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EMMA's summer focuses on wood

The EMMA –Espoo Museum for Modern Art - summer exhibition theme is *Wood in the hands of the sculptor – Finnish wood sculpture from the 1950s to the 2000s*. The extensive exhibition assembled by Professor **Leena Peltola** features over 100 works by 23 Finnish sculptors of different ages, each of whom handles the same material in his or her own personal way.

The exhibition artists are **Martti Aihla, Kari Cavén, Tom Engblom, Radoslaw Gryta, Mauno Hartman, Jussi Heikkilä, Maija Helasvuo, Veikko Hirvimäki, Pasi Eerik Karjula, Tapani Kokko, Markku Kivinen, Inka Nieminen, Pauno Pohjolainen, Kimmo Pyykkö, Riku Riippa, Joakim Sederholm, Anneli Sipiläinen, Jyrki Siukonen, Kain Tapper, Kirsii Tapper, Nora Tapper, Hanna Vahvaselkä and Heikki W. Virolainen**. With the exception of Kain Tapper and Heikki W. Virolainen all the artists are still living.

Working with wood - be it making a bark boat or a wooden building – is a Finnish tradition which has been handed down from generation to generation. In art, too, wood sculpture has long traditions based on church art. The first wood sculptors were skilled and gifted craftsmen who carved pulpits, wooden “poor boys” and church sculptures based on foreign models. Academic sculpture became established in Finland at the end of the 19th century but it owed much of its inspiration to wooden folk sculpture tradition.

The earliest works in EMMA's exhibition go back to a time when there was lively discussion between young sculptors and more conservative thinkers as to whether a tree stump was art. The new generation of artists treated wood freely – burning, scraping and patinating it.

Today's wood sculpture shows marked diversity in the ways of treating wood but the strong artisan stamp continues to live on in the hands of the sculptors. For many of the artists taking part in the exhibition wood is one material among many, for others it forms the basis of their artistic production. Artists are fascinated by the versatility of wood; as a material it is “warm, alive, practical, comfortable, national, it can be worked on manually or with machines and is found everywhere.”

Professor Leena Peltola (b. 1921), who has assembled the exhibition, has long been a name to conjure with in the art world. After a long career at the Ateneum National Gallery she has participated in an advisory capacity in the purchase of more than 6 000 art works for many Finnish collections including

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the Saastamoinen Foundation Collection on show at EMMA. After the wood sculpture exhibition Professor Peltola is considering retiring at the age of 86.

**Michael Elmgren & Ingar Dragset
Drama Queens, 2007**

Alongside the wood sculpture exhibition the video installation *Drama Queens* by the artist couple **Michael Elmgren** and **Ingvar Dragset** is being shown.

Drama Queens pohjautuu **Tim Etchellsin** tekstiin, jonka dialogissa kuvataiteen

Drama Queens is based on Tim Etchell's text which consists of a dialogue between seven super stars of art who meet on a theatre stage. The work was originally created for the Munster sculpture biennale of 2007 where it was shown as a live theatre performance in the Munster City Hall and as a video installation at the Landesmuseum in Munster. Michael Elmgren and Ingmar Dragset have been appointed curators of the Nordic Pavilion at the Venice Biennale 2009.

The summer exhibitions are open from 18.6-31.8.2008

Press photos: www.emma.museum/info

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