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PRESS RELEASE

FERNANDO GARCÍA

VAKIOPAINE

Feb 27 – April 10, 2010

Where gods in their dancing are ashamed of all clothes

He was tired of Madrid, of the hustle and bustle and of the people, of the sun and perhaps of the art too. To be sure, it does happen that an artist becomes tired of all of this and longs for the forests. A grant for the months of April to October 2009. This is how everything started for Fernando Garcia and the city of Jyväskylä in Finland. After an exhausting flight, the artist explored the city and was overcome by an oppressive feeling: the city seemed small and confining.

What to do as a stranger in Jyväskylä? One can visit the churches, but that is rather boring, as the Renaissance never came to Jyväskylä. Instead Fernando Garcia discovered a completely different form of architecture; he discovered the Finnish language.

Does the look of the written language reveal anything about the country? How the letters lean on to each other? Finland would accordingly be a cheerful country with all those vowels, „*OLLA SAMALLA AALTOPITUUDELL*“, how well suited to belting it out into the forest, leaving your mouth open and round.

Fernando Garcia bought a dictionary – *Gummerus* Finnish-Spanish – but soon realized that it was rather complicated to memorize those Finnish bursts of vowels.

He was nevertheless fascinated by the long words that looked so mysterious.

Garcia, born in 1975, studied art at Complutense University in Madrid and has since then been working on the visual aesthetics of language. He does not always physically visit all the places whose languages he studies. He devoted himself to New York street names without ever having been there himself. He completed a fellowship in Berlin – and stayed in Madrid.

In Jyväskylä, Garcia could have visited the workshop at the Centre for Printmaking. He could have used the printing presses to dabble in silk screen, planographic, and intaglio printing. But he did not. Instead he studied the grotesque figures of speech that were listed in his Finnish dictionary. He marveled at the architecture of the Finnish sentences, enjoyed the pointed vowel towers and shady canyons of Js and Ls. A skyline of letters. Garcia also looked for the words in magazines, on TV, on record covers; he listened to their sound in the songs that were played in the pubs at night. And he drew.

Every artist has a primetime for working. Fernando Garcia works at night. During summer, the nights in Jyväskylä are bright. Not as bright as sunflowers or a summer day in Madrid, rather a milky white blue. At any rate, the artist needs no electric light in order to sit out on the patio at midnight. Garcia drew whatever came to his mind; he did not think about it for long, he just let it come to him.

He put figures and geometric shapes on paper in childlike, naïve strokes. Afterimages of a day in a foreign land.

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Bülowstr. 90, 10783 Berlin

CONTACT

contact@aanantzoo.com

t. +49 30 81 80 18 73

www.aanantzoo.com

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Perhaps because the pictures needed a visual frame – something to keep them balanced – Garcia took up his dictionary and added the beautiful, difficult figures of speech with the letter “A” to the drawings. Tough pragmatism was coupled with the flâneur’s sensitive perception. Sometimes it was the drawing that came first, sometimes a word, but it did not matter anyway, for Garcia followed the alphabetical order of the Gummerus dictionary.

ÄLYKKYYS – intelligence
AAKKOSJÄRJESTYS – alphabetical
OLLA SAMALLA AALTOPITUUDELL – to be on the same wavelength
SYÖDÄ AAMIAISTA – to have breakfast
AAMUHÄMÄRÄ – dawn
AARTEENETSIJÄ – treasure hunter
AAVISTAA PAHINTA – to fear the worst
ABSOLUUTTINEN NOLLAPISTE – absolute zero
OLLA AIKEISSA TEHDÄ JTK – to plan on doing something
SINULLA EI OLE HUOLEHTIMISEN AIHETTA, KAIKKI ON SELVA –
nothing to worry about, everything is clear

The verb “to have breakfast” was in this way added to an abstract cubist fragmentation of triangles and circles. The lettering „AAVISTAA PAHINTA“ (to fear the worst) ended up with reduced brush strokes that resemble a bottle opener. Coincidence has a sense of humor. The meaning of the words, however, is secondary. This is about the visual drama between language and picture. Garcia’s watercolors follow a rhythm, just as all works of art need to have a rhythm. Language also has a rhythm. Friedrich Nietzsche was the one to discover that. The philosopher aimed to create language that sounded like music because he feared that semantics would immediately destroy the lightness of life he postulated. Nietzsche, heavy with thoughts, longs for the south in his book *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, for a place “where gods in their dancing are ashamed of all clothes”.

Perhaps Jyväskylä is such a place and Garcia is the person to free language from its weight. When he arrived in April, the artist was expecting snow, but there were just a few remnants left, and little color otherwise – hardly any green, no juice. And then a surprise: nature in Jyväskylä changed from one day to the next. Yellow blossoms burgeoned toward the sun, fresh buds shot up, trees and shrubs sprouted, and the soil smelt of soil.

These colors of conversion emerge in Garcia’s midnight watercolors, purple, grass-green, linden-green, bird-yellow, field-brown, raspberry-red. Flower stems, thorns, and palm fronds may be discerned next to mysterious symbols and bizarre figures, long-necked, scolding, or skiing. Are these the people of Jyväskylä? Unleashed gods?

These watercolors are a mystery, overall. They are Pop Art posters, and yet they are expressive – authentically created by an artist. Words are ornamental shapes, and yet they have a meaning, which, however, remains cryptic to anyone without command of the Finnish language. There are 138 watercolors created in 120 nights, a subjective diary, animated by the coincidence of a dictionary.

Although we could not watch Fernando Garcia paint these watercolors, although we have never been to the land, where the gods in their dancing are ashamed of all clothes, we can nevertheless imagine the nights on the patio in milk-blue light. It is fine to imagine it like that, for that is the sense of these drawings; that is what they were made for, to plunge headlong into your own stories.

Birgit Rieger

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