

Oula Salokannel

Galleria Uusi Kipinä 26.2. – 16.3.2014

I use photographs and text as the material for my installation-type works. I create arrangements using various kinds of items and sources, including hardware stores, attics and storage rooms – the multi-historical cross-sections of Finnish peri-urban areas. I am interested in the temporal nature of images and I explore this in my arrangements, for example through the concepts of place, home, imagery and landscape. My works are also related to the themes of preservation and continuity. The exhibition at Galleria Uusi Kipinä consists of an installation entitled *Sininen muovitynnyri / Designing Translations in the Blue*.

Installation; photo printouts, photo album, objects, flake painted wall etc.

Two of the big photo printouts on the left: Bart van Lieshout

2014

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Sininen muovitynnyri / Designing Translations in the Blue

Finland's first suburbs were built in the 1950s based on the guiding principles of functionalism. The so-called "forest suburbs" combined bright spatial design with the surrounding environment, on the terms of the forests and rocks. The so-called "Finnish design" also earned its position in the canon of Nordic design and architecture at a time when prefabricated construction aimed at mass production was only just being developed. The concept of "timelessness", which is essential in this idyll of design, is probably one of the most often used expressions when defining the characteristics of good design. Lifting an item or an image above time or for example a trend does however involve a problematic starting point for the emergence of a new image. It's like Aalto and Tapiovaara's timelessness lied in their original design, in the skillful creations that can at the very most be reproduced by covering them in new anniversary year colors, while an unpopular and outdated design product could only be expected to have vintage value as a crummy representative of its time.

With regard to the commercially utilized idea of timelessness, it is worth noting that in order for an icon to remain, it has to be transmitted to this moment as an image. What journey did a certain item make and how has it taken shape in order to emerge at this moment? What is the leftover it carries with it, how does the leftover from the past create this moment, a new image that is also a landscape-like connection to the future? In a way, an image is always open and on its way, the only permanent thing is change. As a creator of images, I trace transmissions to shape them into a view that opens up so it can be transmitted.

In its narrowest form, design is seen as a rigid collection that excludes its applications, as the ownership of potential status symbols. Where design is considered to be above everyday life due to wealth, a Finnish place of residence seems to form into a stage for the pursuit of the latest design with “hardware store design” and status design complementing each other. The friends of Finnish design and esthetes who enjoy our homey slate paths may even talk about “designing the everyday life (practices)”. How could everyday design happen without the commercial imageries that show how personal mess can be cleared from sight and older design declared old-fashioned?

I have heard that what the Dutch call coziness is the semi-wild carefreeness that can often be seen in the front yards of the local houses. The wow architecture from different decades and homes filled with design of different ages allow from a Finnish perspective surprising decadence, such as thoroughly rotten garden furniture, to exist right next to them. The country that has been a point of spreading merchandise and cultural influence for decades is not blind to the history of applied art and will not update its facade for fear of patina. Everyday life is full of relics and very worn design, all of which has a potential to appear with a sense of newness in the present. I wonder if Finnish environmental design in the future will allow the japonist organic nature of art historical functionalism to exist outside of Villa Mairea which is now a museum.

The installation *Sininen muovitynnyri / Designing Translations in the Blue* was created on the basis of a sentence I read a couple of years ago: “There is no transportation without translation.”¹ I didn’t manage to tackle the book from cover to cover and I can’t say that I absorbed, let alone remember much of what I read. Therefore, quoting this particular sentence in this context is an example of the statement it makes concerning transmission through distances and various kinds of interruptions. Objects such as concepts, items and other shapes and landscapes change on their journey through time, but they do it by changing both the sender and the recipient. In other words, when transmitted, they perform a transformation or translation, some kind of emergence of an image, where things that are distant from each other become connected to each other and influenced by each other. There are no direct transitions and nothing remains unchanged in the design of everyday life. As a metaphor for a translation, a blue plastic barrel (in Finnish “sininen muovitynnyri”) is a global transportation tool and also an object seen on the corner of numerous houses, something that changes in our memories. Continuing with the theme of translation, here in Finland *lunaria annua* is mainly known as an ornamental plant or used for craft purposes, while in Rotterdam it grows freely in the bushes.

Reflecting on transmission has led me to ask what the role of memory is. If a translation can be seen as an emergence of an image or as standing out, then translations also appear in the creation of distance, in separations, in forgetting and also in sorrow, although that was not really my intention when producing this image. Memory dwells on the clear blue bottom of a barrel.

¹ Bryant, Levi. (2011) ‘The Ontic Principle: Outline of an Object-Oriented Ontology’ in Levi Bryant & Nick Srnicek & Graham Harman (ed.) *The Speculative Turn: Continental Materialism and Realism*. Melbourne: re.press, 275.