

Robert Lucander – rojekti: bar 9

Café Bar No 9, 9.4. – 6.5.2009

Robert Lucander (born 1962) is known for his paintings that utilize human figures and the imagery of advertisements and magazines. In previous work he has often eliminated the traces of painting by using acrylic paint, which he has applied evenly without apparent brushstrokes or without blending the colors together. In his recent works you can sense a new spontaneity that is emphasized by the even stronger integration between color and background.

The people Lucander depicts have changed from being individuals towards anonymous characters. In his earlier works public figures and celebrities could often be discerned, but now the attention is drawn to a new essential; the subject matter is not the depicted characters as such, but universally recognizable conditions, humane and banal absurdities. To be anonymous in a crowd or to step into the attention of the limelight: these extremities can offer feelings of safety as well as cause anxiety and fear of isolation, of loneliness.

The world of mass media often offers us ready-made stories, attitudes and conceptions, but Lucander encourages the viewer to draw his own conclusions. The paintings resemble riddles - in the retouched clues the viewer can find an emotion, ongoing situation or conflict, whereas their final interpretation is left open. The works express dramatic elements, but do not contain a direct narrative. The dramatic characteristics originate in everyday situations, tiny moments here and there, from something everyone can relate to but which to the surrounding often consists of invisible moments. How well can you hide that which you do not want others to see – or that which you dare not or may not want to meet within yourself? Lucander grasps the difficulty of holding on to your inner self in a world dominated by expectations and constant striving for perfection.

It is as though Lucander thinks abstractly through figurative painting. He examines boundaries between the abstract and the figurative and turns these attributes upside down: the figures move towards the abstract whereas the background of the painting at times forms a figurative element. The watercolor pen that Lucander uses accentuates the surface of the background material and gives ground for expressing new spontaneity.

Pilvi Kalhama, Gallery Kalhama & Piippo Contemporary
Fanny Tavastila, Café Bar No 9

Robert Lucander was born in Helsinki. He has studied fine arts at Hochschule der Kunste between 1989-1995 and has since then lived and worked permanently in Berlin. Since the early 1990s Lucander has participated actively in exhibitions throughout Europe. In Berlin he is represented by the renowned gallery Contemporary Fine Arts and in Helsinki by Gallery Kalhama & Piippo Contemporary. Lucander is professor of painting at Universität der Kunste in Berlin and has held frequent lectures at Akademie der bildenden Kunste in Vienna as well as the Finnish Academy of Fine Arts in Helsinki.

rojekti: bar 9 is a unique collaboration between Contemporary Fine Arts, Gallery Kalhama & Piippo Contemporary and Café Bar No 9 in which the paintings of Robert Lucander are brought into an everyday space in the center of Helsinki. The initiative to this project has been brought on by Lucander himself and most of the pieces are shown to the public for the first time.