

Artist statement

Sanni Vanttaja

I am a visual artist based in Helsinki, Finland. I'm working mainly with drawing, writing and printmaking. My artistic practice is contemplative and interrogative, and the themes are often of philosophical nature.

A recurring motif in my practice is the encounter, conflict and intertwining of image and text. I interpret these elements as differing, yet connected processes of thinking. Understanding and interpreting these processes require silence, and observing the messages emerging from quietude. I am especially fascinated in those moments in art making, in which analyzing and rational thinking step aside. When the thoughts begin to slowly take shapes and form images. These notions emerging from consciousness can be referential or even symbolic. They start to form their own language system, that can be lines and characters, shapes and words- anything, but immediate, obvious answers.

Lately I have been mainly focusing on the nature of line and its making.

Drawing, writing and printmaking offer vast, ever fascinating fields to examine the birth of forms, and the emerging of new worlds. Drawing a line can be surprising: at which point the line starts to create words and sentences? When does it expand, and begin to create images? I find drawing a line a fundamental, even primitive way to seek and form meanings. It means leaving a direct, almost raw mark in the world. A line is always a mark, "an inscription" - and even at its simplest very dynamic and charged.

Drawing is a subtle and unassuming artform. It is also intense, corporeal work in which the movement of the artist's body is being directly reproduced on the paper. The artist's emotion and intention, that might not even be conscious, can be read in the lines and their variations. Thus while drawing, the artist has to place herself in a vulnerable position, to reveal herself. In my practice I reflect this frailty and delicateness, both as a strength and uncertainty. I also wish to channel these sort of sentiments to the viewers, as well as encourage them to face their own sensitivity.

Besides drawing and printmaking, writing also has a big role in my artistic practice. I often write arbitrary notes as I work. From these fragments I mold poems, which reflect the linguistic aspects of my practice. In most exhibitions that I have held, I have presented both visual and textual works.

Immersing oneself in artistic work can be seen as a critical gesture these days. For me it means tenderness, contemplation and grounding amid hecticness and demands. It can offer focus and serenity, and taking a break before constant observations and stimuli. Essential to my artwork is asking and seeking, empty space and slow pace. That point in which a question crystallizes into an image, an image into a new world.