

Press release 13.10.2009

## Finnish and conceptual art classics meet at EMMA

*Tapio Wirkkala – Sculptor* 14.10.2009- 10.1.2010 is the first exhibition to be devoted solely to the sculpture of Tapio Wirkkala (1915-1985). To a considerable degree Tapio Wirkkala's image is based on his significant career as a designer but this amazingly versatile artist was also a sculptor. A pioneer in Finnish abstract sculpture, Wirkkala began his career as a sculptor and at no time afterwards did he desert this art form.

The exhibition focuses on Wirkkala's unique plywood sculptures from the 1950s and 1960s which have become international symbols of Finnish Modernism. Two exceptionally large sculptural reliefs will be on show - the roughly seven metre *River Landscape* (1953), the first Finnish abstract art work to be placed in a public area, and the nine metre *Ultima Thule* (1953) completed for the Montreal World Exhibition in 1967, the inspiration for which came from the artist's experience in Lapland's Lemmenjoki valley.

Also on show are Wirkkala's early wooden sculptures from the 1930s, glass and plexiglass sculptures from the 1960s and birds sculpted from different metals (incl. the Marsh Snipe series) competition sketches for public sculptures as well as the artist's drawings. The exhibition also features a number of Wirkkala's best-known design pieces which reflect the connection between design motifs and sculpture.

*Tapio Wirkkala - Sculptor* is the latest in EMMA's series of exhibitions presenting the work of Finnish Modernist classics. Earlier exhibitions have featured the work of **Raimo Utriainen** and **Ole Kandelin**.

The exhibition has been realised in co-operation with the Tapio Wirkkala Rut Bryk Foundation which has loaned the majority of the works.

A 200-page catalogue is published in connection with the exhibition which includes several specialist articles on Wirkkala's sculpture and reminiscences of the artist by some of his friends.

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## Art & Language

Alongside the Wirkkala exhibition is a unique work comprising paintings, objects and large-format posters created by the conceptual art classic **Art and Language** and extending throughout EMMA's gallery space.

This is the first Art & Language exhibition to be held in the Nordic countries and represents "some sort of retrospective entity", one of the themes of which is the relationship between a retrospective exhibition and ongoing artistic activity. All the works on display are new and created specifically for this exhibition.

Art & Language was born at the end of the 1960s at Britain's University of Coventry where artists teaching at the university sought critical alternatives to the then prevailing modernist art and artist concept. In all some 50 British and American artists have participated in the activity of this conceptual art classic.

Since 1977 the core artists of Art & Language have been **Michael Baldwin** and **Mel Ramsden** who are also responsible for the EMMA exhibition.

The exhibition curator is the art critic **Timo Valjakka**. In connection with the exhibition a book *Sivuääniä: kirjoituksia käsitetaiteesta* (Murmurs; essays on conceptual art), edited by **Teemu Hupli**, has been published in Finnish.

An Art & Language lecture will be given at the Kuvataideakatemia (Academy of Visual Art), Kaikukatu 4, Helsinki, at 16.00 on Wednesday 14.10.

*Form for Kids* is an exhibition intended for children in the Ilme workshop. It presents examples taken from the EMMA Art Pack educational collection featuring design from different centuries. Modern design is featured in an installation **Kids' Pattern** and in a related clothing and wall colouring workshop. Design for children and adults may also be tried out. The exhibition is the result of co-operation between AERO and Merja Lamberg from the Tango Design Bureau.

**Press photos:** [www.emma.museum/press](http://www.emma.museum/press)

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