

Five sections on Petri Salo's art work

1.

Looking at Petri Salo's work fills my mind with questions. What is the story of the woman with the wooden leg, where is the tattooed man going or why does the centaur have a suitcase in its hand? He has created a gallery of people, which at first seems totally disjointed, because I cannot find anything that connects them. Yet gradually I start to perceive certain points in common, as the specters represented by the artist are like puppets, preciously reserved in their own realities - yet in a dreamlike logic, as if I had found myself walking around among rare objects in a cabinet of curiosities, curiosities that are symbols.

2.

We do not know who the specters of the paintings are, nor do we know whether their stories have a common beginning or end. Instead, we have tales composed of scenes or associations. We meet contemporaneous centaurs and other specters, who are inexplicably related, both to the creatures in familiar myths and to the people we meet in our daily lives. On the other hand, Salo also shows how the strange occupies daily life and how common the peculiar and fantastic can seem.

3.

The paintings present collages conforming to a dreamlike logic, whose origin gives a background to the artist's own story of how he is influenced by architecture, art works, furniture, curtains or old and neglected constructions of the past.

In this way, Salo is like a Gustave Moreau (1826-1898) of the 2000s, who gathered his own paintings like the later surrealists did with their collages. The ability of Moreau's works to astonish follows a different logic to Salo's. The works of the painter admired by the symbolists, the ability to astonish and the exotic are the first characterizations that come to mind. But Salo's works are on the border between the ordinary and the dreamlike.

4.

To me, Salo's work presents the theory of details in an artistic form, as their polymorphic association and the way

they escape rationalization, to me forms an artistic hall of mirrors, where the reflections create a world of unlimited possibilities. The details of Salo's paintings are at times like references to the relativity of things and to the effect of context. At second glance, I forget myself and think about the symbolism of an individual object or entity, when my wish relates to naming and knowing things.

Naming is not only an attempt to explain the work, but is about curiosity and going along. I want to play with the rules suggested by the artist.

5.

In many of the artist's paintings the theme of encounters recurs. Different people meet each other or spectators are invited to witness an event, which can take the form of a strange ritual or secret meeting. In all these, the most important seems the idea of meeting the mystical, where the main character's life changes course based on an event. Everyday things change to become completely different and unexpected things materialize.

In Salo's work I frequently encounter depictions of a significant moment, in which something is clearly happening. But what? Lack of clarity and the candour of the event result in a more polymorphic interpretation of Salo's paintings than symbolism, as I am never sure what is becoming clear, if anything.

To finish

Perhaps indeed a moment of eternal darkening is portrayed in the paintings, a snapshot when everything changes again to become totally different. To me, the artist's work therefore symbolizes the eternal unattainability of artistic creative work. The greatest secret of art is the secret, as it is secret.

Dreams can be remembered awake, but they only exist in dream. Petri Salo's art embodies that logic of the unattainability without compromising its flight from mystery.

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