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MUU Writes is a group composed of MUU members artists who share an interest in writing. The group has set themselves the task of publishing an essay on every exhibition scheduled in MUU's program autumn 2018, to be released both online and in the gallery.

MUU writes 05/12/2019

Text: JOHN GAYER – MUU Gala 2018

Premier 21.11.2018, Helsinki

MUU Gala 2018 is a celebration of contemporary video art, which simultaneously marks the culmination of Artists' Association MUU's 30th anniversary of operation. The compendium — curated by artist-filmmakers **Tellervo Kalleinen** and **Mika Taanila** — not only successfully integrates the work of seasoned practitioners and young emerging talents in an overview that is at once vital and engaging, perceptive and well paced, but it caps a year during which MUU has also focused on media artists and their art through a diverse range of events.

For MUU Gala 2018, Kalleinen and Taanila have picked twenty-two works and then divided the selections into two distinct groups. Twelve of the videos are being shown under the title *Beautiful Confusions*. *Interceptors* was chosen for the other ten. This pair of rubrics is quite discerning, as each title identifies characteristics that link all the videos in each group. This may not be fully obvious during the screening, but hints do pop up here and there. One gets a fuller sense of the ways the videos are connected by considering the impressions they have made on the viewer after all the work have been seen. This mental process of reviewing what one has just been screened – call it post-show filtering – triggers correlations, which makes the presentation that much more evocative.

Part of what connects the videos in *Beautiful Confusions* are portrayals of distance and disruption, contradictory thoughts and feelings, and dramatic shifts in perspective or process. The title is borrowed from **Miia Rinne's** 'layered film' *Beautiful Confusion* (2017), which is the fourth and latest work in her Open Film Project. Rinne began the project by hand painting a 100 metre-long stretch of blank film and finished it through digital post-production. She then made all the follow-up works using the same process. The one difference is that Rinne always painted on a copy of the previous film to make the next one. In this way the series has been converted into a dynamic evolutionary thread. As film begets film, new sights and sounds continue to blend with the increasingly elusive remnants of an ever more diluted past.

Various kinds of technical processes are highlighted in other works. Whereas **Timo**

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**ANNA HYRKKÄNEN &
HEIDI SARAMÄKI –
VARMUUDEN
HARHAKUVITELMAT II**

**MICHAL CZINEGE –
BEHIND THE MOON**

**PIA MÄNNIKKÖ –
VAIHEINEN**

**UUSIMMAT MUU-
NÄYTTELYT,
TAPAHTUMAT JA
UUTISET**

Wright's short experimental and highly clinical documentary *Ex Nihilo* (2018), for example, shows how technology is being harnessed to circumvent nature, **Yassine Khaled's** video/performance *Monitor Man* (2018) illustrates how people whose movement has been restricted can connect with people in other lands. **Taija Goldblatt's** *Olemisesta / On being* (2018), on the other hand, creates compelling scenarios out of low-tech processes (drawing, tallying) and marginal events (the sound of a stone cutting into glass). This visually rich composition is about escaping modern life's demands. The rapid tapping of cymbals in **Harri Larjosto's** *Cymbals* (2018) initially comes across as a hackneyed attempt to inject tension into humdrum scenes of a jet in flight. But this is a ploy, because just as work starts to get irritating, the video suddenly defies expectations and propels into high gear. Larjosto unleashes a torrent of gripping visuals and sound that transforms the mind-numbing tediousness of air travel into a mesmerising spectacle.

Interceptors, the second part of MUU Gala, operates in a manner that parallels *Beautiful Confusions* in the sense that it has found links among a diverse body of works. This section features situations in which the central figure of the narrative temporarily intercepts or is intercepted by some realisation, task, or set of circumstances. And it is only when the situation achieves some kind of resolution there that the figure (and the viewers vicariously experiencing the circumstances) are released from it.

The section's name was taken from **Risto-Pekka Blom's** *Interceptor* (2018), a work that recreates the famous 1989 Tiananmen Square incident and updates it. In the original version of the event an unknown person temporarily stops a convoy of tanks, but in Blom's version that individual halts a motorcade of luxury cars. Blom riffs off an historical moment in China to delineate a shift in the way people there are now controlled. The inherent confusion and tension engendered by this state of affairs is then offset by **Sara Pathirane's** poetic task *Attempt to Push a Mountain* (2018), which is also set in China. Gentle humour suffuses this jaunt that also feels so tentative. Until the very end, it keeps viewers wondering whether what they are seeing is illusory or real.

Highlighting idiosyncracies, the videos in this section cause viewers to question what is happening and stir up doubt. They also engender fascination in mundane features. One can, for example, identify with the artist's frustration in **Elisa Alaluusua's** *Making the Artic Line / Circle (Part III)* (2017) and be astonished by the improbable outcome in *Half Full* (2018), **Pinja Valja's** contradictory ode to facsimiles. **Johanna Ketola** reveals some of the peculiarities of man's relationship to nature in *Valley L447* (2016) and **Jukka Silokunnas' Hei Vaan! (2017) reaffirms the vagaries of time and place. Moreover, mental stress and humour combine in *Mirror* (2017), **Marjo Viitala's** incisive look at a game in which players aim to avoid being intercepted. Taking part is at once fun and nerve wracking.**

Finally, **Panu Johansson's** *Picturing a Micropolis: 96100-97690* (2017) offers a a bristling exploration of edge-lands, the grey territory that rings most urban centres. Populated by humdrum roadsides, flooded plots of land, deteriorating sports facilities and banal apartment blocks, the fleeting stream of jaggedly framed vistas conveys an unexpected vitality. At once wholly illustrative, the work also undermines disbelief. Who would have thought that a compendium of non-sites could be so captivating?

MUU Gala 2018 elicits energy and enthusiasm, and engenders contemplation on a

broad range of issues. It presents work that re-evaluates the past and present, derives from personal experience and encompasses affairs that are national and international in scope. The curators' choices attest to the talent of Artists' Association MUU's members, especially their abilities and interests, and diverse approaches to the medium. Though MUU Gala 2018 emerges as a fitting conclusion to a memorable year and marks a milestone, that milestone is much more than just a number. It addresses a substantial period of art activity — MUU's three decade-long presence — and operates as a threshold. MUU Gala 2018 isn't just about celebrating the past and the present; it also entails looking to MUU's future.

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