

Press release 23.2.2010

African power at EMMA

24.2.-6.6.

The Power of Africa – Three perspectives

EMMA's spring exhibition *The power of Africa* focuses on Europe's culture debt to Africa from three different standpoints. The exhibition presents an impressive selection of traditional West African art alongside European modernist art. I.a. French and Czech Cubism, German Expressionism, Russian Cubo-Futurism and Finnish contemporary art are shown in an African light.

African art had a major impact on early 20th century Modernism. With the industrialisation and urbanisation of Europe western man was seen to be moving towards decline. Artists set out to seek a new beginning, a vitality and a nucleus of human existence beyond the confines of their homes, looking as far as Africa. Pablo Picasso included, not all artists actually travelled to Africa but the geometric and minimalist language of African art rubbed off on European art through ethnographic collections and art objects. Africa brought about a complete change in the colour world of the paintings of **Akseli Gallen-Kallela**, the best-known Finnish artist to visit Africa, It was only later, after the artist's death, that the glowing colours and somewhat simplified forms of his African paintings were accorded the recognition they deserved.

EMMA presents African works as part of an art culture. The exhibition wishes to demolish the mistaken idea of the superiority of European art and rationalism. Some African art works relate to rituals in the same way as the church frescoes of European art are a part of religion. Contrary to popular belief, the individuality and rich nuances of the artist can also be found in African art, Although it was not customary for African artists to sign their works the artists were respected masters in their society.

The third perspective traces the relationship between Finnish contemporary art and Africa. From experience gained from different cultures today's artists seek an understanding of other cultures – and people – as well as a new artistic content. Many Finnish artists such as **Stefan Bremer**, **Alvar Gullichsen** and **Teemu Mäki** have visited Villa Karo, the Finnish cultural institute in Benin, but often photographs have sufficed to influence them as they did their 20th century colleagues.

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The exhibition's modernists:

Fernand Léger, Emil Filla, Otto Gutfreund, Antonin Procházka, Václav Špala, Josef Čapek, Karl Schmidt-Rottluff, Max Pechstein, Erich Heckel, Otto Mueller, Conrad Felixmüller Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, Natalia Gontšarova, Nadežda Udaltsova, Vladimir Baranov-Rossiné, Ljubov Popova, Kazimir Malevitš, O.V.Rozanova, Alexander Drevin, Pavel Filonov, Vladimir Tatlin, André Lhote, Pablo Picasso, Paul Klee, Auguste Herbin, Marie Laurencin, Wäinö Aaltonen, Hugo Backmansson, Birger Carlstedt, Alvar Cawén, Akseli Gallen-Kallela, Greta Hällfors-Sipilä and Uno Alanko.

The exhibition's Finnish contemporary artists:

Martti Aia, Stefan Bremer, Alvar Gullichsen, Timo Kellaranta, Pertti Kukkonen, Tapani Mikkonen, Marika Mäkelä, Teemu Mäki, Tiina-Elina Nurminen, Lauri Nykopp, Kimmo Pyykkö, Ulla Rantanen, Tuomo-Juhani Vuorenmaa and Ilkka Väätä.

The international works in the exhibition come from France, Germany, the Czech Republic, Russia, Holland and Sweden. African sculptural art has been loaned by i.a. **Musée du Quai Branly, Paris. The State Russian Museum, St. Petersburg, Die Brücke museum and Nationalgalerie, Berlin and Dansmuseet and Etnografiska museet, Stockholm.**

In connection with the exhibition a 200-page illustrated catalogue of the exhibition has been published with specialist articles examining African art and its impact on the early stages of western Modernism. In the contemporary art section Finnish artists describe their African experiences and the impact of these on their own art.

24.2.-6.6.

Candice Breitz

Candice Breitz (b. 1972) is an internationally renowned South African photographic and video artist who lives and works in Berlin. This is the first time her work has been shown in Finland.

EMMA will show the music works *King* (A Portrait of Michael Jackson), 2005, *Queen* (A Portrait of Madonna), 2005 and the artist's latest works *Him* (1968-2008) and *Her* (1978-2008) which remix clips excerpted from mainstream cinema. The works are multi-channel, large-scale video installations that are shown on up to 30 plasma displays, the central theme of which is the inflection of identity through popular culture and mainstream media.

King is a 16-channel and *Queen* a 30-channel installation, in which pop icon fans play the leading role. The fans, found via press advertising and the internet were invited to re-perform either Jackson's *Thriller* or Madonna's *Immaculate Conception* album in professional recording studios. They chose their own

costumes and performed the album as they wished to. The result was a re-recorded version of the Michael Jackson and Madonna albums. With this work Breitz explores how pop music can become woven into the lives of the fans who listen to it and suggests the extent to which the culture industry is a part of our everyday lives.

In *Him* and *Her* one actor appears in different roles in a non-linear drama. The works are parallel 7-channel installations in which **Jack Nicholson** is seen in 23 different film roles extracted from films made over a period of 40 years and **Meryl Streep** in 28 roles derived from films made over 30 years. Multiple incarnations of the same actor converse with one another resulting in an emotional and profound dialogue in each case.

The exhibition has been realised as a co-operation project between EMMA and Candice Breitz.

Special programme

EMMA presents two new special programmes this spring, the **Art Cocktail** and the **Art Café**.

The Art Cocktail offers adult and corporate customers a sparkling day of hands-on programme ideally suited for birthday celebration and other occasions calling for something special. The programme includes a tour of the on-going exhibition and creative activities in EMMA's workshop Paletti. Sparkling wine will be served as a welcome drink to make the occasion truly festive.

Senior citizens are warmly welcomed to the **Safari Café**, where they can make an exotic shopping bag while enjoying coffee in true African style. Coffee is brewed on Tuesdays during the period of **2.3 -1.6 at 14-16**. Participation charge 5 euros.

In **March** performing art students from the Helsinki Metropolia University of Applied Sciences perform in their production **Side Glances** adding drama and dialogue to the exhibition *Entre chien et loup* (At Dusk). The production is directed by **Sussa Lavonen, Metsälintu Pahkinen** and **Reijo Hirvikoski**.

Space is the theme on EMMA's children's weekend on **27. - 28.3**. The event is produced in co-operation with the Museum of Horology and the Toy Museum. Come and experience all the exiting things in all three museums.

On **15.5** you are welcomed to **Fall in Love with EMMA**. The museum is filled with music, poetic encounters, guided tours and creative working. Fall in Love with EMMA is a co-production with Tapiola Sinfonietta.

Press photos: www.emma.museum/press

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