

Full of emptiness
Exhibition with Elina Salminen & Jeroen Vranken
from May 21st to July 2nd, 2016 at *Plagiarama*

ENG/

Why does emptiness usually have such a very bad press ? Thanks to both artists presented, empty becomes full and nice. You can enjoy it, because full and empty are both components of life and art, and it seems strange to give one or the other any kind of preference. That's the reason why Plagiarama presents a show full of emptiness, borrowing from Jeroen Vranken its expression describing the common presented works.

Jeroen Vranken shows a photographic work about the disappearance of his father. Through the distance of the camera, he started to take photographs of his father's objects, then he photographed also the places those objects originated from. Trying to know him and to meet him, in search of his presence, he found some more absence. His works irradiates fully this emptiness, and reflects a very present absence.

Elina Salminen develops a work of painting and installation. She provides the full a wide emptiness that allows its perception. Moreover, the full she shows is usually very delicate and hardly visible. Reducing the boundaries between full and empty, she gives the tiny the possibility to be powerful, focusing our attention on the weakest sign. She offers a very absent presence, a work full of emptiness.

Both artists highlight the full of emptiness in their own ways, and remind us that the full, the being give the possibilities, then it is through the emptiness, the non-being that we can use it, as the empty in a glass of water allows us to drink.

Curator Yuna Mathieu-Chovet

FR/

Pourquoi le vide a-t-il généralement si mauvaise presse ? Grâce aux deux artistes présentés, le vide devient plein et beau. Il peut s'apprécier, car le plein et le vide sont tous les deux des composants de la vie et de l'art, et cela semble étrange de donner à l'un ou à l'autre toute forme de préférence. C'est la raison pour laquelle Plagiarama présente une exposition pleine de vide, empruntant à Jeroen Vranken son expression décrivant l'ensemble des travaux présentés.

Jeroen Vranken présente un travail photographique à propos de la disparition de son père. À travers la distance induite par l'appareil photographique, il commence par photographier des objets lui appartenant, puis les lieux d'où ils proviennent. En essayant de connaître et de rencontrer son père, en cherchant sa présence, il trouvera encore plus d'absence. Son travail irradie pleinement ce vide et reflète une absence très présente.

Elina Salminen développe un travail de peinture et d'installation. Elle propose des interventions picturales à peine perceptibles, ses pièces n'étant visibles que grâce aux généreux espaces vides qui les entourent. En amenuisant ainsi les frontières entre le vide et le plein, elle donne à l'infime la possibilité d'être puissant, concentrant notre attention sur le plus faible signe. Elle offre une présence très absente, un travail plein de vide.

Les deux artistes soulignent la richesse du vide chacun à leur manière et nous rappellent que si le plein, l'être, donne des possibilités, c'est par le vide, le non-être, que nous pouvons y accéder, comme le vide dans un verre d'eau nous permet d'y boire.

Commissariat Yuna Mathieu-Chovet

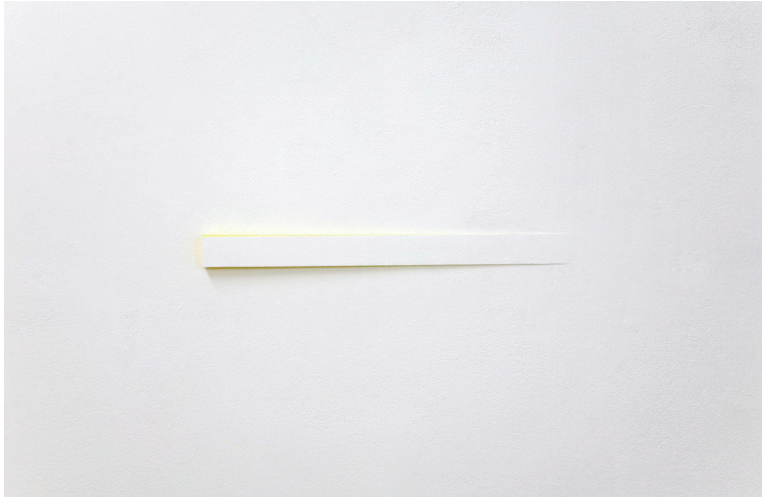
Full of emptiness
Exposition avec Elina Salminen & Jeroen Vranken
du 21 mai au 02 juillet 2016 à *Plagiarama*

Edited by **PLAGI ▶ R ◀ VM ◀**

with the kind support of Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles



Elina Salminen



White while pink, 2015

Elina Salminen
Oil on canvas
100x200 cm

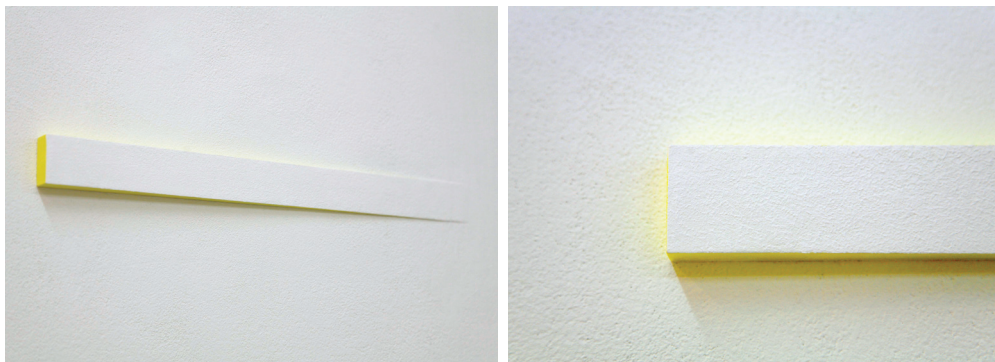
Splinter, 2016

Elina Salminen
Acrylics on wood
33x4x2 cm

If color is what makes things visible, my work is a lot about painting in the zone between invisible and visible. Enlightening this particular space with colors is to bring visibility to something absent - or, in other words, to give visibility to the emptiness. For me, an emptiness getting full but still remaining empty is one more way to talk about something that happens while we look at an artwork (or why not something else getting intense enough to become an experience) ; it's this invisible bound that tends to become perceptible, and for me this tension takes place by colors. It is like the desire of seeing becoming visible.

Another tension exists between black and white, two interesting colors not always considered as such. But we always seem to end up thinking of these two colors as the extreme poles between which the story of the visible begins. So did Aristotle, and later Goethe, thinking that colors were shades and shadows transforming white into colors. So, for them, colors other than white would be shadows. They are these shady areas that I tend to enlighten, as if the beginning of the color, the very first shades barely darker than white were actually lighter, as if these almost invisible colors were carrying more light than any white.

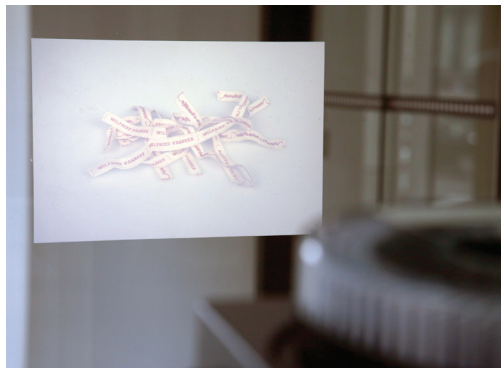
Elina Salminen, May 18th, 2016.



Elina Salminen is born in Helsinki, Finland in 1977. She studied french literature in Paris (1998-2003) and obtained a postgraduate degré in 20th century french poetry. After a few years in Helsinki she moved to Brussels and started studying painting in the *Royal Academy of Fine arts of Brussels (ARBA)* in 2011 and is about to finish with a Master's degré. She is laureate of the Prix Macors at the Mediatine art contest 2016.

Jeroen Vranken is born in Antwerp in 1987. He is a Ghent based photographer and media artist. He completed his MFA in photography at *KASK Ghent* in 2015 with great honours and has been published and exhibited internationally since. Vranken is part of *Unfold* and *CHPT.01* collective and makes music under the banner of *Atlas and Hoar*.

Jeroen Vranken



Tamam Shud - He is dead, and he is going to die, 2015

Jeroen Vranken

*slide projector, slides, sticker screen, one C-print kodak metallic paper, limewood framed, 80x100cm, one injet inova baryt paper, limewood framed, 70x50cm, two injet inova baryt papers, limewood framed, 80x100cm both, on the floor
variable dimensions*

It is a good question to ask why emptiness, or absence is by definition a bad thing. In my work, it is not an illustration of the uncanny nature of the story told, but more about the role that photography played in telling this story.

I've always associated photography with absence, or distance, as photographing for me, is a very physical thing. It is placing an object between yourself and the subject, and finally, it is the object that observes and documents the subject. But I do not see this as a bad thing. The uncontrollable nature of the final image is something very mysterious, and attractive.

Two years ago I came across the box filled with the objects, and when sifting through them for the first time, I had no hopes or even thoughts of finding anything related to my father. I was not trying to willingly bridge the gap between what I was told and what I wanted to be true. I did not aim to find my father, but I found a comfort that I couldn't understand.

The Polaroid photo's colors had shifted from a deeper contrast to a pale palette over the years, its print quality was not optimal, its surface became light sensitive, textured with creases here and there, from being moved around. It had a sharp white edge, and the image was centred. My parents were seated next to each other on a black leather sofa, both dressed up. They looked very young, around 20 years old my mother would later tell me, and they looked very happy. My father had one arm extended over the back of my mother's head, holding her. Even when they were still together, I never saw them this close. I had never before felt so close to an image, either.

When Roland Barthes found the image of his mother, which he calls «The Winter Garden Photograph» he quotes Godard saying «Not a just image, just an image». Barthes continues: «But my grief wanted a just image, an image which would both be justice and accuracy – *justesse*: just an image, but a just image.»¹ Something to which I could relate very well, almost as if I was searching for this image all along, one that possessed kindness, and offered a sort of amend making peace. I mainly knew my father through stories, those stories weren't necessarily just to his whole being, only to a part of his life that hurt others. There were other stories, fragments that I collected, which were far more adventurous and caring, loving. I could not find those in the photographs hidden in the drawer. There were reminiscent, but not accurate. Barthes continues: «For once, photography gave me a sentiment as certain as remembrance»².

¹ Roland Barthes, Camera Lucida, p 70, 2000, Vintage books; ² Roland Barthes, Camera Lucida, p 70, 2000, Vintage books;

I felt wounded by the image. It matters a great deal for me, but for me alone. I could add adjectives to it, exposing it as «the only photo I have where both of my parents are in together», attempting to give it more weight by words. Trying to wound its viewer. Though my efforts would be futile, it would not wound you like it wounds me. The only reason it is put in my installation is not of its importance to you, but its importance to me. To you, the viewer, it is nothing more than a piece of information, «...an indifferent picture, one of the thousand manifestations of the «ordinary»; it cannot in any way constitute the visible object of a science; it cannot establish an objectivity, in the positive sense of the term; at most it would interest your *studium*: period, clothes photography; but in it, for you, no wound.»³ As if it helped me to understand the depths of my loss, the image was stocked between the other objects, but out of all 300 objects in the box, it was the only image. It was obvious that these objects were kept as memories. When I asked my mother about the objects and why she kept them, she told me that there is no truth in photography, that your memories are in your head, but will fade eventually, «when you look at photographs you might think: oh have I been here?» she said, «but even that will eventually fade. All pictures fade.»

In the image my father was very much alive, and would remain living, but at the same time, he (and we all are) is heading towards un-dialectical death. Pursuing photographing the objects in the box, put me in dialogue with his death. The objects originated from the time the photo was taken, up to the moment when we parted ways. In the photograph he was very much alive and it was almost as if through the objects, through photographing them, I could guide him into death. Not by means of trying to murder him, but conclude him. In this way, «He is dead, and he is going to die»⁴ applies not only to the state of his life in the image, but also to the usage of the photographic process, letting the subject perish and its image live on...

I often interrogated the narrative of my work after the image was found. It was no funeral that was certain. There was no intent of burying anything, on the contrary it found more like a quest, thinking that by revisiting all the places my mother's memories (that might also be my father's) I could understand the image better, understand the person in the image better. But there was nothing to find, aside from the feeling that I had been there before, which was strange. It felt like chasing an invisible man, not a ghost, more like chasing myself, and connecting myself to him through spaces. Documenting what he might have seen. What I wanted him to have seen.

I never found my father, like I found him in that photo, by accident. I found fragments of me trying to find him in the images I constructed; I found his absence.

Jeroen Vranken, May 18th, 2016.

³ Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, p 73, 2000, Vintage books; ⁴ Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, p 95, 2000, Vintage books

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