

Warmth of bronze statuettes – Observations on Paula Mikkilä’s art

In the past few years, visual artist and sculptor Paula Mikkilä (b. 1954) has become a full-time artist. Her long experience as a school teacher specialising in art gives a strong underpinning to her career as an artist.

Paula Mikkilä’s artwork comprises several different forms of expression from paintings and mixed-technique pieces to sculptures, but in the recent years her focus has shifted more convincingly to the field of sculpture. As an artist, she has familiarized herself in particular with the classic material of bronze, which is her main material. Its plasticity very nicely suits the world of Mikkilä’s statuettes which depict both narrative stories and art-historical pastiches as modern-day re-interpretations.

During the 2010’s Paula Mikkilä has discovered serialism as a way for producing continuity in her statuettes and for re-interpreting content. From the piece “Home Sweet Home” (2006) onwards, spatiality, which is central to Mikkilä’s art, has further developed and has also found new meanings in her artwork. In the multi-piece series “Schjerfbeck”, Paula Mikkilä has re-created the paintings of the renowned painter Helene Schjerfbeck as three-dimensional statuettes. They preserve the original spirit of the classic painter but add Mikkilä’s own imprint and expression in details updated to reflect the modern day. For instance, Schjerfbeck’s classic painting “Shadow on the Wall” (1883) has been recast as a new version in the bronze statuette “Shadow on the Wall and a Forgotten Cell Phone” (2017). In this piece of work, the artist makes use of the shadow cast by the three-dimensional sculpture to create spatiality. Updated versions of Helene Schjerfbeck’s portraits, such as “Dancing Shoes” (1882), re-interpreted in bronze statuettes exhibit a fine example of Mikkilä’s warm-hearted imagery. The artist casts the statuettes herself, which demonstrates her good command of the material. Further, the artist successfully combines photography with bronze.

In the 2010’s, Paula Mikkilä has demonstrated professionalism by taking part in a vast number of exhibitions both on local and national levels. In addition to group exhibitions, she has displayed her artwork in solo exhibitions in Matera, Italy in 2018 (at the end of an artist residence period) and in Jyväskylä, Finland in 2017. The invitation to Osaka, Japan in May 2019 will further broaden her international contacts. Alongside her own creative work, Paula Mikkilä has also delivered commissioned works, such as the sculpture series for the Majaoja Foundation that the foundation awards as prizes.

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