporary art in Finland and shoulder the responsibility this brings with it."

Kiasma should operate along similar lines in its own field – in art that is being done now.

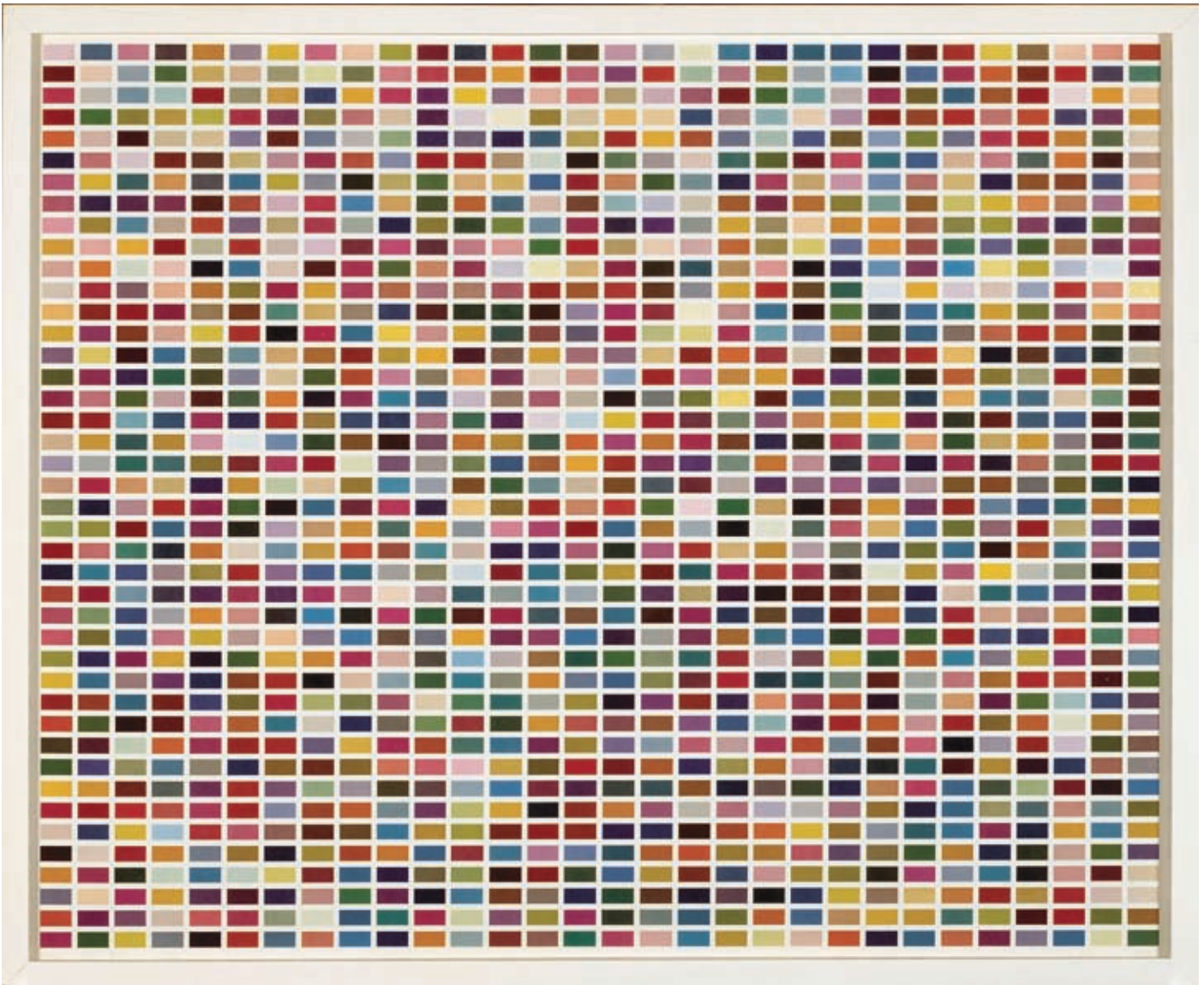
"The fringe should be displayed in the marginal. Our role is not to constantly question the mainstream phenomena of contemporary art. If we only display alternatives, most contemporary art will never be shown – then we'll be giving the public a distorted image of present-day art. The public will imagine that all contemporary art is what the fringe does. Instead our task is to provide alternative contemporary art movements with an institutional sounding board for the fringe to sharpen their claws."

However, the institution's role does not mean having no bite and being boring: "Our mandate lays down the foundation for our regeneration and originality – we are a museum of contemporary art. We always display the latest, significant and thought-provoking art. Ten years down the line, young people will still find Kiasma stimulating – I would like us to be able to keep the young people who visit us now as our regulars, and to constantly raise new generations to come here, too."

BOLD BUT SAFE

Art should be introduced in an environment where encountering it is safe, a museum: "Say a work of art is taken physically to where people are, like to a street, but it remains unconnected, it doesn't relate to anything, the work does not really approach people. If a work does not appeal, generate an experience, people won't see the work in their midst, they just trip over it – and what good is that?"

Berndt Arell feels that whenever museums implement projects with the public in mind, projects that the public get the most out of, those projects do well. However, if exhibitions are built from theoretical perspectives it is easy to get the feeling that curators set up



exhibitions for each other – experts for experts and not for the public.

On special occasions, hosts and hostesses play an important role welcoming their guests and putting them at ease so that they have a good time together. Some museums call their lecturers museum hosts or hostesses: “At best, museum pedagogy removes the obstacles to people’s visits; the visitor does not need to feel nervous about being in a museum.” But there is no need for interpretative pedagogy because people feel that over-explaining and interpreting is demeaning – a person interested in art is, or should be, interested in creating his or her own personal interpretation of a work.

Berndt Arell underlines that the personal nature of experiencing art also means the viewer is responsible for his or her own experience:

“The visitor does not need to feel nervous about being in a museum.”

“Unfortunately, few people are so open that they dare to be receptive to the change and experience art has to offer. People think that art is not life, that it only portrays life. If they consider art merely as “art” then no change takes place. The artist intended his or her work to become a part of reality. The viewer should dare to take the risk to make art part of his or her own reality.”

□ Milla Unkila

BEEN TO KIASMA YET?

Musical gone contemporary theatre

Seven men and a chamber orchestra in a feminine musical on Kiasma's stage? The new experimental musical *RIITTA – nainen talossa* (RIITTA – the woman in the house) is written and directed by **Pauliina Hulkko** and the music is composed and arranged by **Sanna Salmenkallio**.

RIITTA is based on two literary works: **Alexandre Dumas'** novel *Camille* and **Heiner Müller's** play *Quartet*. They form a schematic template through which to observe the world. The performance also rouses 1970s nostalgia in the sounds of the era's love ballads.

"The libretto of RIITTA includes arias and recitative and instrumental parts, during which other forms of stage idiom will also be seen. The musical combines opera, the *mise en scène*, and different styles of musical. The aim has been to hijack the musical form and make it work for contemporary theatre", says Pauliina Hulkko.

□ *Premiere on February 2, Kiasma Theatre*



PIIJE IMKKÄNEN / OMA



Art in the midst of life

Young Indian women venting their frustration about the human rights problems in their community through comics; an artist reading short stories to long-term patients in a hospital; people with CP making theatre about their own life stories; employees making art to improve their well-being at work.

These are examples of the projects in which art has been incorporated to people's real lives, discussed in the article collection entitled *Taide keskellä elämää* (Art in the midst of life). The collection of articles has contributions from forty experts and creators of applied arts. Their mutual message is that art need not be confined to spaces demarcated for art. It should be made part of people's everyday lives – and be present where people themselves exist – in the midst of all our lives.

□ *Taide keskellä elämää*, (ed.) Marjatta Bardy, Riikka Haapalainen, Merja Isotalo and Pekka Korhonen. In Finnish, paperback, 333 pp, 25 e, available from the Kiasma online shop at www.kiasma.fi

Artist as curator in the Loop of the Month

Kiasma's collection currently comprises some 300 works of media art. They are on display in a room of their own – *Mediateekki*. The new Loop of the Month series will select the artworks to be displayed in a new way.

Selections will be divided between the Artist's Choice and the Curator's Choice. Kiasma will invite Finnish video artists to choose one or several video works from Kiasma's collection and to introduce the work. Invited artists may also choose a work of their own to be displayed alongside the chosen item from the collection. Curators in turn will be selecting a thematic whole, which will present the history and various genres of video art.

□ Each artist and curator will take turns in introducing *The Loop of the Month* on the first Friday of each month at 6pm

Making sense of contemporary art

Why has a bicycle stand been hauled inside an art museum? What exactly makes a kick sled a work of art? **Satu Itkonen's** book *Selkoa nykyaiteesta* (Making sense of contemporary art) encourages readers to embrace contemporary art and look for their own personal meanings in it.

The book has been written for all those who are interested in contemporary art – especially those who find it strange. The book introduces 30 works from Kiasma's collections.

□ Released in spring (in Finnish)

Dive into a painting

In January Studio K turns into a cave painter's cave. The simplified modular outer shell of the installation by **Miika Nyyssönen** hides inside a contrasting element: a "cave" rich in form and colour. The colouring within does not follow the baroque outlines of the interim, the defining lines escape the viewer and activate all the senses of perception.

Miika Nyyssönen is a difficult artist to define. His works relate to the basic aspects of painting and conceptualising. Simultaneously he explores experiencing space as sculpture with all senses. The viewer dives into the painting.

□ *Miika Nyyssönen, Studio K*
11 January – 20 April,
Kiasma collections



Miika Nyyssönen: Cavepainter's Cave, 2005
Installation, 3 x 3 x 3 m



Chief Curator
Marja Sakari

Job description: knowing art

The most common question asked of Kiasma guides is “Why is this art?” Then, firmly in second position is the question “Why is this on display in Kiasma?”

Kiasma has two chief curators, a collections and an exhibitions curator. The collections curator is in charge of collections and their enhancement. The exhibitions curator plans and is responsible for the overall management of the changing exhibitions. Both are involved in making decisions on the acquisition of new works for the collections. Marja Sakari has just begun work as the exhibitions curator, having previously served as Kiasma’s collections curator. It is therefore her job to think of answers to those questions that occupy the minds of museum visitors.

What does a curator do?

A curator follows art, the production of artists and events in the field of arts. I should know what the hot topics in the art world are, and be familiar with current phenomena, both in Finnish and international fields of art. Such knowledge is basic material, not only for the planning of exhibitions but also for making decisions on the acquisition of collections. An important part of the job of a curator is to visit exhibitions and look for interesting works of art.

How do you become a Chief Curator, is your own background typical of the field?

I am a Doctor of Art History. The study of art history is definitely quite typical of the field. But my work experience is perhaps not so typical, as its scale has

been quite extensive. While I was studying, I worked as an exhibitions secretary in a gallery, then I was employed by an art-related organisation. I taught art history both at university and at the Finnish Academy of Fine Arts, and worked as a researcher in the Central Art Archives of the Finnish National Gallery and later at the Academy of Finland.

My extensive knowledge of the art world and its protagonists has been of great benefit to me. In this work, I’ve co-operated with many different people and organisations – of course preliminary planning, writing out lists and pondering exhibition themes are jobs that are often done alone, but finally putting an exhibition together demands large-scale teamwork involving many kinds of professional skills.

What do you think are the best things about your job?

The fact that I am working with living artists. Although exhibition construction processes might be similar, their content is usually so different – you have to find out about different kinds of things, and you get to learn new things all the time. In how many jobs can you always be creating something new?

What’s also great about Kiasma is the community spirit. Having got used to a certain loneliness when working as a researcher, the fact that here things are done together, in co-operation, is really

productive. My colleagues are definitely one of the good things about my job.

What is the difference between studying art, which somebody has already defined as art, and deciding yourself whether something is art or even good art?

Well, of course there is a difference, although my own field of study particularly included concept art, which constantly questions what art can actually be. In concept art, the end result is not necessarily a physical object – a mere disappearing process is art. Through my research work, I have dealt with disappearing processes or processes whose limits cannot be defined, just like now in the exhibition planning processes. The study of contemporary art generally differs from the study of older art pretty much. Works of art are linked to some reference framework, and a concrete object, which has a creator, is not as important as it was in older art.

In your work as Chief Curator, you are in a position where you must decide, sometimes merely on the basis of a concept document, whether something is art or not.

Of course it is always an adventure to select the work of an artist based on his or her idea. You never know exactly what end result to expect, and mutual trust is necessary. A project might begin with artists coming to tell me about their

ideas. First of all, you have to have faith that the creators will possess the skill to execute their ideas well. You also have to trust that the idea, when executed, will also be interesting. In such a situation, it's good to know about the earlier works of the artists and their way of working – is it probable that they will make the end result interesting? It also helps when you know the art world well enough to be able to compare an idea to others that are out there – is the overall idea actually interesting? You also have to know the artists, what kind of work they generally do, and what themes they are currently working with, to help in selecting work. Most exhibitions in Kiasma, however, consist of existing works, which have previously been on display somewhere else.

When you look at the works brought before you, what do you pay attention to, what are the processes upon which you can decide that something is not only art but good art?

Most importantly, encountering contemporary art requires you to look and see without prejudice – your senses and mind should be open and receptive, and you should be ready really to see what you are looking at. Of course, looking, seeing and understanding make quite a tangled web. Contemporary art is conceptual, so very often a work will set off thought processes, might throw a question at me, the viewer, and activate a thought process. Perhaps the hallmark of a good work is that it causes reactions on many levels. It might make you think about many things – and also induce pure pleasure. Aesthetic pleasure, beauty is an essential part of visual art. In addition to aestheticism, intellectualism often plays a key role in contemporary art – a good work has the ability to create insights in its viewers.

Good contemporary art helps us to understand something fundamental about our world, or raises a question

about something, shows things from a different perspective or makes us think about familiar things in a different light. Or then in the intrinsic quality of a work, how it is actually created, there is something new and thought-provoking. Visual language cannot necessarily be made verbal. Visual experience is important; it is something that can be physically experienced here and now. Art only happens in and through the viewer. The more knowledge I have of art, the more I project my own self into a work. I am perhaps able to draw more from it, to get more out of it. Contemporary art is a continuum, not a series of individual works, so the more knowledge I have of this continuum, the better I can relate the works to their contexts. In contemporary art, works may comment on other works or ideas of other artists, and if I don't know what art-related topic the work in question is alluding to, I might completely misunderstand it.

Is power a burden? After all, you have to make decisions on whose work will perhaps still be interesting in decades to come – what if you make the wrong assessment?

It's a great responsibility. Sure, we at Kiasma are also gate-keepers of the art world – we form a kind of screen, which, once artists have passed through, gives them more credibility, both at home and internationally. That is a difficult question, but I believe that nowadays the world is so open that the responsibility for preserving art for future generations does not merely rest on the shoulders of a handful of individuals.

What are the guidelines for Kiasma's exhibitions, is Kiasma a national or international museum?

This year, we have a very interesting range of exhibitions on display: some of them present classics of contemporary art, and some approach the most topical contemporary art in a thematic way.

I also hope that young artists will make a name for themselves in our exhibitions. The guidelines by which Kiasma is progressing and will continue to progress are precisely these: international classics of contemporary art, topical and thematically constructed exhibitions, and new art that is only now being created.

The role of Kiasma is two-fold. Kiasma's most important job is to support Finnish art, and to acquire, preserve and display significant domestic contemporary art. On the other hand, it is also our job to display in Finland internationally significant art, to bring interesting art here for people to see. Kiasma is an internationally renowned national gallery, which is also tasked with ensuring that Finnish art is seen abroad.

□ Milla Unkila

On yrityksiä, joilla
on paljon näkemystä.



*On yrityksiä,
joilla on näkemys.*



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**BEEN TO
KIASMA YET?**

Shadow tour – children guiding adults through Kiasma's architecture

Where does the dusk begin?
What happens to shapes when moving
between darkness and light?
How much light is required so that
we can see colours?

These and many other questions were asked when three- and four-year-olds from Vironniemi day-care centre roamed through Kiasma in 2007. The children moved around the building in small expedition groups, taking photographs, and drawing and painting what they saw. And what they saw included exciting views, interesting wholes, multidimensional shadows, and strange reflections. A completely new Kiasma was discovered.

Children look at architecture with an open mind. They have the ability to help us adults see new things in familiar surroundings, and familiar things in a new light. That is why the discussion and the observations of the children will be made into an audio guide for all visitors to enjoy and to mark Kiasma's 10th anniversary. The tour comprising children's discussion and the pictures created by them of Kiasma is available in Finnish, and it is recommended specifically for adult visitors. □



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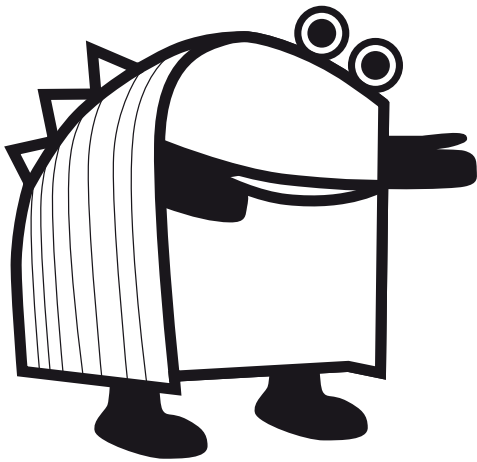
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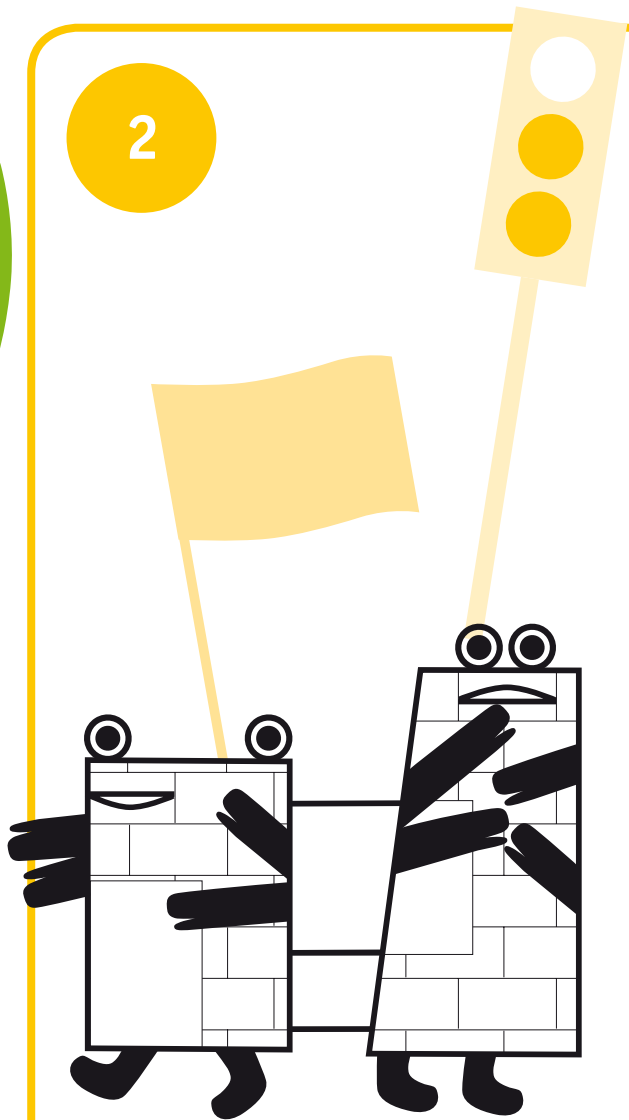
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1



Monster 1 is a gentle creature with a heart of gold. It prefers to stay indoors, in peace and quiet. It is a real home monster.

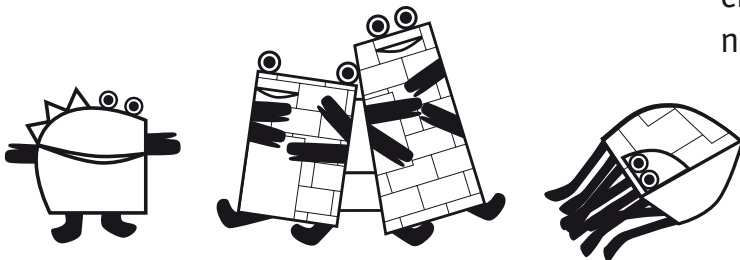
2



Monster 2 has two sides, and cannot really decide where it wants to go. Lively and light headed, it does not take things too seriously, and loves the buzz of the city.

Name the Monsters!

The endearing Kiasma monsters are out and about. They have got their shape and appearance literally from Kiasma's walls. Each newly-hatched monster has its own character and personal habits, but as yet, no name.



3



Monster 3 is absent-minded and often forgets where it is. It also gets confused by counting its own legs, wondering how many it actually has – can you help?

4



Monster 4 is sensitive and shy, sometimes a little timid. When startled, it can be quite scary, so be careful not to wake it up too quickly!

GIVE NAMES TO THE FOUR NEW MONSTERS!

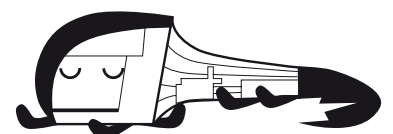
These cute monsters will be the mascots for Kiasma’s family programmes. Each workshop, event, publication, and other product aimed at children and families will be marked with one of the Kiasma monsters. Look out – you never know when they might appear!

The monsters are born in and of Kiasma. They are designed by graphic designer **Reka Kiraly** together with Kiasma staff. The new *State of Art* map shows where and how these monsters live.

YOUR HELP IS NEEDED

The monsters are an international bunch, so they need names in different languages. By suggesting names for the monsters, you have the chance to win monster products! To enter, visit www.kiasma.fi/monsterit

The competition closes on 15 March.





PHS

COVER: Julian Schnabel PHOTO: © Mondino, Courtesy of Julian Schnabel Studios

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Kiasma is open Tue 10 am–5 pm, Wed–Sun 10 am–8.30 pm
Tickets EUR 7/5, free for under 18-year-olds. Kiasma is fully
accessible. Guide dogs are welcome. The ticket office and
the Theatre are equipped with tele/induction loop systems.

www.kiasma.fi
See the latest program information and visit
our on-line museum shop!

Friends of Kiasma
Further information tel. +358 (0)9 1733 6595

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