

## Tiina Kivinen



Tiina Kivinen (born 1971) studied at the North Karelia College of Arts, where she majored in printmaking and graphic art. She has had solo exhibitions in Finland, Germany, Estonia and Spain, and participated in group exhibitions also in China, South Korea, Japan, Russia, Germany, Italy, Estonia, Poland and Sweden. She is represented in numerous collections including Wäinö Aaltonen Museum of Art, Aboa Vetus & Ars Nova museo, The Government of Finland, The Finnish Parliament, and in the Collections of The Art Museums of Helsinki, Tampere, Oulu, Jyväskylä and Kouvola.

In 2012 she was the first winner of the Queen Sonja Nordic Art Award.

### Instinct and emotions

A small gesture in a landscape, weakness of a human, or a strong presence of an animal are things that are difficult to illustrate. They are states of mind, momentary perceptions. As topics of visual arts they become concrete. At the same time they tend to lose their original, intuitive sensitivity. A landscape turns into a still, colored surface; a human being becomes a person and an animal turns into a symbol.

Printmaker Tiina Kivinen has taken on the challenge. She concentrates on intuition. She reaches for the original frame, where sensitivity can be seen. Her work is about boundaries which are not easy to observe in real life – because stopping time is impossible.

Kivinen slows time down for us. She shows us images that offer a prolonged presence. From tiny premonitions arise thoughts and a restless motion appears to be coherent.

Kivinen offers us the possibility to see but at the same time she also forces us to take a closer look. She does not disregard the smallest things in life. Although the smallest might be left unseen in everyday life, Kivinen makes them visible in her works. The most vulnerable and trampled are defended by Kivinen.

Nevertheless, Kivinen does not preach, she shows empathy. She relies on the empathy of the viewer and works subtly, just like Asian lyricists. Her work can be compared to Japanese Tanka and Haiku poems. A light, breathing rhythm and the endless layers of contents and aesthetic colors emphasize the lyricism of her works.

Representation is a wavering notion for Kivinen. At times there are recognizable elements in the picture. In most cases, it is the viewer's own need to find the reason for the picture, the storyline that the picture entails. This need is deeply humane. The feeling of closeness when recognizing the motif makes the viewing experience pleasant, reflecting the viewer's own memories and experiences.

The strictest representatives of abstract art wanted to eliminate the possibility of recognizing the motifs. Kivinen's aim is quite the opposite. She tunes the viewer into a sensitive mood. She creates images that are easy to grasp.

The viewer is, however, on a narrow field: without concentration the motif is not easily understood. Kivinen plays with the viewer's need of recognizing the topic and at times she dares to make recognition almost impossible. The viewer's need to recognize the motif has to be deep enough so that the work is not merely considered as an abstract composition.

Kivinen's work is easy to view as a series because of the interesting interaction of abstract and figurative. Recognizing the topic in one piece encourages the viewer to find the topic in another piece as well. This is why her body of work is not seen in the same way as a group of mere abstract compositions.

Kivinen works with intaglio. It is often considered to be technical, heavy work lacking in direct processing of the motif. This is not true. Intaglio printmaking is very similar to drawing. Working on the image is possible also in the printing stage.

Kivinen uses etching very seldom. She works mainly with drypoint, mezzotint and monotype techniques.

With these techniques it is possible to print only small editions. A large number of Kivinen's prints are unique. Working on the image in the printing stage demands the presence of the artist, and that is the reason why only few of Kivinen's prints are printed by a professional fine art printer.

Kivinen concentrates on the most essential things. She prefers large surfaces but she has the ability to express herself in smaller surroundings as well. A square is one of her favorite forms. It is not obvious which way the print is finally displayed.

She expresses herself in an aphoristic way. A condensed message is often interestingly elliptical. Though being elliptic does not mean losing the meanings of the print. The meanings have a lyrical form, emphasizing the aesthetic features of the print.

Kivinen is a storyteller. The titles of her prints are contemporary and typical for everyday language use. The titles offer the viewer one possible way to interpret her works.

Kivinen expresses herself with lines and colors. The colors she uses are not loud - they are sheer and toned. There are bright greens and warm reds bringing light onto the surface. The most important color is black. The velvety black is created with mezzotint technique. The surface of the copper is broken into even holes that are filled with the hand rubbed ink. The ink transfers into the grains of the heavy printing paper. By polishing the broken surface of the copper, the black ink gets new shades and light.

In intaglio printmaking the colour black has a strong status. In Kivinen's work it raises up to a topic. At the same time it links the works to the traditional printmaking in a fine, respective way.

Kivinen composes with the deep, velvety black and makes the picture rest on the surface. The black is completely empty and brimful at the same time. It is rarely dismal. It is breathing, wide, and leaves room for the viewer's interpretation.

When taking a closer look at the black, it can be seen that it is by no means pure. The black that Kivinen uses is strongly toned. Sometimes it is warm, sometimes cold, but never insignificant. The shades of black appear in ways that are unnoticeable in a direct viewing experience. The difference would be noticeable if the same work would be printed with pure black.

The black presented in different shades and tones is not agonizing. It is the color of dusk, the horizon and the color of a campfire burned out. It does not compete with the whites: it wraps them alternately inside and around it. The other colors play minor roles in the play where black and white take the lead.

The line drawn by Kivinen lives a transitional stage. It has more nuances and it has made the works more drawing-like. A fragile line creates veil-like images that make the deep black surfaces even more noticeable.

In her newest prints the line is like hair. The mark strongly scratched on the copper has a new companion: a fine line, lightly carved. Kivinen's technique is drypoint. The line is carved directly on the copper plate. The technique is laborious and demanding, but it enables direct working on the image, so that the act of drawing is being emphasized and reflected to the print.

As an abstract, Kivinen's prints can be defined as drawings. They are stages for simple, humane observations. The black surface and the network of lines form an abstract composition or a recognizable object, depending on the context.

The epic intensity of her work is parallel with the ultimately tuned visual delight. Kivinen presents this in a very skilful way. The strong presence of the artist is transmitted from her work. It is lifelike and constantly open for new interpretations.

Veikko Halmetoja