

## **Dark Days, Bright Nights: Contemporary Paintings From Finland**

International Painting Exhibition Opens October 2 at Kemper Museum

KANSAS CITY – August 25, 2015 – ***Dark Days, Bright Nights: Contemporary Paintings from Finland*** gathers together and investigates the inspirations, methods, and practice of Finnish painters. *Dark Days, Bright Nights* presents 43 works of art—stylistically disparate and often visually dazzling—from 13 artists ranging from the post-WWII generation to those who have come of age squarely in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The exhibition features 41 two-dimensional paintings, a sculptural installation, and a projected video installation.

***Dark Days, Bright Nights: Contemporary Paintings from Finland*** will be on view at Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art from October 2, 2015, through February 21, 2016. With days of 24-hour darkness in the winter months and 24 hours of sunlight during the summer, what is real and what is a dream can seem a narrow distance apart in this most northern of the European countries. *Dark Days, Bright Nights* is curated by Barbara O'Brien, executive director Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art, Kansas City, Missouri. "My travels in Finland allowed the opportunity to create a portrait of a time and place where support for the arts has been strong, and the notion of the painter as a respected cultural worker is palpable," said O'Brien. Admission to the Kemper Museum and this special exhibition is free.

The 13 artists represented in *Dark Days, Bright Nights* were all born in Finland, and now work in locations including the city and countryside of Finland as well as Berlin, New York City, and Stockholm. Artists include Jani Hänninen, Heikki Marila, Marika Mäkelä, Jarmo Mäkilä, Rauha Mäkilä, Reima Nevalainen, Leena Nio, Vesa-Pekka Rannikko, Mari Rantanen, Mari Sunna, Nanna Susi, Sirpa Särkijärvi, and Anna Tuori. The artists selected represent a wide range of experiences and painting styles, but are connected by the Kemper Museum's philosophical focus on investigating the history of the gesture in painting and in creating a conceptual and art historic bridge from the 20th to the 21st century in both exhibition program and the Permanent Collection.

Jarmo Mäkilä's narrative tales of country life in the shadow of WWII are a counterpoint to the 21<sup>st</sup>-century inspiration of cityscapes and graffiti in works by Jani Hänninen. The relationship to the natural world, so important to the Finnish people, is vividly realized in the paintings by Lapland artist Sirpa Särkijärvi. The space between waking and sleeping seems to come to life in the snow-globe-like paintings by Anna Tuori. The desire to control and genetically manipulate nature is explored in a video installation by Vesa-Pekka Rannikko.

A full-color catalogue accompanies the exhibition, and is available for purchase in the Kemper Museum Shop. The catalogue provides art historical scholarship and cultural context to the exhibition and includes essays written by Peter MacKeith, Honorary Consul General to Finland; Timo Valjakka, an independent writer, curator, and critic based in Helsinki and London; and curator O'Brien.

Support for the Kemper Museum is generously provided by members and donors, especially Frame Visual Art Finland, and The Ministry for Foreign Affairs and the Consulate General of Finland. Financial assistance for this project has been provided by the Missouri Arts Council, a state agency. This project is supported in part by an award from the National Endowment for the Arts.

A complete list of all scheduled Museum programs and times can be found at [kemperart.org](http://kemperart.org). Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art is open 10:00 a.m.–4:00 p.m., Tuesday–Thursday; 10:00 a.m.–9:00 p.m., Friday–Saturday; and 11:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m., Sunday. All Kemper Museum programs are free.

## **SELECTED EXHIBITION-RELATED PROGRAMS**

### **Opening and Artist Panel: Jarmo Mäkilä, Rauha Mäkilä, Vesa-Pekka Rannikko, and Anna Tuori**

**Friday, October 2, 5:00–6:00 p.m. cash bar and live music, 6:00 p.m. artist panel**  
Exhibition curator Barbara O'Brien moderates a discussion with exhibition artists. Enjoy live improvisational electronica music by Kansas City-based Mnemosyne Quartet, and talk with docent guides in the exhibition throughout the evening.

### **Performance: Helado Negro**

**Friday, October 16, 7:00 p.m. cash bar and performance**  
Headlining, Florida-born, Brooklyn-based musician Helado Negro performs his blend of electronic compositions and live vocals with the dreamy movements of local volunteer "tinsel

dancers” in this choreographed performance. Musician Thomas Wincek opens the evening with original electronic pop compositions.

**“A House of Finland” Lecture: Peter MacKeith**

Friday, October 30, 5:00–7:00 p.m. cash bar, 6:00 p.m. lecture

Bringing his experience as an architectural historian, MacKeith adds a lively point of view to understanding the paintings in *Dark Days, Bright Nights*, for which he contributed a catalogue essay.

— more —

**“What is a Portrait?” Artist Talk: Mari Rantanen**

Friday, November 13, 5:00–7:00 p.m. cash bar, 6:00 p.m. artist talk

Inspired by the iconic Marimekko fabric designs, painter Rantanen creates the vividly colored and geometrically patterned portraits of women artists that are featured in *Dark Days, Bright Nights*. Born in Finland, Rantanen now splits her time between Sweden and New York City.

**Meditation in the Galleries**

Sunday, November 15, 2:00 p.m.

Enjoy a relaxing and rejuvenating meditation in the Charlotte Crosby Kemper Gallery, led by sound practitioner Paul Rudy. Bring your yoga mat and enjoy a sound immersion amongst a range of works in the exhibition. Space is limited; RSVP at [reservations@kemperart.org](mailto:reservations@kemperart.org), Subject: MEDITATION

**Curator-led tour: *Dark Days, Bright Nights: Contemporary Paintings from Finland***

Sunday, December 6, 2:00 p.m.

As we approach the shortest day of the year, join Barbara O’Brien in the Charlotte Crosby Kemper Gallery as she shares stories of visiting the studios of the Finnish painters whose paintings are included in *Dark Days, Bright Nights*.

**Family Day: Taiteen Tekemisen**

Saturday, December 12, 1:00–3:00 p.m.

All ages | Drop-in | No registration required

Children of all ages, led by a local working artist, will create their own works of art inspired by *Dark Days, Bright Nights: Contemporary Paintings from Finland*, using mediums such as paint sticks, clay, wire, and more!

**Artist Talk: Kati Toivanen**

Friday, January 15, 5:00–7:00 p.m. cash bar, 6:00 p.m. artist talk

Finnish-born, Kansas City-based artist Kati Toivanen presents her 2015 public art projects for Art in the Loop and Art in the Park and discusses Finnish influences in her work.

**Dino O’Dell: *One World, Many Songs***

Sunday, January 24, 2:00–2:30 p.m.

All ages | Drop-in | No registration required

Go on an adventure around the world. This geographical journey transports students to all seven continents and highlights details about each one. Through interactive music, stories, and images, Dino sings of the world’s longest river, tallest mountains, and largest desert while teaching the names and locations of the oceans and continents.

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## **ABOUT THE KEMPER MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART**

Kansas City's renowned FREE contemporary art museum, the Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art opened in October 1994 and draws 120,000 visitors each year. The Museum boasts a rapidly growing Permanent Collection that uniquely bridges modern and contemporary works of art featuring artists such as Louise Bourgeois, Helen Frankenthaler, Willem de Kooning, Georgia O'Keeffe, Keltie Ferris, Trenton Doyle Hancock, Richard Mosse, and Ursula von Rydingsvard. The Museum hosts special exhibitions, installations, lectures, as well as children and family programs and workshops.

The Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art (4420 Warwick Blvd.) is open 10:00 a.m.–4:00 p.m., Tuesday–Thursday; 10:00 a.m.–9:00 p.m., Friday–Saturday; and 11:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m., Sunday. Café Sebastienne serves lunch 11:00 a.m.–2:30 p.m., Tuesday–Sunday; and dinner 5:30–9:00 p.m., Friday–Saturday. The Museum and Café are closed on Mondays and major holidays. Kemper at the Crossroads (33 W. 19th Street) is open 10:00 a.m.–4:00 p.m., Wednesday–Thursday; 10:00 a.m.–9:00 p.m., Friday; noon–4:00 p.m., Saturday, and the galleries at Kemper East (200 E. 44th Street) are open 10:00 a.m.–5:30 p.m., Tuesday–Friday; 10:00 a.m.–2:00 p.m., Saturday. Admission is free at all three locations.

**For more information about the Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art, visit [kemperart.org](http://kemperart.org).**

For high-resolution images or media inquiries please contact:  
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Images and downloadables are also available online at: <http://www.kemperart.org/press-kit>