

GOOD LUCK WITH LIFE

JULIANA HYRRI
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26 Feb. 2019 at 7.15 am

M Hey, if you have a moment, I'd like to hear what's going on with your exhibition plan!

J Sure, but I'm warning you already that I haven't really had a lot of time to work on this exhibition yet, heh. But it'll get started at some point.

M No problem!

11 Apr. 2019 at 11.37 am

J Hi Maija! I'm now starting to form a clearer idea of what I'm actually taking to the gallery. This process has been all about experimenting and getting a grip of new things. I was able to borrow equipment for animation loops, so they can be done (yay!), then I have 2-3 dollhouses whose painting is kind of a work in progress. They'll be a single colour all over and I'll install animations inside two of them. One of the dollhouses is shockingly large and I'm still considering whether to bring it inside the gallery. I thought about utilizing the gallery projector to project a crawling figure on the floor/ceiling, edge of the floor/ceiling. Also, I'll print a diorama of the room on fairly large foam boards. I've made the originals of it by hand using collage techniques, I thought that the originals could also be hung on display, they're quite small. I'll paint two large figures directly on the wall who appear to support the ceiling of the gallery. So, I'd like the exhibition to appear full, but not muddled. I thought that I'd make as much as possible of everything now, and then discard things, if necessary, when setting up the exhibition. I can also send you pictures if you need them!

J sorry about the kilometre-long message.

M Ooh, I like the idea that there are dollhouses and then suddenly the gallery too is a dollhouse where the large figures don't really fit! Or is that what you meant? What's your underlying idea? What kinds of feelings do you deal with? I'm now on a train on my way to Karjaa, we can chat.

M Send me a few pictures of the sketches!

M The text could be an interview. Oi

M Sent too soon

M If we don't have time to meet, then let's chat like this?

M What do you think?

J Yeah, that's exactly my idea! Figures that are too large in spaces that are too small, I was thinking about a kind of cabin fever, the façades and stage of life, a kind of treadmill of life and adjusting to society. But I don't want this to be an angst thing, but more about the kind of comedy and routines of this way of the world, a bit like struggling with it all.

J a chat is fine!

J So I've been spending a lot of time at home/ in my studio and perhaps I kind of mirror this whole exhibition and my own hassle and cabin fever as well :--D

J Here's a sketch of the wall painting

M The paintings will be great!

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One picture comes to mind, Alice in Wonderland by the French illustrator Rebecca Dautremer, have you seen it? It shows a house with a glass porch filled with Alice's huge face and a giant hand reaching from one of the windows. Not the same style, but just the idea of a girl growing uncontrollably and the room becoming too small.

Cabin fever is good

A dollhouse is perhaps a training field for life that is offered to girls where a sort of faint idea of happiness is staged. What memories of dollhouses do you personally have? Do you have any dollhouse references, something that you've read or seen?

Hey, yeah, that Alice in Wonderland thing is a classic, but I don't think I've seen that picture! I haven't had any dollhouse references, I didn't even own one as a child. I got the dollhouses for the exhibition second-hand from different places so they all have a history of their own. What fascinates me about dollhouses is their kind of small and somehow delicate world, but then again, I remember playing with my friend's dollhouse as a child and sometimes we played quite rough, meaning that there was a lot of drama and sexual undertones, in the way that children typically examine these things through play. The dollhouse also reminds me of The Sims, which I've played ever since I was a child well into adulthood. Play is present in that too, but so is a sense of power and control over the characters' lives. Everyone who's played Sims probably remembers how you could get rid of an unwanted character by putting it in a swimming pool and removing the ladder... And then there was Habbo Hotel! It was totally crazy and I played it a lot, it also involved interaction with other people but it was possible to build yourself quite an impressive façade. And of course, there's many other games where you can build a virtual life and use it to escape reality in a way. Some even get married online to another character and then that's their "reality". I got a bit side-tracked, haha

Interesting! I haven't played those, I tried Habbo once but nobody wanted to speak to me! Talk about exercising power.

How can you make an exhibition visitor feel small? Or too big?

In the gallery space, you can perhaps play around with different sized things and influence the smallness/bigness experienced by a visitor. Somehow this goes back to childhood again, but our primary school often went on trips to Heureka where there's that gigantic wooden table and big chairs, giant coffee cups and dishes on the table, that has somehow stuck in my mind.

A giant coffee cup must've been impressive! I remember a giant chair from my school trip to Åland!!! And hey: Astrid Lindgren's Nils Karlsson-Pyssling! He bathes in a coffee cup with the main character of the book.

And the coffee cup carousel! I think there's still one in Linnanmäki.

I wonder if we're all interested in seeing the world from a different sized horizon, big or small?

When you outgrow the dollhouse, does that mark the end of childhood? Some kind of struggle?

Power is an interesting aspect. Playing God, and indeed that sexually loaded play in a confined space. This'll be good.

My first graphic novel, which was just published, also focuses on childhood and experiencing and seeing things through the eyes of a child. Perhaps the underlying thing here is some kind of childhood recollection and precisely that struggle. I got the largest dollhouse from a girl who was fairly young and who seemed like she'd just decided that she won't play anymore. That somehow made me feel weird and like I'm tearing something away from that person, although I obviously paid for it. But now that I remember my own childhood things, I really regret that some things were thrown in the trash, given away and sold. I'm going to get back to my other stuff now but it was really nice to write. It feels like this is finally moving forward, yay!

Yep, my train just arrived in Karjaa, so I'm off too.

Juliana Hyrri's artist interview: Maija Hurme
Layout design: Oskari Huolman

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