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Press Release

Emma Jääskeläinen

Running Up That Hill

21.09. – 24.10.2021

Public Opening: Friday, 17.09.21, 11 am – 8 pm

**GALLERY WEEKEND
BERLIN
16 – 18 SEPTEMBER
*DISCOVERIES 2021**

PSM is pleased to present the first exhibition by Emma Jääskeläinen (*1988) in Germany. With her new marble sculptures and textile works the Finnish sculptor continues an artistic practice that has most recently been on view at her first institutional exhibition, at the Kiasma Museum of Contemporary Art, Helsinki in 2020.

In her sculpting, Emma Jääskeläinen avoids monumentality. Massiveness resides in the physical nature of the works and in their materials. Even the tiniest everyday things become meaningful in the heavy material mass of the sculptures, while the big questions of life can get dressed in gentle humour. The works can be references both to very concrete matters, such as domestic tasks and objects found at home, as well as to family members, memories, and embodied experiences. Often a sense of the personal connects the pieces. Never too serious, typically flavored with joy. The first thing she carved into stone was a butt-like balloon sculpture.

The works are woven to be a part of a story, a bouquet of anecdotes and fragments, which, however, have no beginning or end, and which include innumerable sidetracks. Although text is an essential part of Emma's work – sketching often includes writing song lyrics – pinning down the final meaning of the works by putting it in words appears tricky, even unnecessary. The sculptures resist being classified, and logical ordering does not have priority. Rather, Jääskeläinen's means is intuition. There is always room for coincidence.

In her works, the topics often receive forms that resemble body parts. The physical body is central not only as a form, but also as an instrument – of thinking and experiencing as well as physical sculpting. For Emma Jääskeläinen, sculpting and the sculptures are one.

One form often repeated in the pieces is the human hand. The hand is a tool. A limb that grasps a pen, plays an instrument, conducts everyday tasks. Carries, cares, works. Gets worn and tired while working, sore from repeating the same routine.

Jääskeläinen is interested in the susceptibility of the body to the world outside: the cramps or soreness resulting from sculpting are concrete for an artist. Dependency on the body and an understanding of its vulnerability guide working. The susceptibility of the body in different conditions: the chlorine from a swimming pool absorbed into the skin, skin wrinkled by water, body tested by air-conditioning, heat, the flu. There is a fine line between shelter and threat; different chemicals protect, but simultaneously, damage. The awareness, raised by the pandemic, of the continuous threat to the exposed body is a reality to everybody.

In her previous works, Emma focused on the visible part of the body, its surface. In her new pieces, she digs beneath the surface: into the brain. The brain sculpted from stone lays on the floor, relaxed. A sculpture, too, can be a body, taking repose in a hammock. Rocking and receiving the audience's gaze. The sculptures shyly seek contact outside themselves.

Emma Jääskeläinen has worked with a number of different types of stone. In her most recent works, she uses the Lappia green marble. A new type of stone always means a new way of sculpting. Sensitivity towards the material is indicated by a gentle approach, becoming familiar with the characteristics of the material. Work is negotiation and reacting to one another – collaboration. Sometimes, the stone puts up a struggle, at other times, it willingly receives the chisel and bends more smoothly into the form suggested to it. Just like cutting cheese as Emma once explained the process of sculpting.

Her combining materials includes a certain relaxedness and ease. Sometimes she adds light, fragile, delicate materials to the sculptures, which creates layers in the piece. These add-ons are materials she has collected on trips or readymades bought from supermarkets like seashells, earplugs, chillies, chewing gum or fast food chain's cap. Emma chooses stone which arouses strong impressions and contents. Marble from Norway had the look of a fatty sausage. In her new works, in addition to stone, Jääskeläinen uses sheep's wool, aluminium, and found objects as material. Textile and wool are for Jääskeläinen as any other malleable material. Felting turns wool into a tight mass. Combined with stone, a dense and thick felt shelter for the stone's hard, but also brittle surface. What is central is the parallel state of the materials, rather than their opposite nature. A stone can be soft just like wool, or felt rough like the coarse surface of stone.

Text: Satu Oksanen