

Hothouse of Painting

When looking at Tiina Elina Nurminen's paintings I immediately feel out of place. Instead of standing in an almost chilly and nondescript gallery or museum space I yearn to move outdoors – or better still – someplace where it's hot and humid. Nurminen spent a better part of the early 2000s in Zambia and nowadays resides in Switzerland. This change of place has had its effect on her works. The earlier translucently airy, coolly coloured paintings have transformed into tactile, almost perspiring canvases. Being a Finn, this abstract uneasiness is not something that can be put into words. Silent contemplation might be one way, guttural uttering alongside panting and puffing another.

Nurminen's paintings are maybe more like places and situations than easily recounted stories of lived moments. Even if she has often stated that memories or events have triggered these images, for me it is easier to approach and take them 'in' as manifestations of bodily sensations instead of judging them to be previously observed panoramas. This is not to say that these works are not places or mental environments constructed by, with and through painting. The somewhat worked up static nature of painting in general, and Nurminen's works in particular, is what makes them so appealing. We can either start to decipher the processes of paintings' coming into being or just let them 'be' and silently accept and enjoy their taciturn nature and in this particular situation permit them to make us sweat.

These works have their background in the already mentioned Zambian setting and the topographical references crack up here and there. Nurminen nevertheless cleverly avoids being overtly autobiographical and leaves us space and room to manoeuvre our way in and out of her works. This is not to say that occasional telltale signs of experienced events aren't visible. Nurminen just cunningly situates them into a vibrantly enchanting whole. Mountaintop-like forms acquire almost sensual qualities and aquatic vistas become delineations of painterly actions. Nurminen also frequently places obstacles that hinder an all too easy journey into her paintings. Here and there we are faced with visual accents that seem out of place. But even there, in that particular moment, we grasp something essential about the hothouse of painting.

Kari Immonen