



Karoliina Hellberg, *The reappearance of the snakevase*, 2023.
Acrylic and oil on canvas, 170 cm x 140 cm. Photograph: Jussi Tiainen. Courtesy of the Artist and Elizabeth Xi Bauer Gallery, London.

Labyrinth

Karoliina Hellberg
Elizabeth Xi Bauer

7th June – 3rd August 2024
Private View: 6th June 2024

Elizabeth Xi Bauer is delighted to present **Karoliina Hellberg's** first UK solo exhibition. The Gallery will exhibit new works by the artist and a wallpaper print designed and executed by Hellberg for this upcoming solo show.

Karoliina Hellberg lives and works in Helsinki and is known for her large, vibrant oil, acrylic, and ink canvases. Her work immerses the viewer in a world of repeated imagery, signs, and symbols, a labyrinth of spaces and places, combining layers, forms, and elements. The artist blends dream-like visions and narratives that merge the every day with the ethereal. This is explored with pictorial tropes such as indoor scenes, plants, flowers, clouds, animals, and textiles, which are remembered, imagined, or inspired by researched source material.

“Spaces and moods in my paintings have been influenced by the environment in which I grew up and the kind of places I feel to be important...spaces in [my] paintings are collages of metaphysical and psychological elements; they do not just reflect just one place or experience”, Hellberg explains.

Hellberg paints the space between memories and fantasies, heightened by her recurring use of intense colour throughout her works. Confident yet sensual brush strokes merge the foreground and background, highlighting areas rich in detail while allowing the works to appear flat and challenge our understanding of how we navigate the physical world. Employing these techniques, Hellberg builds a captivating and enchanting world.

The settings depicted in Hellberg's paintings are often interiors, such as rooms in a home, which act as a container for the elements within them. The works in this upcoming exhibition at Elizabeth Xi Bauer will include spaces between the interior and exterior—for example, the view of a house as seen from a garden looking in. Although an outdoor space, these gardens have still been designed and created by a person. Rather than linear, they operate across multiple levels of time as they are a mixture of real, remembered, and imaginary places. Hellberg's works depict fictional spaces that interpret instances or objects that originate in reality. The artist omits human figures from her works and instead portrays objects and elements brought in or discarded by humankind. In Hellberg's works, the ghosts of human presence remain. "I enjoy the recurring theme of aesthetic ghosts and labyrinths; my paintings are like chapters in a book of short stories", explains Hellberg.

Rather than guiding the viewer, Hellberg wants the audience to have their own understanding when encountering the work and to enjoy losing themselves within it. Whilst the references may be personal or from her research, Hellberg does not always desire to disclose her inspiration by not inflicting her interpretations on the viewer.

Hellberg works on one painting at a time, turning other artworks around so she does not see them. The artist does not always finish a painting before deciding to work on another. This allows time to reflect and continue working on another canvas, returning to the other paintings later. This intense focus is reflected in her works.

"It's more like one thing leads to another; you can't predict all the choices you'll make in a painting, how you will feel about it or what you might need to solve in the painting", Hellberg explains.

This upcoming exhibition of new works by Karoliina Hellberg at Elizabeth Xi Bauer will include large canvases, smaller paintings, framed watercolours, and prints in a wallpaper format, the latter of which the artist has received a grant to create from Arts Promotion Centre Finland (Taike). These wallpaper prints will serve as an accent feature, exploring the motifs embedded within Hellberg's works. The familiarity of wallpaper further layers and extends Hellberg's depiction of domestic settings. This new wallpaper is similar to a project by Hellberg, commissioned by the Didrichsen Museum, upon her receiving the Pro Arte prize in 2018. This 2019 solo exhibition at the Didrichsen Museum was the first time Hellberg created and executed her wallpaper prints. The artist included new wallpaper prints in exhibitions at Galerie Anhava, Helsinki, Finland, and Galleri KANT, Copenhagen, Denmark.

The exhibition will be curated by Maria do Carmo M. P. de Pontes.

Notes to Editors

Karoliina Hellberg (born in 1987 in Porvoo, Finland) lives and works in Helsinki, Finland.

In 2015, Karoliina Hellberg graduated with an MA from the Academy of Fine Arts, Helsinki, where she also received her BA in 2012. Hellberg studied at the Slade School of Fine Art in London, UK, in 2013.

Hellberg has participated in residencies at Cité Internationale des Arts, Paris, France; The Academy of Fine Arts Foundation, Helsinki; Helsinki International Artist Programme (HIAP), Suomenlinna, Helsinki; Academy of Fine Arts residency, Berlin, Germany; and Ásmundarsalur, Reykjavík, Iceland.

Solo exhibitions of Hellberg's work include those at HAM Helsinki Art Museum Gallery (2015), Helsinki; Guggenheim Art Club at Kaiku (2014), Helsinki; Didrichsen Art Museum (2019), Helsinki; Galerie Anhava (2017 and 2019), Helsinki; Galleri KANT (2019 and 2022), Copenhagen, Denmark; Ásmundarsalur (2020), Reykjavík; and Finnish Institute (2017), St Petersburg, Russia. Hellberg's work has also been included in group exhibitions, including those at Ásmundarsalur (2023), Reykjavík; Amos Rex (2021), Helsinki; Kiasma Contemporary Art Museum (2020), Helsinki; Kuopio Art Museum (2018), Kuopio, Finland; and Peckham Rye Studios (2014), London, where she was invited to participate by the Slade School of Fine Art. Hellberg's work has been exhibited at art fairs internationally, including Market Art Fair, Stockholm, Sweden; CHART Art Fair, Copenhagen; Enter Art Fair, Copenhagen; and Art Rotterdam, the Netherlands.

Elizabeth Xi Bauer Gallery previously presented Karoliina Hellberg's work in the group exhibition *The Cholmondeley Ladies* in 2022. That same year, Hellberg was commissioned by the City of Helsinki's Art Collection to create a public art display. Kallio General Upper Secondary School now houses a series of four paintings by Karoliina Hellberg, an alumnus of the school. The series of paintings is titled *Lilacs, Anemones and Wind*, and it is divided into two pairs of paintings located in the stairway of the building.

In 2018, Hellberg was awarded the prestigious Pro Arte award from the Didrichsen Art Museum. Alongside receiving the award and in collaboration with the Didrichsen Art Museum, the artist published *Karoliina Hellberg*, a collection of essays, interviews, and a catalogue of her oeuvre. In 2019, the Didrichsen Art Museum held a solo exhibition of Hellberg's work as part of receiving the award.

Hellberg's works are collected in numerous public and private collections worldwide, including Saastamoinen Foundation, Helsinki; Helsinki Art Museum, Helsinki; The Academy of Fine Arts Collection, Helsinki; Museum of Contemporary Art Kiasma, Helsinki; The Finnish Art Society, Helsinki; Didrichsen Art Museum, Helsinki; and the Vexi Salmi Collection at Hämeenlinna Art Museum, Hämeenlinna, Finland.

Hellberg created typography for Finnish rapper and poet Paperi T's 2023 album *Joka päivä jotaion katoaa*. She also designed the typography for Paperi T's posters and concert visuals.

Hellberg's artwork has also graced the cover of Anna Järvinen and Tapio Viitasaari's 2022 album *Dagen var mulen - sånger av Kaj Chydenius*.

In 2022, Hellberg was commissioned to produce a painting for Café Savoy in Helsinki.

Hellberg contributed to the 2020 Artek 85th Anniversary poster and created artwork for the cover of Otto Donner's book *De levande och alla de döda*.

In 2017, the WSOY created a limited-edition series of 12 Finnish literary classics with covers recreated by Finnish contemporary artists to celebrate Finland's 100th anniversary of its independence. Hellberg was commissioned to create the cover artwork of Tove Jansson's *Moominpappa at the Sea*.

In 2015, Hellberg partnered with design house Samuj to create the set design and visuals for their Spring show.

Hellberg is represented by Galerie Anhava in Helsinki and Galleri KANT in Copenhagen.

Elizabeth Xi Bauer presents a solo exhibition of new works by Karoliina Hellberg, which will run from 7th June - 3rd August 2024, open Wednesday through to Saturday, 12 - 6 pm or by appointment. A

Private View will be held on 6th June 2024, 6 – 8 pm, in the artist's presence. The artist will be available for interviews.

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Image credit: Karoliina Hellberg, *The reappearance of the snakevase*, 2023. Acrylic and oil on canvas, 170 cm x 140 cm. Photograph: Jussi Tiainen. Courtesy of the Artist and Elizabeth Xi Bauer Gallery, London.