



Contemporary Finnish-American Artist Series
20th Year Retrospective

Finlandia University Gallery • December 1, 2011, to January 14, 2012

A Retrospective of Exceptional Expression

In his introductory essay to the exhibit catalog for the Finlandia University Gallery's Contemporary Finnish-American Artist Series 20th Year Retrospective, Chicago-based art writer and journalist Jeff Huebner writes that the exhibit series "embraces a group of people whose work represents not only the range and diversity of Finnish-American cultural expression—from abstracted landscapes to ceramic vessels, from realistic paintings to photographic portraits, from stainless-steel sculptures to fiber art—but also the wide-ranging heterogeneity of the American art experience itself."

Huebner stresses, however, that, "While these artists and their appealing works are part of our American heritage, they also reveal varying levels of engagement with their ethnic identity, or nationality. Some directly explore themes and images related to their Finnish-ness (suomalaisuus), Finnish-American-ness, or Sámi heritage ... other artists show a more tenuous connection to their ancestry, their work more concerned with formal issues ... [and] some of these artists mine veins of magical realism, psychological realism, or surrealism."

"Though justly proud of their heritage, I'd venture to say that most of the artists in this exhibition would prefer not to be classified by such limiting, hyphenated labels. They are all exceptional American artists, period." Huebner concludes, adding that, "Except sometimes through the surname, you wouldn't necessarily know these folks were Finns."

"The Finlandia University Gallery gratefully acknowledges each of the 19 artists who have been part of the Finnish-American Artists Series," says gallery director Carrie Flaspohler. "It is their commitment that has made it a success. They are an inspiring, professional, and generous group of artists."

The exhibition and catalog are supported in part by Finlandia Foundation® National, Finn Spark, Inc., Patricia Van Pelt, and a gift in memory of The Hon. Dr. Gloria Jackson.

The Contemporary Finnish American Artist Series 20th Year Retrospective catalog can be ordered through Finlandia's North Wind Books. The 48-page soft cover book includes 19 full-color reproductions of the artwork featured in the exhibit.

Finlandia University Contemporary Finnish-American Artist Exhibit Series Participants

- 1991 Tarmo Watia
- 1992 Joyce Koskenmaki
- 1993 Kathleen Oettinger
- 1994 Peder Kitti
- 1995 Yeshe Linda Helander
- 1996 Gerald Immonen
- 1997 Elsa Bekkala
- 1998 Marlene Ekola Gerberick
- 1999 Rudy Autio
- 2000 Gladys Koski Holmes
- 2001 Arno Rafael Minkkinen
- 2002 10-Year Retrospective
- 2003 Eric Aho
- 2004 Petri Flint
- 2005 Vaino Kola
- 2006 David Salmela
- 2007 John Lundeen
- 2008 Désirée Koslin
- 2009 Bruce A. Niemi
- 2010 Dina Kantor