

A Cave for Play

- a group show at Leikkiluola, Helsinki

Organised by Sakari Tervo

Corinna Helenelund

Lukas Hoffmann

Milena Huhta

Johanna Härkönen

Arttu Merimaa

Hermann Saari

Raimo Saari

LM Salling

Aki Turunen

Niina Tervo

Man Yau

Leikkiluola is a playground built in a bomb shelter under the Hakaniemi marked square in Helsinki, Finland.

Photographs by Otto Bystrom, Sakari Tervo and Lukas Hoffmann.

A Cave for Play

- a text by Juuso Tervo

When bored, we can try the trampolines. There, freeing oneself from gravity's pull, we acquire a miraculous freedom – momentarily – to become someone or something else: a bird, a buffoon, a boy wonder. But it's hard work to keep oneself in the air. Eventually, we run out of breath as our body reminds us that we are land beasts, not birds.

It is not, though, weightlessness itself that allows us this momentary freedom: it is the magic of trampoline from which this miraculous sensation emerges. And what is a trampoline, it's magic? Yes, serious gymnasts use it as a tool, but for others – the rest of us – it is a toy. Unlike toys designed for our use, trampoline uses us: the hard work put into our fleeting aerial metamorphoses is work in which we try to adapt to the strange laws of nature governing the trampoline. Within its frame, we walk and talk differently; we become creatures marked by its circle of magic. As a toy, the trampoline offers a passageway to things otherwise; fragments of fantasy.

Walking around this underground playland, one finds metamorphoses of various kinds that do not settle with one particular meaning. A tree has become a roundabout, a slide waves like the sea. Panels depicting ruin-like walls covered by vegetation camouflage the structures of a dizzying maze where, upon entering, one easily loses the sense of direction. In this realm of play, every object evokes multiple uses, inviting us to find out what might these uses be; to find out three ways into and four ways out from the labyrinth. Like the trampoline, the playland uses us: it provides a time to adapt oneself to strange things, to imagined worlds covered in bouncy plastic and shine.

It does not come as a surprise, then, to find these artists wandering around the cave, playing with the frame that the playland itself is. We seem to be looking for an emergence: an alchemy that turns the artwork into another kind of work, a work marked by magic close to the momentary weightlessness experienced in the trampoline. As gravity eventually pulls us down, the artwork returns back to its own realm: surely it is not a toy. Nevertheless, marked by play, these works participate in an emergence of other worlds within this world of fleeting fantasies. What was a faux ruin now serves as a stage for artworks worked by bodies that this place puts to work; a momentary stage for possible metamorphoses. A layer after layer not of meanings, but frames, circles of activity and work.

Like in an exhibition, we might expect to be shown things in this playland. But we also know that play can shelter, offer a camouflage, and store secrets. What disguises what here, underground? Surely the artworks stick out: they seem to be out of place. And yet, momentarily weightless, they blend into the play, showing themselves only otherwise. We see play, a time for play, mere time. A deep, heavy breathing follows. Catching our breath, we return to the ground, this time above it.



Aki Turunen
The Spring Fantasy, the brimstone
oil on canvas
135cm x 120cm
2014



Aki Turunen
The Spring Fantasy, the brimstone
oil on canvas
135cm x 120cm
2014



Arttu Merimaa
(Untitled)
work from the series "Grandfather's Leather Club"
drawing on unburnt clay
2017



Arttu Merimaa
(Untitled)
work from the series "Grandfather's Leather Club"
drawing on unburnt clay
2017



Corinna Helenelund
Extended Blue
textile and wadding
2018

A large, vibrant blue sculpture of a reclining figure, possibly a person or a creature, is the central focus. The figure is positioned on a green and brown checkered mat, which is part of a playground structure. The figure's body is elongated and muscular, with its arms resting on its knees and its legs spread out. The figure is surrounded by various playground elements, including a green slide, a brown net, and a brown frame. The background shows a red and white checkered wall and a green and brown checkered floor. The overall scene is a colorful and playful environment.

Corinna Helenelund
Extended Blue
textile and wadding
2018



Hermann Saari

The Rest

eye shields, plastic wrap, a styrofoam head, foam rubber,
ceramics, metal, textile, inflatable glider

2018



Hermann Saari

The Rest

eye shields, plastic wrap, a styrofoam head, foam rubber,
ceramics, metal, textile, inflatable glider

2018



Johanna Härkönen
Trinity
coloured pencil on paper, pu fake fur, wood, clay, polyvinyl chloride
100x70 cm
2018



Johanna Härkönen
Trinity
coloured pencil on paper, pu fake fur, wood, clay, polyvinyl chloride
100x70 cm
2018



LM Salling
Day Job or Mickey With Broom
metal wire, tape, wax, wood glue, acrylic paint
ca. 2cm x 2,5cm x 4cm
2017



LM Salling
Day Job or Mickey With Broom
metal wire, tape, wax, wood glue, acrylic paint
ca. 2cm x 2,5cm x 4cm
2017



Lukas Hoffmann
Untitled Remote Control
as part of '2 2civilcourage makes me weep'
foam cast with remote control, slide show, size and duration variable
2018



Lukas Hoffmann
Untitled Remote Control
as part of '2 2civilcourage makes me weep'
foam cast with remote control, slide show, size and duration variable
2018



Man Yau
KNIGHT
from the series CHECKMATE, a part of the collaborative project 'Dislocation'
hand carved marble, ash wood
30 x 19 x 19 cm
2014



Man Yau
KNIGHT

from the series CHECKMATE, a part of the collaborative project 'Dislocation'
hand carved marble, ash wood
30 x 19 x 19 cm
2014



Milena Huhta
Whitehead Gag
work from the series "FetiShōjo"
ink on paper
2018




Milena Huhta
Peach Sissy
work from the series "FetiShōjo"
ink and watercolour on paper
2018



Niina Tervo
Amphibian
natural rubber, pigment, wheat flour
2017

Niina Tervo
Amphibian
natural rubber, pigment, wheat flour
2017





Raimo Saarinen
soft pale pink
peony, waxed cotton cord
2018



Raimo Saarinen
soft pale pink
peony, waxed cotton cord
2018

Corinna Helenelund is a Finnish artist working with sculpture and installation. Helenelunds work has its base in the impossibility to fit and keep the morphing formlessness of life inside the human body, with a pull towards intense emotional states and their distorted proportions and perspectives and an interest in how inner stirrings warp our experience of the outer world while our surroundings pour their colors on us. / corinnahelenelund.com

Lukas Hoffmann, lives and works in Berlin, Germany. He graduated from the Gerrit Rietveld Academy, Amsterdam, Netherlands and is currently enrolled at the Dutch Art Institute, Roaming. He is also part of the artist collective [Samet Yilmaz](#) (formerly known as k.i. beyoncé).

Milena Huhta is mixing together elements of 90's shōjo manga, sci-fi scenarios, contemporary fashion and Asian folklore, she creates worlds filled with conflicted and melancholy characters. / milenahuhta.com

Johanna Härkönen is an artist from Helsinki now living and working in New York. Härkönen has a background in fashion design at Aalto University of Art and Design and works with painting, illustration, 3D animation and mixed media. In Härkönen's latest works hand-drawn chimeras, buff figures and mutants roam freely within an overblowing decorative framing featuring rave skunk hair, tribal ornaments and gloss plastic covering. The ceramic hanging ornaments resemble sigils used in chaos magick rituals. / johannaharkonen.com

Arttu Merimaa is an artist focusing on moving image and video installation. His videos deal with the merging of the common and the subjective; how personal experiences co-exist with the media culture and how reality is conceptualized through visual imagery. In addition to his own artistic work Merimaa runs a window gallery called [Alkovi](#) in Helsinki. / arttu.linnake.net

Hermanni Saarinen utilizes heterogenous materials within his works, which can take a form of a sculpture or installation. Materials form associative networks and interact together creating stage like situations. Often a work comes from a certain bodily feeling or body posture, like staring from a window or resting. Saarinen is interested in actions and situations which are usually considered unproductive, slow and passive. Saarinen has graduated from the Finnish Academy of Fine Arts in 2011 / hermannisaarinen.com

Raimo Saarinen is a Helsinki based sculptor whose artistic practice focuses on the various ideas of nature and people's relationship with plants and ecosystems in the western post-industrial cultures. Saarinen's works explore temporality, power relationships and the theme of estrangement. He is specialized in working with living plants and organic matter. / raimosaarinen.com

L M Salling is a Danish artist based in Helsinki. Told through a universe inhabited by familiar and absurd characters accompanied by ideograms and religious symbols, Salling's work centres around the darker and more introverted sides of the human mind and soul, exploring the feeling of otherness and existential disorder and chaos.

Aki Turunen is a passionate painter who graduated in the Finnish Academy of Fine Arts in 2011. In addition to that, he also studied painting at the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts in Copenhagen in 2011. Turunen's work is characterized by a deep interest in art history, a wish to combine both intellect and tactility, a delicate use of refined materials, such as icon grounds and pearl-like secondary colours matted with beeswax. He is perhaps most known of his snake-themed paintings: "In the depth of an ocean there lurks a malevolent snake whose scales shine like condensed jewels." / akiturunen.com

Niina Tervo creates multimedia art, using mostly sculpture and installation. Her works are based on scientific and philosophical reflections on life, its structure and the underlying forces. The materiality of Tervo's sculptures alludes to the existence and imperceptibility of forces, through which she explores the interrelations between things and their intrinsic connections with the environment, alluding thereby to the structures of life. Tervo's works form an abstract, yet seemingly ordinary space, a process that makes the artist and the spectator alike a part of the research as well as the artwork itself.

Man Yau is an artist living and working in Helsinki. She graduated with a Masters's degree from the Aalto University of Art and Design in 2018 specialising in ceramics and glass design. Yau's works thread a balance between traditional methods and craftsmanship and industrial, detailed form and quality. / manyau.fi

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Juuso Tervo is currently working as a postdoctoral researcher at Aalto University School of Arts, Design and Architecture. His research and writing combine historical, philosophical, and political inquiries in art and education, drawing from fields such as literary theory, poetics, theology, philosophy of education, and philosophy of history. He received his PhD in Arts Administration, Education and Policy from The Ohio State University in 2014.

Sakari Tervo is an artist living and working in Helsinki. He graduated from the Finnish Academy of Fine Arts in 2011 and works in collaboration with other artist or in art collectives. He is a member in the [Sorbus gallery](#) working group.