

Ville Lenkkeri *Looking Back with Closed Eyes*

Exhibition: 12 March – 24 April 2021



An Unspoken Admission of Tenderness, from the series *The Petrified Forest*, 2013, pigment print

Persons Projects is proud to present Ville Lenkkeri's solo exhibition *Looking Back with Closed Eyes* featuring a small industrial town situated in the Finnish countryside, once the home for him and his doctor father.

This exhibition is curated from a selection of works from his series *Petrified Forest* and *Medical Records of a Small Town*. Its primary focus is on the relationship between the artist and his deceased father through Lenkkeri's memories, conversations, and mutually shared moments they once had together. His photographs resonate with an authenticity that needs no post-production to capture the atmosphere and believability of the moment. They differ in tone and content from those of his other more renowned contemporaries, such as Gregory Crewdson, because he reflects his own life encounters or memories from his past. The protagonists in his images are primarily family members or close friends and his work crosses into the borderlands between the small-town mentality he grew up with and the countryside surrounding it. Each image forms its own story where the lines between facts and fiction blur, ushering in the surreal meeting the mundane. It's a Finnish version of Tim Burton's movie *The Big Fish*. He successfully bridges his father's recollections from what they were into what he wishes to see. His personal twilight zone is where he can visualize his father's aspirations and make them his own.

From his earliest beginnings, Lenkkeri has been fascinated with the correlation between cinema and photography. His approach to photography has been to use a combination of irony, humor, and his craftsmanship for detail to build cinematic scenarios where a strong social narrative is woven into the image. He creates situations that utilize the same type of sensitivity that Aki Kaurismäki shows in his films, as they both use their own form of mixing fact with fiction, drawing upon the inherent ambiguities that serve as stereotypes for describing the Finnish character. According to Lenkkeri's premise, dramatized fiction may be the most accurate way of bringing forth the truth that is gained through a profound, unique, and thus indivisible experience. His photographs may characterize situations laced with humor at first glance but, in retrospect, reflect the realities most people have to deal with living in a Finnish rural setting.

Ville Lenkkeri was born in 1972 in Oulu, Finland. He lives and works in Stockholm, Sweden. He received a Master of Arts, Department of Photography, Aalto University in Helsinki in 2006 and a Bachelor of Arts, Department of Photography, Academy of Performing Arts, FAMU in Prague in 2001. He has held exhibitions in institutions such as FotoMuseum in Antwerpen, Stenersens Museum in Oslo, Borås Konstmuseum, Oulu Art Museum, Hasselblad Center in Gothenburg, and Künstlerhaus Bethanien in Berlin.