

Janne Laine (b. 1970) is a Tampere, Finland-based artist who works mainly in the medium of heliogravure. Laine obtained a degree in visual arts from the Tampere School of Art and Media. Since 1992 he has exhibited in over 20 countries.

His work is included in numerous public collections in both Finland and abroad, and he has received a number of awards for his work, including the Bank of Canada Award at the 5th Biennale internationale d'estampe contemporaine de Trois-Rivières, Québec. Laine is also a Master Printer at Grafiikanpaja Himmelblau (Himmelblau Graphic Workshop), where he has worked since 1992. Laine recently received a five-year artist grant from the State of Finland.

Veikko Halmetoja (b. 1977) is a Finnish art critic. He works as a managing director for the largest annual art festival in Finland. He also writes art critiques for the leading national paper, *Helsingin Sanomat*. He has been Editor-in-Chief for an alternative art magazine called *½-lehti*. He has also written articles on the works of several artists in cooperation with them, including Janne Laine since 2001.

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Janne Laine *Silence*



Into the deep, heliogravure and aquatint, 40 x 60 cm, 2008



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Submerged in Water

by Veikko Halmetoja

translated by Anne Paldanius



Janne Laine is a Finnish artist who uses the traditional techniques of intaglio and photography. His method of working involves photographing his subject, then etching the image onto a copper plate, after which he continues to work the plate in order to get the desired image. He will often polish the plate to increase the amount of light, as well as to add a touch of mystery, in the final print. All unnecessary details disappear and the image is left uncluttered. The works, printed on a thick paper, come out airy and aesthetically timeless.

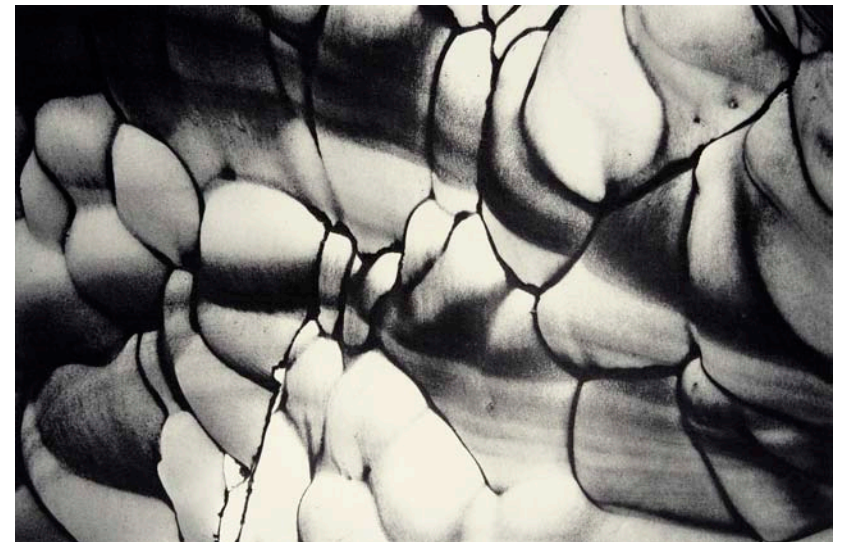
Laine does not tie his works to any particular moment or location. Although he takes photographs all over the world, he tones down the local characteristics in the final outcome. Unlike tourist snapshots, his pictures lack the desperate attempt to grasp something unique. Laine seeks to depict a perfect landscape, which does not exist. His approach is based on the search for this scenery, on the depiction of an imaginary landscape. Everywhere he goes, he finds a universal landscape. It is not a sight recognizable by all but a sight in which one always finds something familiar.

In his works Laine uses landscape as a narrative element. The works – nearly always made in series – depict big, dramatic movements in slow motion. He stops the moment and forces the viewer to forget the flow. Waterfalls come to a standstill, clouds of steam solidify and the ice ceases to melt. The series advances slowly and the movement is visible in the form of subtle changes. Life is symbolized by water, which is depicted in all of its three stages: ice, liquid and steam. Sometimes Laine depicts his subject at such a close range that recognition becomes difficult. This is one way to obscure the recognizable elements of the subject and bring the

image into a symbolic level. As a result, the remaining concrete material in the images becomes no more than a mere backdrop for the unattainable.

There is, nevertheless, a risk in obscuring the recognizable elements in the image: the semantic content may get lost in the process. Laine, however, manages to avoid the problem. The content matter in his works does not require an easy representation. The landscape is never merely a visual representation of a scenic view. It is a symbol of life: immaterial, yet concrete. The meaning is born expressly in the abstract level. Laine's works show imaginary landscapes independent of any ideologies; they are primal images, which show the birth of life.

At the same time, Laine is actively involved in the current environmental debate. Due to climate change many of the places he has used as his source material have now changed considerably. The changes in the landscape and, in particular, his concern over the melting glaciers in the North, are present in the works both metaphorically and concretely. The visual imagery of the end, instead of the beginning, is getting more and more visible in his images – an apocalyptic vision of the final moments. Yet, Laine does not preach. Instead, he lets the viewers make the next move and waits for their reaction. Laine does not find fault in viewers who enjoy the aesthetic pleasures caused by his works. The beauty in his works, nevertheless, always contains a subtle reminder of the things that we are about to lose.



Skin of Ice I, heliogravure and aquatint, 40 x 60 cm, 2008

Facing page: *Towards the light*, heliogravure and aquatint, 40 x 60 cm, 2008