

Parasol unit

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Press release

Eija-Liisa Ahtila

26 February–25 April 2010 (Private view: 25 February, 6.30–9 p.m.)



Images: *Fishermen / Études No. 1*, 2007, 5 min 34 sec, DVD installation for 1 projection, 4:3 / 1:1.33, stereo surround, no dialogue. Courtesy Marian Goodman Gallery, New York and Paris, © 2007 Crystal Eye – Kristallisilmä Oy. *Where is Where?*, 2008, 53 min 43 sec, 6-channel projected high-definition installation with 8-channel sound. Photographed by Marja-Leena Hukkanen. Courtesy Marian Goodman Gallery, New York and Paris, © 2008 Crystal Eye – Kristallisilmä Oy; *The Hour of Prayer*, 2005, 14min 12sec, DVD installation for 4 projections, 4:3 / 1:1.33, sound DD 5.1, original language English, Photographed by Malla Hukkanen, Courtesy of Marian Goodman Gallery, New York and Paris © 2005 Crystal Eye – Kristallisilmä Oy

Parasol unit is delighted to present a major solo exhibition by the renowned Finnish film and video artist **Eija-Liisa Ahtila**. It includes three important moving image installations never before seen in England.

Ahtila is best known for works that concentrate on narratives in human life together with the relationships and primal emotions that underlie them. She describes her films as 'human dramas' because they play on the central themes of our existence, such as love, death, sexuality, the difficulty of communication, and individual identity – both its formation and disintegration. Her fictional stories emerge from interviews and extensive research, her own observation and memory. As Ahtila's films are often shown on multiple screens or within complex installations, her stories unfold simultaneously within time and space, thereby creating a multi-layered experience that engages the viewer both physically and emotionally. Her masterfully crafted narratives, striking portrayal of characters and highly individual mode of expression have captured public interest and won much critical acclaim.

The exhibition consists of three installations: on the ground floor *Where is Where?*, and on the first floor *The Hour of Prayer* and *Fishermen/Études No. 1*, and is accompanied by a new publication.

Where is Where? (2008) is a haunting and layered consideration of how the interpretation of history affects our perception of reality. It tells of a dramatic event that occurred during the Algerian War, when two young Algerian boys killed their French playmate in a colonialist conflict. Fifty years on, a European poet seeks to understand that act. Space and time fall away in the experiences and existentialist writings of the poet, as do notions of morality, religion, guilt and forgiveness. Please note that viewings of this film begin on the hour, and parental supervision is advised.

The Hour of Prayer (2005) is a short tale about human nature, renunciation and death, which marks a watershed in the artist's production. Via the events surrounding the demise of a dog, it tells the story of death entering a house and the process of dealing with grief. The material is shown in four simultaneous projections, the

intention being to explore the possibilities of disrupting the traditional causal logic, structure and space for perception in screen narrative, while still being able to follow the events.

Filmed in West Africa in an area where locals frequently attempt illegal immigration to Europe in the hope of a better future, *Fishermen/Études No. 1* (2007) is the first work in a series of five one-channel video installations called *Études*.¹ It recounts the tale of a group of men who repeatedly and frantically attempt to get out to sea in the face of strong winds and heavy seas, in a vain hope to earn their daily food.

In conjunction with the exhibition, Parasol unit with the support of FRAME (Finnish Fund for Art Exchange) will hold a one-off screening of Ahtila's film *Where is Where?* This UK première will be held at the **Prince Charles Cinema, Leicester Square**, on **Wednesday 14th April 2010** at **7pm**.

Eija-Liisa Ahtila (born 1959 in Hämeenlinna, Finland), held her first solo exhibition in 1990 at the Tampere Art Museum, Finland, and since then has exhibited extensively in Europe and the USA. Her exhibitions include: 2009, *Eija-Liisa Ahtila*, Museum of Modern Art Aalborg, Denmark; 2008, *Eija-Liisa Ahtila*, Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen, K21, Düsseldorf, Germany; 2008, *Eija-Liisa Ahtila*, Jeu de Paume, Paris, France; 2006, *Eija-Liisa Ahtila: The Wind*, MoMA Media Space, New York, USA; 2004, *Intention to Fail*, Berkeley Art Museum, Berkeley, USA; 2003, Tokyo Opera City Gallery, Tokyo, Japan; 2002, *Fantasized Persons and Taped Conversations*, Kiasma, Museum of Contemporary Art, Helsinki, Finland; 2001, Sala Montcada of Fundació "La Caixa", Barcelona, Spain; 2000, Neue Nationalgalerie, Berlin, Germany; 1999, Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, USA; 1998, Museum Fridericianum, Kassel, Germany.

Ahtila's work has also been shown at numerous film screenings and festivals, including the Sundance Film Festival, Utah, USA; Locarno International Film Festival, Switzerland; Hong Kong International Film Festival, Hong Kong, China; and film retrospectives at MoMA, New York, USA, Centre Pompidou, Paris, France and Tate Modern, London, UK.

This exhibition is kindly supported by:

THE
FINNISH
INSTITUTE
IN LONDON



FRAME
Finnish Fund for Art Exchange

Visitor information

Gallery opening hours: Tuesday – Saturday, 10 a.m. – 6 p.m. and Sunday, 12 – 5 p.m.

Closed: Good Friday and Easter Sunday.

Admission: Free

From Angel Tube station, turn left and walk down City Road for ten minutes before turning left into Wharf Road at the Texaco petrol station. From Old Street Tube station, leave via Exit 1 and walk up City Road for five minutes. Turn right into Wharf Road after passing the Texaco petrol station.

Buses 43, 205 and 214 all travel down City Road.

Note to editors

Parasol unit foundation for contemporary art is an independent educational charity devoted to promoting contemporary art for the benefit of the public. The core activity of the foundation is to showcase contemporary work of leading and young international artists who work in a variety of media. In conjunction with each exhibition Parasol unit organizes a series of talks and educational events. Parasol unit mounts four exhibitions a year, each of which is usually accompanied by a publication. To encourage the widest possible access to its exhibition programme, Parasol unit does not charge admission fees for its exhibitions.

Upcoming Exhibition:

TABAIMO: 26 May – 6 August 2010 (Preview 25 May)

¹ *étude*: a short composition or exercise for a solo instrument that focuses on demonstrating or improving a single area of technique.