

THE A-Z OF CURATOR

BY VEERA PEKKINEN

MARIKA MAIJALA | MARIA HERREROS

14.11.–14.12.2019

Mattsson & Mattsson, Luotsikatu 8, Helsinki

A is for Antiquarian bookshops

A big part of the thought process behind the exhibition has been made in antiquarian bookshops.

B is for Sylvia Beach

An American bookseller and a visionary publisher, whose bookshop was a gathering place of artists, writers and musicians in 1920s Paris.

C is for Chapeau

Many of Marika Maijala drawings are repeated images. Her characters often wear hats, which can be seen as a sign of artists' longing for lost worlds.

D is for Robert Delaunay

One of the early inspirations for the exhibition was a Paris city map from year 1976. The cover image of the map is painted by Robert Delaunay, an artist who lived in Paris between 1900 and 1940.

E is for Une Étude En Rouge

The central colors of the exhibition, turquoise, verte, blanche and rouge, are mentioned in the dramatic song "Une Étude en rouge", written and composed by Aino Venna. It has served as a subconscious inspiration for the exhibition.

F is for Foux Du Fafa

Flight of the Conchords' "Foux du Fafa" – Lots of fun as a parody of what happens if you don't know French grammar and just memorize phrases. Great as a discussion starter of stereotypes. The video can be seen in the exhibition's behind-the-scenes blog.

G is for Guilt

While staying in Paris, Marika was dealing loneliness and feelings of guilt. She was feeling shame over being white, privileged "artist in Paris."

H is for Maria Herreros

Maria Herreros' (b. 1983, Valencia) work balances between the sweet and the grotesque. This is the first time her illustrations are on view in the Nordic countries.

I is for Illustration Exhibition

Is the gallery the best place for art media which has already been published elsewhere? The idea of doing this exhibition started from my need to test and find out, develop and share.

J is for Joie

Playful and hilarious are adjectives related to Marika Maijala's work, because of its colors and childishness. But if you read the story "Rosie's Journey", you'll understand that it's all about the search of joy (joie f), as some kind of a goal, yet unreachable.

K is for Kiki de Montparnasse

Maria Herreros' series of portraits of Kiki, a nightclub singer, actress and a popular artist's model, salute the The Queen of Montparnasse and at the same time, those models and artists who are already forgotten (if they were ever known).

L is for Luxe, Calme et Volupté

The curatorial method of the exhibition can be described with these words: 'Là, tout n'est qu'ordre et beauté, Luxe, calme et volupté.' ('There, all is order and beauty, Luxury, peace and pleasure.') Charles Baudelaire, Les Fleurs du Mal (1857)

M is for Marika Maijala

Marika Maijala's (b. 1974, Mikkeli) artworks speak to us with a long-lost language of childhood. She has recently received the prestigious Finnish Rudolf Koivu Prize for her debut as a writer, Rosie's Journey (2018).

N is for Notebook

Notebooks are Marika Maijala's visual diary, where ideas are affirmed. She wants to keep the free spirit of sketching in her final illustrations, and sometimes uses the sketches directly from the notebooks, just as they are.

O is for Orientalism

Josephine Baker was an exception to white hegemony in early show business and she crystallized a kind of fusion between orientalism, jazz, cubism, and the 1920s passion for African art.

P is for Les Ponts

When I saw Marika Maijala's wildly expressive wax crayon drawings of Parisian bridges for the first time, I was struck by how well they fit together with densely detailed works of Maria Herreros. Despite the different styles they can easily be presented side by side, and neither one dominates the other.

Q is for Quelle Surprise!

A simple wax crayon drawing Marika made in Paris is a great example of how the subject matter of a piece of artwork needs not be fully explained, delineated or understood. It can still bring energy to its surroundings.

R is for Rhythm

The rhythm of the exhibition comes when the chosen elements find their specific order in space. Placed above the front door, the first (and the last) artwork of the exhibition is Marika Maijala's "Le Sacre du Printemps". It is a humorous prelude for the exhibition.

S is for Solitude

Marika's wax crayon drawing "Solitude" is a beautiful reminder of the fact that everybody must have solitude at some point, to be able to get perspective on their life, and to get a feeling of self, of inner quiet. Solitude is also a chapter in her video "Artist en résidence", influenced by silent movies and French New Wave

T is for Taika-show

Taika-show ("Taika" means Magic in Finnish) is a self-created word Marika was using when we met in Paris. Taika-show is a kind of metaphor for the whole project, concentrated on the magic of drawing.

U is for Ulysses

In 1935, American publisher George Macey offered artist Henri Matisse \$5,000 to create as many etchings as this budget would afford for a special illustrated edition of James Joyce's *Ulysses* – first published in its entirety in Paris by Sylvia Beach in 1922.

V is for Venue

I wasn't looking for a traditional exhibition space for this exhibition. Therefore, the domestic setting in Mattsson & Mattsson's Studio Gallery was a delightful finding, not to mention the exactly right blue walls.

W is for Wallace Fountains

Bridges, fountains and parks set the verdurous, soothing tone in the first room of the gallery. Wallace Fountains are public drinking fountains in Paris, financed by an art collector and philanthropist Sir Richard Wallace.

X is for X-tra mile

Exhibitions take time to put together, and going the extra mile is always worth it.

Y is for Youth

Maria Herreros' iconography walks between pop culture and contemporary anthropology and she has given a lot of thought to the age stereotypes. One of the most impressive portraits in the exhibition is the portrait of restaurant owner Rosalie Tobia in advanced years.

Z is for Zut Alors

What goes on behind the scenes of creating an exhibition? There surely has been highs and lows, twists and turns, and also many Zut Alors -moments in this one year process...

READ ENTIRE ARTICLES

azjournal.fi