

DOMINIK WLODAREK HEIJASTUKSIA / REFLECTIONS

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“Heijastuksia / Reflections, Paris, Les Halles II”

carborundum / dry point

60 x 80 cm

2010

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THE BEGINNING OF “HEIJASTUKSIA / REFLECTIONS” SERIES

The “Heijstuksia / Reflections” carborundum print series was started in December 2005 as a site-specific printmaking installation especially made for the “Unknown City” art event organized by Finnish Academy of Fine Arts in Helsinki.

The workshop directed by Erkki Soininen was connected to the idea of site-specific art and the task was to create some artworks related to the Kallio district of Helsinki.

One of the choices for the future artwork location was an abandoned glass box in hexagonal shape, formerly used for advertisements, which has been empty for many years. I liked this place very much and when I saw the city landscape reflected in its windows it inspired me to create my first site-specific printmaking installation.

The idea was totally new and revolutionary to me because my previous work was based on abstract landscape aquatint / etching. It was a very refreshing experience to do the artworks based on reality and to show them directly on the site in the middle of the cityscape. This installation consisted of four printed proofs made using carborundum / dry point printmaking technique, displayed in a hexagonal glass box situated next to the crossroads of Sturenkatu and Kirstinkatu. The prints are a transformation of the real city landscape from that place.

The starting point of each print is a photo taken with a camera attached to the surface of the glass cabinet where the artwork was later installed. On the first print one can see a reflection of the building situated on Kirstinkatu (Toshiba Store). The second print shows a reflection of Sturenkatu, with Sonera building on the horizon. On the third print one can see Sturenkatu and some trees separating the street from the parking place and the inner yard of the school. The fourth print shows the reflection of the Sturenkatu and the entrance to the Kulttuuritalo on the right side.

The idea was to make prints as close to the reality as possible, so that the audience could easily find the reference between the printed image and the real landscape. In order to make it possible the prints were in the same scale as in reality. The width of the prints was around 2 meters, according to the glass box window's size.

An interesting aspect in creating those prints was the limitation caused by the fact that they had to be strictly reflecting the view from the opposite side of the window from where they were installed. There were not so many options in changing the composition and the subject matter. The contents of each reflection print came out a bit by chance, since the installation place was not possible to move. One of the artworks shows just a common Toshiba shop wall, which probably would not be chosen as a subject matter of an independent piece of art. The certain limitation of the “artistic freedom” was one of the key points of my concept of a site-specific printmaking installation. This situation was a great experience, which allowed me to open for the new opportunities and see my printmaking activity from a different perspective.



“Heijastuksia / Reflections“

site-specific printmaking installation

“Unknown City Project“

Helsinki, Finland, 2005



“Heijastuksia / Reflections“

site-specific printmaking installation

“Unknown City Project“

Helsinki, Finland, 2005



“Heijastuksia / Reflections“

site-specific printmaking installation

“Unknown City Project“

Helsinki, Finland, 2005



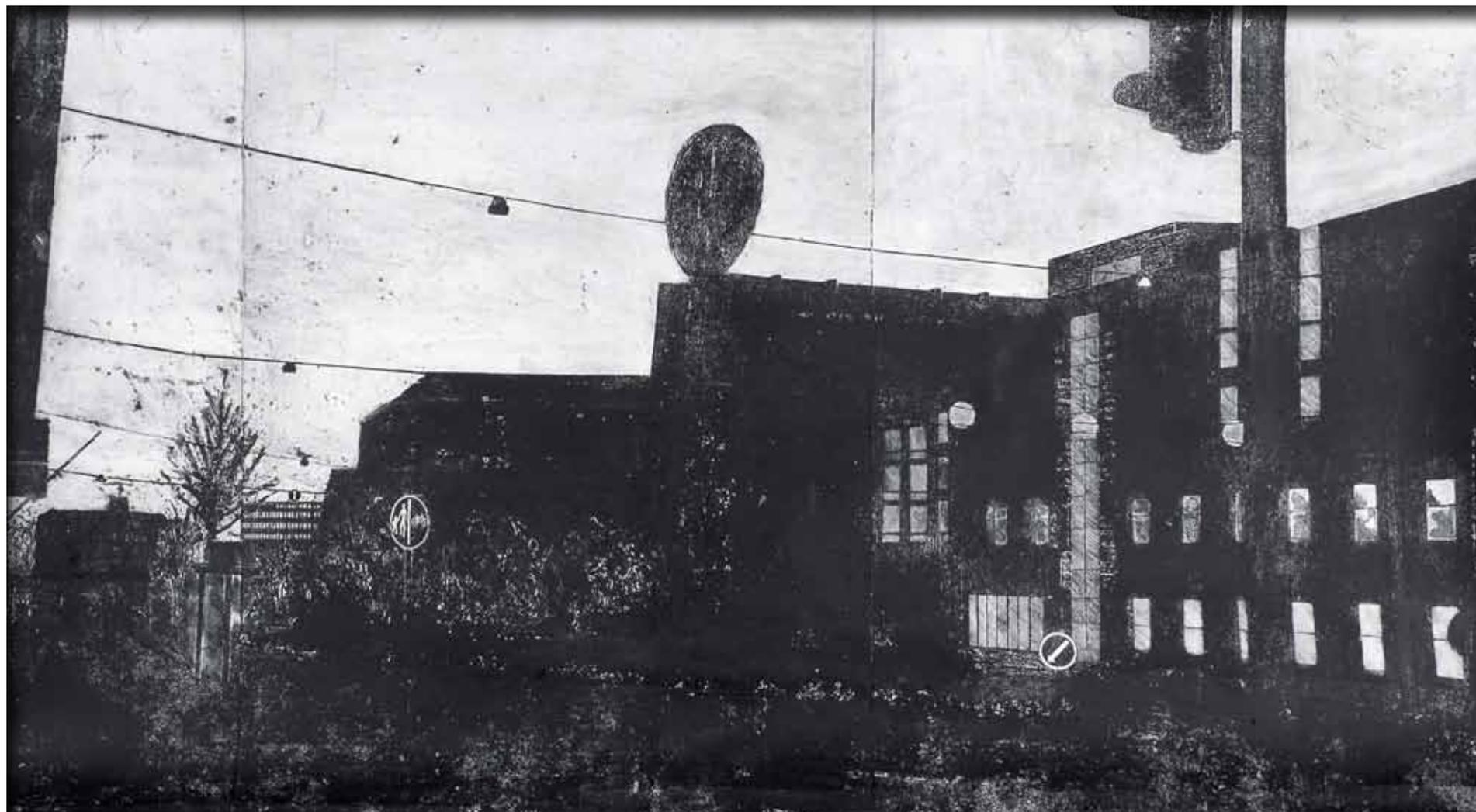
“Heijastuksia / Reflections“

site-specific printmaking installation

“Unknown City Project“

Helsinki, Finland, 2005



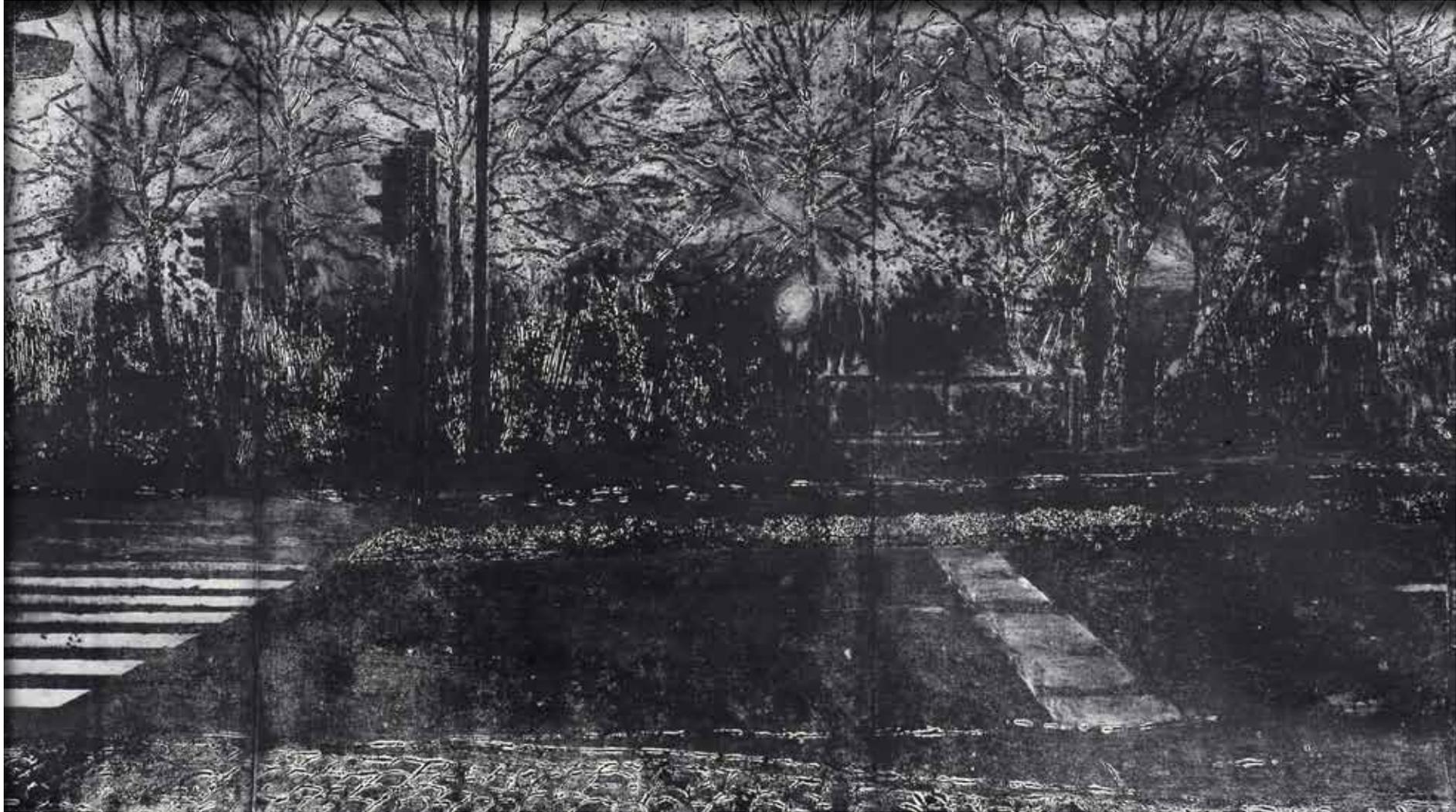


"Heijastuksia / Reflections II"

carborundum / dry point

122 x 215 cm

2005

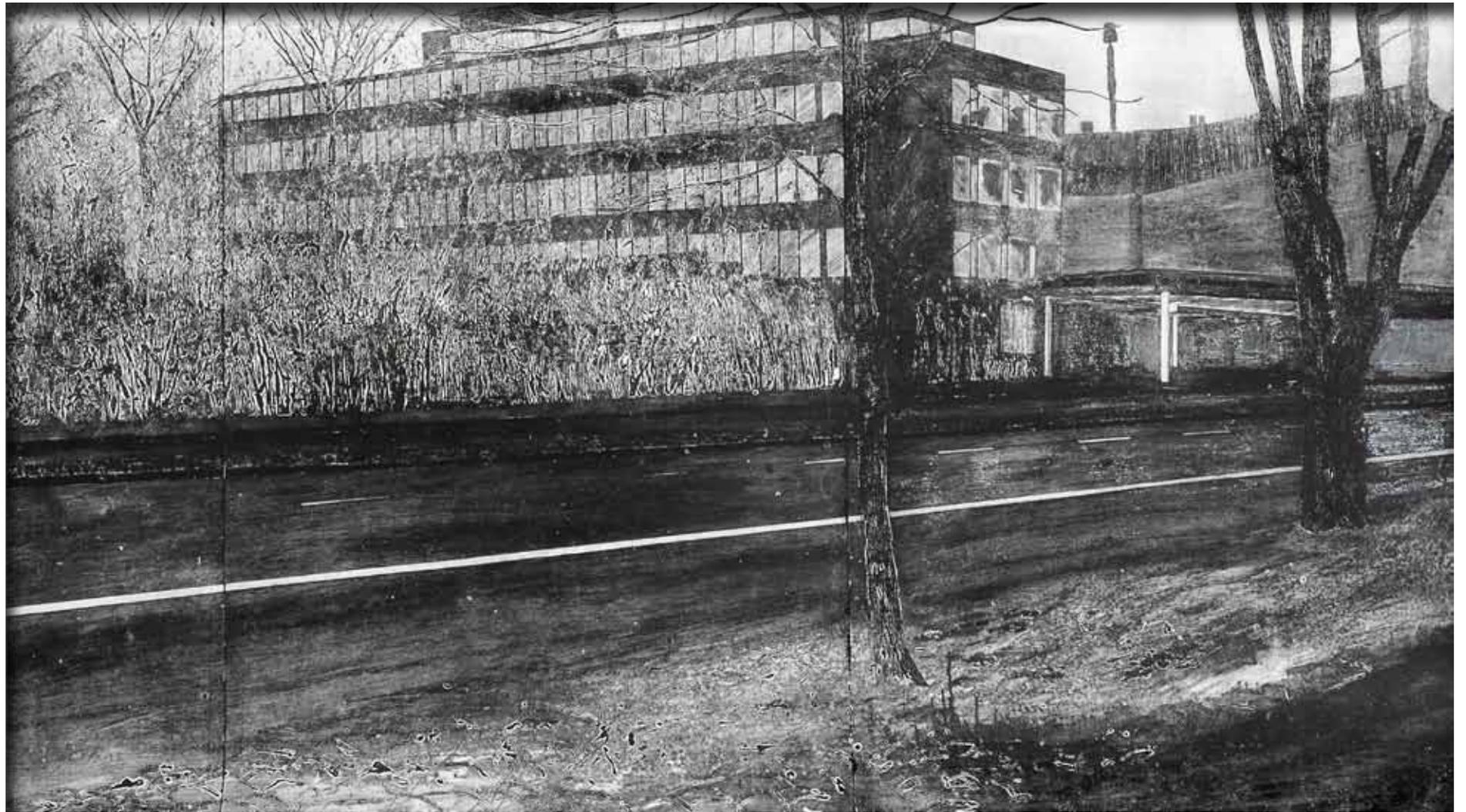


“Heijastuksia / Reflections III”

carborundum / dry point

122 x 215 cm

2005



“Heijastuksia / Reflections IV”

carborundum / dry point

122 x 215 cm

2005



"Heijastuksia / Reflections, Helsinki, Cantina West"

carborundum / dry point

122 x 221 cm

2006

I decided to continue the “Heijastuksia / Reflections” idea in several art exhibitions in years 2006 – 2009.

In my solo show “Grafiikkaa” in Kuvataideakatemia Galleria in August 2006, among the other works, there was one large-scale print reflecting the view from the gallery’s window – a “Cantina West” restaurant situated on Kasarmikatu. The print was exhibited inside the gallery space, on the wall situated in opposite to the real window, so that it was possible to see it from the street. The next site-specific printmaking installation was made especially for “The Masters of the University” group show in Finnish Academy of Fine Arts Gallery (FAFA Galleria) in January 2007. It consisted of one big print, which was in the exact shape of the gallery window – a vertical rectangle with the arc on the top. The artwork was placed on the wall, at about 5 meters distance from the window. The subject matter was again the reflection from the city landscape opposite of the gallery. The print was visible from the street level and caught the attention of the people passing-by. Some of them looked through the window into the gallery space, then they looked left and then back into gallery space again. It was then possible to see the expression on their face as they got the reference. In the spring 2007 I took part in the Finnish edition of “Taidetta kaupungilla ” art competition organized by the Diners Club. The idea was to create an artwork, which would be suitable for an exhibition in the middle of the city space in the billboard frames. The theme of the contest “ Art in the City” was very connected to my idea of the site-specific printmaking installation. I made a proposal, which was a continuation of my “Heijastuksia / Reflections” idea and I won the first prize.

One of the locations of an artwork in the city space of Helsinki, planned by the organizers was a place in front of the Museum of Contemporary Art KIASMA. I have made a print based on the reflected view from that place. The final exhibition of “ Art in the City” contest was set up in Kamppi area, around 100 m from the original spot, which I have planned in my proposal, so in that case my artwork was not placed exactly in front of the real landscape shown on the print.

This was a good example of the situation that, something is out of control, but it also proved that the prints worked as the independent artworks and they don’t really have to be placed exactly in front of the real landscape. It made me think about giving myself a bit more freedom in designing the “Heijastuksia / Reflections” series prints, which might be exhibited in some gallery spaces, far away from the original landscape, which they were reflecting.



“Heijastuksia / Reflections, Helsinki, Lönnrotinkatu”

carborundum / dry point

260 x 175 cm

2007



“Heijastuksia / Reflections”

carborundum / dry point

171 x 116 cm



“Art in the City” – Diners Club art contest exhibition

Helsinki, 2007



INSTALLATION IN HELSINKI CITY ART MUSEUM TENNISPALATSI

The “Heijastuksia / Reflections, Kaisaniemi” installation was an attempt to “move” some parts of the common city landscape into the gallery space. The pyramid is a model of the real glass window from Helsinki Kaisaniemi Metro station tunnel. The prints are based on the landscape of Kaisaniemi area reflected in that window. In my artworks I would like to show from a different perspective some sites of the city which people pass everyday without even noticing.

The installation in Tennispalatsi was my response to not being able to make a site-specific installation on the original place in Kaisaniemi Metro station area. The reason why it could not be shown there was the safety regulations, as it was explained in a letter, which I received from the person in charge of this building. The pyramid-shaped windows were designed as a safety feature in case of fire in the metro tunnel and it should be easy to open in order to release the smoke.

It was an important experience to learn how to deal with the authorities in order to obtain a permission to make an artwork in the city space. Although I could not make this artwork in the original place I was still very attached to the project, so that is why I decided to make it in the smaller scale in the exhibition space of Helsinki City Art Museum Tennispalatsi.

The reason why I chose the Kaisaniemi pyramid as a subject matter of my installation was that I found this place very interesting. After the first installation made in the hexagonal glass box in Kallio, which was a successful artwork, I was trying to find a similar place in the middle of Helsinki, which could be suitable for that kind of installation.

The pyramid-shaped windows in Kaisaniemi are quite characteristic feature of this part of the town and, although many people consider them as an ugly piece of architecture, I like them because they are a bit unusual and make a city landscape of Kaisaniemi a little less boring. The triangle shape of the windows was also an opportunity to make the printed proofs in an uncommon shape different from the traditional rectangle. The triangle prints looked quite interesting placed on the wall in sort of puzzle-like composition, but for the installation in Tennispalatsi I placed them into the wooden model of the pyramid. The height of the model was 1/3 of the size of the original one from Kaisaniemi metro station. I had to scale down the pyramid model in order to fit it into the space of Helsinki City Art Museum Tennispalatsi.

Although the original pyramid in Kaisaniemi is made of steel, I decided to build a wooden model of it. I wanted to make it in a simple and minimalistic way by just painting it white. The idea was to put more attention to the prints than to the architectural features of the pyramid itself. I hoped that the people who will see the exhibition in Tennispalatsi would easily find the reference to the original place. Certainly the installation might be more meaningful to the people who know Kaisaniemi district of Helsinki, who could compare it to the original object, but I wished that it could be also interesting for those who have never been there.



“Heijastuksia / Reflections, Helsinki, Kaisaniemi”

printmaking installation

Helsinki City Art Museum Tennispalatsi

2008



“Heijastuksia / Reflections, Helsinki, Kaisaniemi”

printmaking installation

Helsinki City Art Museum Tennispalatsi

2008

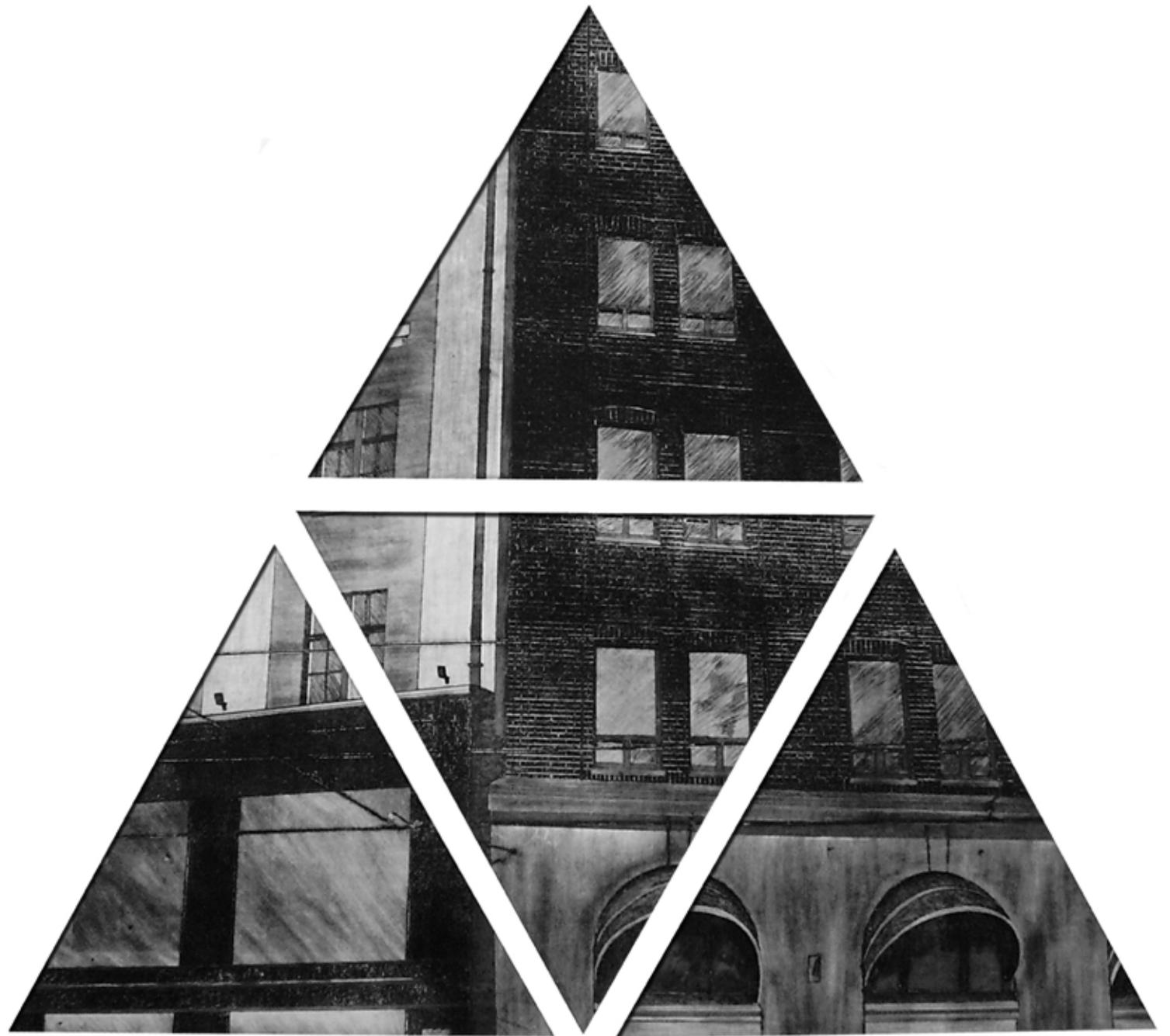


“Heijastuksia / Reflections, Helsinki, Kaisaniemi”

printmaking installation

Helsinki City Art Museum Tennispalatsi

2008

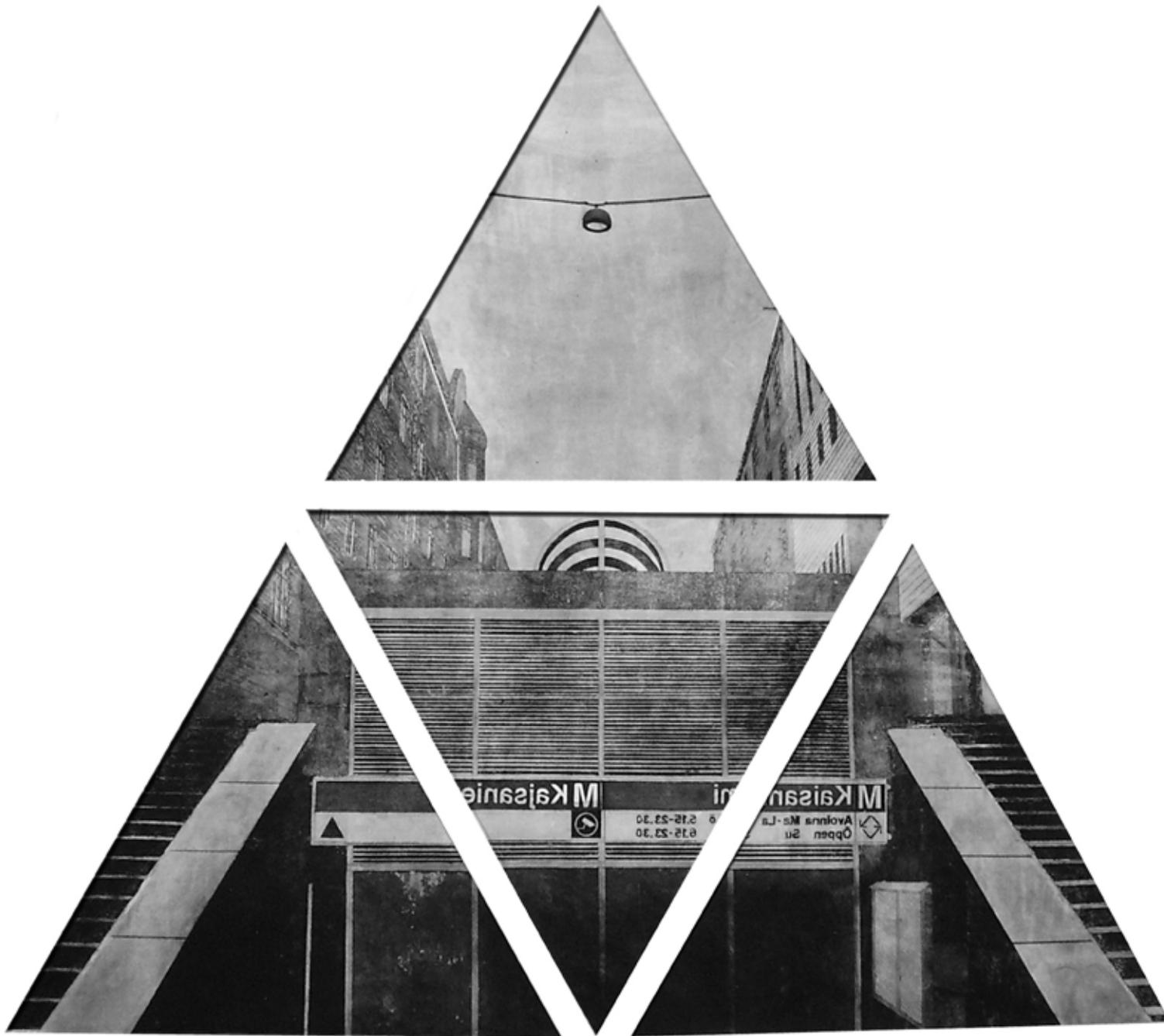


"Heijastuksia / Reflections, Helsinki, Kaisaniemi"

carborundum / dry point

145 x 165 cm

2008

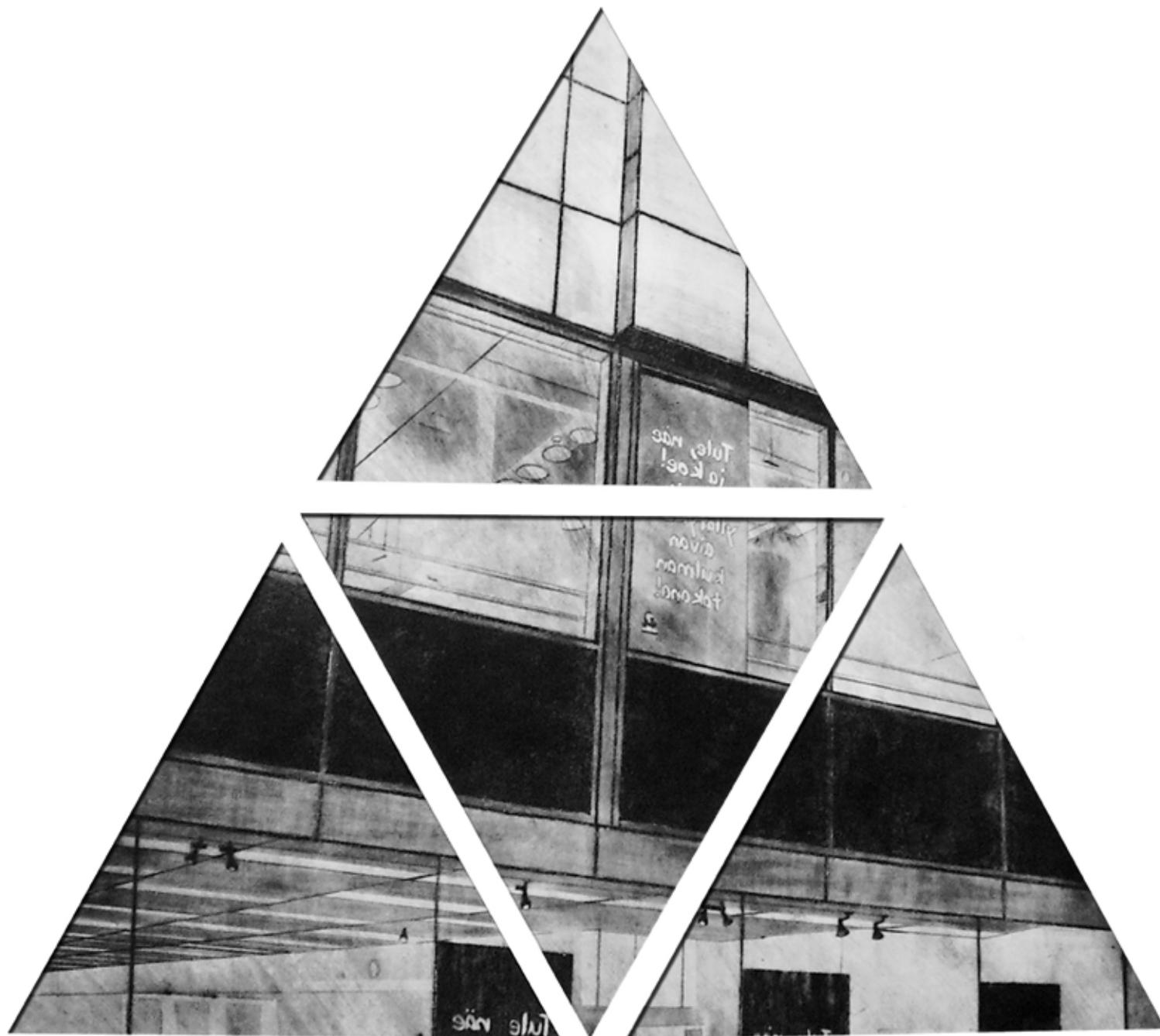


"Heijastuksia / Reflections, Helsinki, Kaisaniemi"

carborundum / dry point

145 x 165 cm

2008



"Heijastuksia / Reflections, Helsinki, Kaisaniemi"

carborundum / dry point

145 x 165 cm

2008



“Heijastuksia / Reflections, Helsinki, Viiskulma” printmaking installation Galleria Huuto-Viiskulma, Helsinki 2008

THE SOLO SHOW IN GALLERIA HUUTO-VIISKULMA, HELSINKI

Exhibition press release text:

Heijastuksia / Reflections exhibition in Galleria Huuto Viiskulma is a review of my recent works from the Heijastuksia / Reflections series of carborundum / dry point prints. The first works from this series were made in December 2005 as a site-specific printmaking installation. The main inspiration for my prints is the city landscape. I like to show in a different way some parts of the city, which people pass everyday without even noticing...

The prints are based on the mirror images of the real landscape. All the elements are in the image, but reflected. Some viewers can recognize the places, but the reflection causes also some kind of confusion. A reflected image gives an impression of the place in sort of magical and abstract way. It is also strongly connected to the tradition of printmaking, where the printmakers have to prepare the plates as a mirror in order to get them printed according to reality.

The first print in the exhibition was placed in the window of the gallery showing the reflected view of the city landscape from the opposite side. This time the reflection was a building with the “Primula” restaurant – a common street view, which is quite universal. Again the pure chance was involved in the process of creating the print, because I had to do an artwork according to the view from the gallery window, which was impossible to change. The window piece was designed in order to make a link between the gallery space and the city landscape, as well as to attract the visitors to come and see the show.

The Huuto-Viiskulma gallery space is quite small and it consists of two exhibition rooms.

In the first room there were two prints with the reflected view of Hakaniemi district of Helsinki. These works were the first ones from the series, which were designed as independent prints, not connected to the exhibition space.

The Hakaniemi district is one of my favorite places in Helsinki. It was one of the first places I saw after arriving to Finland for the first time in September 2004. I got off the bus in the Hakaniemi market square and it captured my attention with its architecture, which was a bit different from the places I have seen in Poland. A good feeling and something irrational was in my mind. Somehow I remembered this moment from my life, and after about 3 years I decided to design some prints inspired by this place.



“Heijastuksia / Reflections, Helsinki, Viiskulma”

carborundum / dry point

2008





"Heijastuksia / Reflections, Helsinki, Hakaniemi I"

carborundum / dry point

95 x 127 cm

2007

In the first print from the Hakaniemi series there is one of Helsinki's most famous buildings, Ympyrätalo, the modern sculpture in front of it, as well as another building with Rytmi bar and Chilli fast food restaurant. The worker's union building in the Hakaniemi market square is seen on the horizon.

The second print from the Hakaniemi series shows a part of Hakaniemi Market Hall and the office buildings by the market square, with the Nordea and McDonald's neon signs on the roof. This view is the closest to my first impression of Hakaniemi. The Hakaniemi district of Helsinki is quite common and well known, probably because of its history connected with the working class movements, which seems to be very important for Finnish society. I have noticed that many viewers can easily recognize this place, and after a while it creates some kind of confusion in them because of the reflection. There is something that almost everyone living in Helsinki has seen many times, which is so common and taken for granted. It is interesting that by the simple trick of reflection it is possible to make the people to stop for a while and see it from the different perspective.

In the second room of Galleria Huuto-Viiskulma I exhibited two prints, which were inspired by the landscape of the different cities than Helsinki. The first one was from Paris, France and the second one from Taipei, Taiwan.

From October 2007 till the end of January 2008 I was studying at Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts in Paris as an exchange student. During my stay in France I was interested in making some prints from Heijastuksia / Reflection series inspired by the Paris city landscape. It was something refreshing and I thought that the "Reflections" idea is quite universal and it could be made in any city in the world. One day when I was walking in the Latin district of Paris I took a photo, which was a starting point of the "Reflections, Paris, rue Rataud" print. I was inspired by the interesting contrast and connection between the graffiti made on the wall of one building and a street view with some old style architecture.

The second print was based on the photo taken in Xinbeitou district of Taipei, Taiwan. In September 2008 I participated in the "Taipei Drift" workshop organized by Taiwan National University of Arts on behalf of 08 Taipei Biennial. It was a great opportunity to discover a new city so different from those which I have seen before. During my stay I collected many photos in order to have material for the new prints.

While taking a photo in Xinbeitou district of Taipei, I felt like it was going to be a subject matter of my next print. I was attracted by the atmosphere typical to the eastern cities with lots of advertisements, signs, light boxes and electrical cables. There is also a huge advertisement of a KFC fast food restaurant, which is a common sign of globalization, and I especially liked the contrast, which it made with the other adverts written in Chinese signs.



"Heijastuksia / Reflections, Helsinki, Hakaniemi II"

carborundum / dry point

95 x 127 cm

2007



“Heijastuksia / Reflections, Taipei, Xinbeitou”

carborundum / dry point

95 x 127 cm

2007



"Heijastuksia / Reflections, Paris, rue Rataud"

carborundum / dry point

80 x 120 cm

2007

ABOUT CARBORUNDUM PRINTMAKING TECHNIQUE

Carborundum is one of the youngest printmaking techniques, developed in the late sixties of XX century, by Paris-based, French-American artist painter Henri Goetz.

Carborundum is connected to the colograph techniques. The name comes from the carborundum abrasive material (silicon carbide, SiC), which is commonly used for grinding the lithography stones. It looks like a black powder and it is a very strong and durable material. The idea of carborundum technique is very simple and gives to a printmaker a wide range of possibilities and ways to develop it in many different creative ways. The carborundum powder is mixed with an acrylic gesso paint medium used for grounding the canvas (it could be also a glue, which sticks to the plate). According to the amount of carborundum powder mixed with the medium it is possible to achieve a wide range of shades of gray on the printmaking plate. The more carborundum is added, the darker tone is achieved. The mixture of gesso and carborundum is painted directly onto the metal plate. As soon as it gets dry the plate is ready for printing. One of the biggest advantages of this technique is that it is non-toxic and quite fast. Of course the duration of the process of making the plate depends on that how detailed the image is, and it may also take a lot of time to finish. Another great feature of carborundum is that it is one of the most painting-like printmaking techniques. It is possible to use the gestures in painting a plate, as well as using the stencils from the masking tape, and many different styles of the brushstrokes. Another advantage is that the painted layers of the carborundum / gesso mixture may have a various thickness, which makes possible to achieve a sort of relief on the proof printed on paper. Of course it is important to not to make too thick plates, which might affect the damage of the paper or the press blanket during the process of printing on the press. The printing process is the same as for intaglio prints. First the ink is applied onto the plate and then the extra amount of ink is wiped out using tarlatan. Then the plate is printed on wet paper.

The best base for carborundum technique is the aluminium offset plate (it may be a used one – printed from one side), because it is quite thin and after painting on it with carborundum / gesso mixture it is still thin enough to be printed on the intaglio press. One of the disadvantages of carborundum technique is that the plates are not so durable if we compare it with some intaglio techniques, such as etching. It is caused by that the carborundum is falling out of the plate in each printing process. Of course it is possible to correct the plate by painting it over with some new layers, but unfortunately as a result of that, it is impossible to make many same looking printed proofs from one plate.



"Heijastuksia / Reflections, Paris, Les Halles I"

carborundum / dry point

60 x 80 cm

2009

When I was planning the first artworks from “Heijastuksia / Reflections” printmaking series I found the carborundum printmaking technique the most useful. It turned out to be especially suitable for large-scale printmaking. Painting with carborundum and gesso mixture on the aluminium plate was the best solution. Because of the low weight of the plate I was able to handle it by myself during the printing process. Using carborundum together with dry point technique allowed me to obtain the wide range of different shades of gray and effects on the plate. It was also very good medium to experiment with.

EPILOGUE

I am very concerned about the role of chance in artistic creation. I might say that the whole idea of “Heijastuksia / Reflections” series came out by a chance. Seems like one site-specific art course made a huge impact on several years of my artistic research. I am still working with the city landscapes, trying to find some new value in the “Heijastuksia / Reflections” idea and to bring it into another dimension. The city landscape plays very important role in my artistic explorations. It may be connected to the fact that when I moved to Finland I found myself in totally new environment and it was a little bit shocking experience. It affected me so much that I had to express my feelings in a series of works dedicated to my new city Helsinki. After almost six years of living there I still see it through a foreigner’s eyes. It gives me some more distance and allows to see in a different way some sites, which local people just take for granted and pass everyday without even noticing.

There is a strong relationship between my prints and photography. They are based on the photos, but my goal is to create some new value on the border between photographic reality and freehand drawing. The printmaking seems to be the best medium to achieve my goal. Some of my works may look hyperrealistic from the distance. Taking a closer look, one may discover that they are a combination of countless little scratches, brush strokes, cut-out stencil marks and lines transposed from the photographic image into the language of printmaking. The manual process of making the plate and the moment of surprise, which comes always after printing the plate for the first time are very important to me. I am trying to find some new value using traditional printmaking techniques and combining the prints into installations. The initial idea of “Heijastuksia / Reflections” series as a site-specific installation was an attempt to bring the printmaking outside of the gallery into the urban space in order to make it more accessible for people. I had also an opportunity to show the prints from this series in my solo exhibition in the gallery as well as in a group exhibition in the art museum. The process of designing the artworks for each of those places was different. I had to consider the limitations of each space, its advantages and disadvantages, in order to find the best solutions for my artworks. It was a very good experience. I believe that it would allow me to be more flexible in planning my exhibitions in the future.

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Special Thanks for the support to the Staff of the Printmaking Department of Finnish Academy of Fine Arts in Helsinki
prof. Antti Tantt, lecturer Maija Albrecht, assistants: Erja Huovila, Marianne Kokkonen and Tatu Tuominen
as well as to the final work supervisor Jaakko Niemelä
Juhani Autio (photos on the pages 6,7,8,9)
and Joseph James (text proof reading)