

THE HELSINKI SCHOOL

23 March – 21 April 2007

Purdy Hicks are proud to announce the first London exhibition of new work by the Helsinki School photographers. There will be work from four generations of artists who have taught, graduated or attended the University of Art and Design Helsinki. The New Art Gallery at Walsall showed their work five years ago and the international reputation of the group has continued to escalate with shows all round the world except London. London's failure until now to show the work is even more remarkable as schools of photographers are extremely rare. The most obvious comparison is with Bernd and Hilla Becher and their pupils at the Düsseldorf Academy.

Just as the Bechers' pupils read like a *Who's Who* of German photography, the students of the Director of Professional Studies Program, Timothy Persons (Curator of the Purdy Hicks exhibition) and Professor Jorma Puranen at the University of Art and Design Helsinki, have dominated Scandinavian photography over the last fifteen years.

Jorma Puranen is represented in this exhibition by works from his most recent series, *Icy Prospects*, which are an amalgam of paint and light. He painted a piece of wooden board with black, glossy alkyd paint, took it outdoors in winter and photographed the fragmentary reflection of nature on the surface of the board.

Ola Kolehmainen, the leading second generation artist, has become the focus point of the Helsinki School. His large works dominate the space around them with their strong architectural and minimal structure, but there is invariably some subtle subversion of the form. From the same generation is **Pertti Kekarainen**, whose work mimics the more dreamy way that people often explore space. Light bubbles interfere with the otherwise classic lines of his interior scenes.

Third generation's **Sandra Kantanen** has strong links back to Jorma Puranen. Like Puranen, she uses a layer of paint as a base for her photographs. After studying in China her subject matter too is a retrieval of the past playing on a Chinese landscape, sought after and idealised for thousands of years, but now polluted. In contrast **Nanna Hänninen** captures and combines real and imagined landscapes. By using a stationary light, Hänninen draws herself into pictures creating a delectable sensitive palette.

Mikko Sinervo and **Anni Leppälä** have only recently graduated from the University of Art and Design. Sinervo's works simply and elegantly explore changing light and time. Leppälä takes a more meandering but just as intriguing path through time, exploring her own childhood. The approach that unites the Helsinki School is not as clear cut as the objectivity of the Düsseldorf School, but there is a shared sense of discipline and structure that allows the graduates a great deal of freedom of interpretation.