

galerie gmurzynska zurich

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Jani Leinonen: "I want to become so famous that Damien Hirst's mother knows me..."

April 8th – June 4th 2011 Exhibition Gallery Gmurzynska, Zurich

Munich, March 24th 2011 – From April 8th until June 4th 2011, the Gallery Gmurzynska, Zurich will be exhibiting works by the Finnish artist Jani Leinonen. In this retrospective under the motto "I want to become so famous that Damien Hirst's mother knows me...", ca. 60 of this artist's installations, collages, paintings and videos are being shown.

It is the intention of Jani Leinonen to cause a stir and initiate discussions by means of spectacular, socially critical art projects. The artist caused a sensation with his work that shows framed begging signs of beggars from all over the world at the 2009 Biennale in Venice and with the kidnapping and execution of a "Ronald McDonald" statue in Helsinki in February 2011. Before that, the Finn had surprised everyone with his presentation in the "Art Supermarket", which he called into existence in Helsinki in 2006. For one month, contemporary works of art were sold in an empty supermarket. During this month, the number of visitors to the "Art Supermarket" exceeded those of all the museums and galleries in Helsinki put together. Another unusual event was the opening of the "Art Chop Shop" in Helsinki in 2007. Leinonen opened a business, located in three containers, in which everyone could bring his/her own works of art in order to have them "tuned" by Leinonen.

As unusual as Jani Leinonen's works of art are, the targets that the artist has set himself are equally surprising:

- 1) He would like to create a work of art that is stolen from a museum.
- 2) He would like to create a work of art that is so good that pirated copies are made of it in Shanghai.
- 3) He would like to become so famous that the mother of the artist Damien Hirst knows him.

In his works, Leinonen plays with various different political and social systems: the product-oriented society is taken up as a theme in the same way as is the striving for fame. In order to transport his message, the artist uses the marketing strategies of such systems. For example, he paints over advertising posters for commercial products in order to demonstrate the influence of society and marketing on each and every one of us.

Leinonen does not simply criticise the processes he describes in his art, but immerses himself in them. For example he allows the reactions to his art, such as newspaper articles, to flow back into it and thus creates new material. The surroundings, context, discussions, and scandals: in short, everything that happens in connection with his art is a part thereof and makes its own contribution towards Leinonen's work. Leinonen accordingly presents his art in a variety of ways: his paintings he exhibits in museums in the traditional manner; whilst his installations are set up in supermarkets or bars, or parts of the rooms such as gambling machines are incorporated into his art. Leinonen wishes to create ideologies, conversations, political changes or social controversies, not simply to place a picture on a white wall.

In addition to numerous solo exhibitions of his own in Europe and in America Jani Leinonen has also already presented his works in a number of renowned collective exhibitions. The Biennale in Venice 2009 and the 798 Beijing Biennale 2009 are among the highlights of his career. The Gallery Gmurzynska has been exhibiting his works regularly for the past two years.

Gallery Gmurzynska

For more than 40 years now, the Gallery Gmurzynska has specialised in masterpieces of classical modernism, contemporary art and artists belonging to the Russian avant-garde. The gallery is setting its milestones at its three locations in Zurich, St. Moritz and Zug and informs people concerning the most important art of the past century. More than 100 exhibition catalogues, books and catalogue raisonnés have been created in close cooperation with renowned experts from the whole world over. The Gallery Gmurzynska will be extending its programme in the future and placing its main emphasis more and more on works produced in the early 20th Century and their influence upon the art of today. In this way the gallery is building a bridge between modern and contemporary art

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