

## JORMA PURANEN

### Shadows, reflections and all that kind of thing

3 – 28 March 2011

Purdy Hicks Gallery is delighted to present their second solo exhibition by Finnish photographer Jorma Puranen. His distinguished career has included a long tenure as Professor of Photography at the Helsinki School of Art and Design and many international solo exhibitions, together with work held in most of the major international photographic collections. The exhibition will present work from two recent series.

**Shadows, Reflections and All That Sort of Thing** was inspired by Puranen walking through the galleries of a museum in his native Finland and being fascinated by the light reflections on the surface of the paintings. By photographing historical portraits he awakens the past of the portrait's subject. The photographic process has been emphasized, and the original focus of the painting seems to hover behind or between its physical layers, while the viewer's eyes travel across the many details of the work.

Jorma Puranen writes of this series

*By 'images' (eikona) I mean first shadows (skias), then reflections on water (phantasmata) and other close-grained, polished surfaces, and all that sort of thing ....*

*Quotation from Plato's The Republic, Book VII*

**Shadows, Reflections and All That Sort of Thing** was evolved of fragments and details of portrait paintings I have photographed in a number of museums and private collections within the last few years.

*Within museum photography, dramatic use of light and shade were avoided: rather, light was used to give uniformity to a series, regardless of difference of photographed objects. My emphasis is on attention to the photographic process itself, complexity of gaze, to convey arresting sense of presence, to evoke an exalted attention. With intensive raking light I wish to bring to our attention the surface of the painting, with its shiny areas, its hidden colours and its craquelure.*

*The resulting photographic portraits of **Shadows, Reflections and All That Sort of Thing** defy the accepted standards of a well-made photo. The daylight is reflected on the*

*surface of the painting, overexposing certain parts of the image, obliterating others in darkness. The series questions the relationship between the portrait, the portrayed, and the photograph of the portrait, and the way in which the employed mediums influence our perception of them as an 'image'.*

*In the photographs seen in **Shadows, Reflections and All That Sort of Thing** the original focus of the painting, a face, seem to hover behind, between and beyond the material layers of the painting. Looking at paintings from unusual angles evokes in the viewer the sense of vulnerability emerged from the tension between a moment and permanence, a flash of light and centuries old patina.*

*Photography's capacity to register reflections is actually its singular gift. What other medium deals so expressively with the play of light and shadow? Furthermore, by veiling the faces in light, the photograph actually reinvests them with mystery. In the face of their own reality, these pictures remain blind, just as at the same time they open our eyes to the 'destiny' of the sitters. The actuality of the past is thematized in the series of **Shadows, Reflections and All That Sort of Thing**. I fetch my portraits through the past of their painted existence and the actuality of the photographs materializes them as transitory bodies.*

The **Sixteen Steps to Paradise** series continues Puranen's treatment of light and shade and the use of reflections. For the artist, the use of reflections is a metaphor, a way to grasp the relationships of past and present. The series depicts his garden: photographed on black-painted acrylic sheets, placed sixteen steps from the entrance. In the images the light and the shapes of plants are exaggerated and unreal – the reflections have disturbed the viewing.

For further information or images please email [contact@purdyhicks.com](mailto:contact@purdyhicks.com)  
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