

Smedjan - ett kraftcentrum i byn

Litteratur

Ingen är profet i sin egen stad, heter det. Det gäller också Jouni Jäppinen, kulturell mångsysslare i Abborfors, men framför allt smed. Och av allt att döma relativt okänd. Han är utbildad silversmed, men har länge intresserat sig för smideskonstens rustikare varianter, och inte minst dess långa och fascinerande historia.

Om det sistnämnda handlar boken ”Pajan hämärästä”, en populär version av de akademiska uppsatser Jäppinen de senaste åren har skrivit inom kulturhistoria vid Turun yliopisto. Och det är en fascinerande historia Jäppinen dukar upp, kryddad med många färgstarka anekdoter om olika smeder i vårt land, insamlade av etnologer och andra kulturforskare. Men Jäppinen har också själv samlat i den bruksbygd bor i, det vill säga Strömfors, och i motsvarande miljöer på den estniska sidan, som Jäppinen känner som sin egen ficka.

Att smeden Ilmarinen i Kalevala, med sin Sampo, spelar en central roll i eposet är ingen slump. Som Jäppinen visar har smedjan alltid varit samhällets kraftcentrum, både bildligen och bokstavligen. Den yrkeskunskap smeden hade, dvs. förmågan att göra stål, och härda det till både bruksföremål och vapen, gav honom en väldigt stark position. Såväl lien, yxan och plogen som svärdet, kniven och bössan var av helt central betydelse för samhällets fortbestånd. Inte att undra på att smideskonsten alltid har omgetts av stark mytbildning. Stark och stor var smeden också rent bokstavligen, eftersom det var ett fysiskt ansträngande jobb.

Men också mystiskt, eftersom smeden hade kunskap om hur man tämjde det hårda materialet, med hjälp av eld och en hel del kemi, vilket gjorde att hela verksamheten invid den glödheta ässjan omgavs av mystik. Smederna var inte sena att utnyttja detta, och framställde sig gärna som en form av schamaner i kontakt med djävulen och andra hinsides krafter. Till denna aura bidrog givetvis också att smederna ofta utförde också andra för människor viktiga uppgifter, i kraft av sin yrkeskunskap och sina instrument: dvs. rollen som tandläkare (tandutdragning!), helare, djävulsutdrivare, åderlätare, blodstillare, kvacksalvare etc.

Att smeden länge hade en så stark position gjorde enligt Jäppinen också att han inte sällan tog sig ansenliga friheter, till exempel i förhållande till kyrkan och andra auktoriteter, vilka smederna ofta kom på kant med. Något de ofta tycks ha turnerat med stora mängder humor. Smederna var följaktligen ofta utpräglade byoriginal.

Smideskonsten hör till våra äldsta hantverksyrken, och smedjorna till våra första industriella arbetsmiljöer. Konsten att smida järn, dvs. järnåldern, uppstod drygt 3000 år f.Kr. i Mellanöstern och Indien. Till våra breddgrader kom den cirka 700–500 år f.Kr., och nådde sin kulmen på 1800-talet, då antalet yrkeskunniga smeder var cirka 1500, plus lika många husbehovssmeder. Där efter minskade smedjornas antal, i takt med den industriella utvecklingen. I dag finns det högst 10 mästarsmeder kvar. Däremot har amatörintresset för att smida ingen vuxit, och det ordnas smideskurser på olika håll, också i Lovisa.

En viktig milstolpe var de olika järnbruken, av vilka det som mest fanns 132 stycken, varav några i Lovisanejden. Järnbruken var samtidigt en viktig inkörsport för influenser utifrån. Hit kom till exempel ett stort antal valloner, som etablerade sig i både Nyland och Österbotten. Och i Fredrik Långs roman ”Flickorna på Nappari” nyligen aktuell i Bokcaféet, spelas huvudrollen av sonen till en smed i Fiskars, som hade utvandrat från Sheffield i England för att i Fiskars bygga upp det som bruket är mest känt för ännu i dag, det vill säga tillverkningen av saxar.

Jouni Jäppinen har under de senaste åren, tillsammans med den skicklige amatörgeologen från Pyttis, Rune Nygård, gjort mycket för att bokstavligen gräva upp och omtolka Lovisa- och Pyttisnejdens tidigaste historia. Man har funnit rester av gamla smedjor och en mängd andra föremål från fornhistorisk tid, och därmed bidragit med många pusselbitar i de fortfarande bristfälliga kapitlen om vår äldsta historia. Jäppinen har också re-konstruerat den forntida järnframställningen, och därmed återuppväckt redan bortglömd yrkeskunskap.

Rollen som Ilmarinen, lika beundrad som skräckinjagande, kan smederna knappast få tillbaka, men man instämmer gärna i Jäppinens slutord om att del av den position de tidigare haft, som viktiga kulturbärare i samhället. Jäppinen lever åtminstone själv upp till den rollen.

Thomas Rosenberg

Östra Nyland 22.11.2014

Lovisa

Connecting Materials

Visual Arts

Gallery Ofeigs Listhus, Reykjavik. Iceland 22.7. - 9.8.2000

Finnish metal artist Jouni Jäppinen is very well known in his native country. Finnish press has already reported of the exhibition "The Seventh Impression", which is to be seen here at the Listhus Ofeigs, Cafe Mokka and Grjót galleries in 1989. Jouni uses the title metal artist, but he has actually a very versatile education and career behind himself. First he studied to become a blacksmith, then a goldsmith at Lahti Goldsmith Institute and finally at the University of Art and design in Helsinki, where he would specialize in metalwork. He has been working in these fields during different periods of time, both within industrial design and manufacturing, and he has arranged many exhibitions. He has also made some documentaries, which have also won some prizes. Jouni's works are as versatile as his background, and by no means is there only metal involved, when he turns his ideas into reality. On the contrary, he used eagerly all kinds of items he happens to run into during his travels. They may be forgotten gadgets and small items, which he works on or adds into a new kind of context. The result is a work of art or an ornament. Sometimes these works are connected with himself or with his family of fishermen, like in the work "My Grandfather". In this work grandfathers oarlock has found a new place: namely in grandmothers rolling pin. In this work like in so many other works, too, there is often a humorous if not even an ironic nuance, when he puts different's items together. There are also large metal works in the exhibition, like square reliefs. In these works a steel frame surround a bronze plate, which Jouni has patinated and worked on in different ways. These works connect the robust work of a blacksmith and the somewhat neater work of a goldsmith in an amusing way. Right from the start one notices, that the works are telling about a very determined artist, who doesn't hesitate to express his ideas with the help of the kind of material which happens to be at hand.

In many ways the works are tightly connected with the environment where he comes from. It is all about the vanishing culture and working methods of the outer peninsula. We have lately seen different sides of the Finnish modern art and photography and it is truly very nice to see here one more artist from Finland who has chosen to walk his own paths in terms of creative work.

John Proppe

Morgunbladid 3.8.2000

Reykjavik

Jäppinen and the Battle with the Sea

(An exhibition at Gallery Saltbodan Loviisa)

Loviisa. It's just as if you were diving into the past, the mystical dusk. Somewhere the waves are rolling. Somewhere else the moon is glimmering above the surging sea. The sun is scorching outside. It is cool in an old salt storehouse. Log walls are changing colours in different shades. There are strange gadgets growing out of the floor and the wall.

There is this bold branch pointing up obliquely from a thick oak log; a phallus in erection with a smiling man's head of plaster. Mr. Pitkääpää is the name of this original, obscurely symbolic sculpture. And there's more, much more ... Behind these creative works is Jouni Jäppinen, who is nowadays resident in Ahvenkoski, Ruotsinpyhtää. Jäppinen is also known as a maker of finery and a heraldist. Therefore he has worked with minor works of art. Now he is establishing a profile with somewhat bigger works, of which every item is in some way connected with the sea. Next to the branch phallus there is the tail of a mermaid in different hues of dark blue. On top of the tail there is the head of a puppet: the boy of the sea. Against the log wall there are the outlines of a lighthouse, a creation akin to a pyramid, which Jäppinen has probably constructed from old boards of a boat. The light in the lighthouse is an old combine harvester lamp.

And all of a sudden: something that reminds one of a torturing device. Porpoise is the name of this sculpture, which is sharp and smooth at the same time. There is a certain kind of a minor cutting blade for the stem on the floor. Two short branches, two pieces of wood, which have been separated with reels. And even here, a rising movement, a phallic one. The same idea is to be seen in the sculpture "Kuningaskoira". The first association leads into the workshop of a shoemaker; a piece of wood akin to a wooden last, which is fixed to a stand made of a bold piece of iron. A dog, oh yes indeed, but what kind of a dog? A versatile one in its contradiction, even obscurely solid forms. It's a question of interaction between the two materials: cold and heavy, hard and warm. shiny ... In Jäppinen's sculptures there is certainly something that you could call sexual, or an erotic rhythm. Toivo from Suursaari island is hanging from the wall. Three old bulkhead boards and an oarlock. The boards are matt and worn out, darkened by the age. The varnish has cracked. Toivo has been in service from 1936 till 1996.

The exhibition is dominated by a brass oarlock which is at the other end of a round light-colored wooden piece. The name of this work is "My Grandfather II". An empty oarlock, which once upon a time was filled with the joy of rowing, a squeaking oarlock, a piece of safety equipment on a stormy sea.

Sea and again sea, taking and giving, battle, hard battle, life, death and destruction. Metal artist Jouni

Jäppinen may not need any further presentation. His list of merits is a lengthy one.

I have made my point on this issue before, but I would gladly like to repeat it: there is no doubt whatsoever that Jouni Jäppinen wouldn't be one of the most interesting and capable artists in Eastern Uusimaa region. And not only in this region. He is one of those who also have got international buoyancy under his wings of creativity.

Kim Wahlroos

Östra Nyland 6.8.1998. Loviisa (Translation by Juha Varjola)

Ashes And Diamonds - Jouni Jäppinen's Jewelry Art

(Statement is based on the exhibition at Gallery OZ, Helsinki 1996)

Finnish metal artist Jouni Jäppinen's jewelry ignores convention in both its forms and its materials. His pieces are, however, made to be used. Jäppinen says that he works mostly on the basis of inspiration: "When I get an idea, I have to start work at once, and I choose the materials on the basis of what happens to be at hand". And it seems that what is at hand includes all sorts of things not normally perceived as materials for a jewelry maker with a diploma in goldsmithing: fishing-tackle cord, seal fat, objects retrieved from the sea bed and wrecks, discarded wood, iron, soot and a miscellany of paints.

As examples of the diversity of his jewelry one may point to Kalastajan kääty ('Fisherman's Necklace') (rope and polymer float) or to an irregularly rectangular brooch (metal mesh recovered from a sunken ship, paint, soot, gold leaf and silver leaf). From the viewpoint of painting, the naivism of Kalastajan kääty might be compared with the simple sincerity of Henri Rousseau's works; the shape of the brooch in turn represents informalism, though there is an impressionist streak in its underwater atmosphere.

Jäppinen's works reflect their maker's inner tension. He both cherishes tradition and breaks with it. His reverence for old, almost vanished ways of living and acting has been expressed, for example, in Jäppinen's participation in the conception and making of two documentaries.

The first, *The Visit*, has as its topic the aboriginal people of Papua New Guinea and was awarded the first prize at an international anthropological film festival held in Pärnu, Estonia, in 1992.

The second - *Jäänkävijät* ('Icefarers'), whose location is Jäppinen's childhood landscapes and which was presented in the spring of 1997 in Finnish TV 1's *Ykkösdokumentti* series - is a tribute to the last seal hunters on the Gulf of Finland and at the same time to the whole culture of the outer islands - a remembering, a storing of still-extant knowledge, a piece of cultural anthropology.

As a contrast, Jäppinen can be critical and ironic. Today's cultural and educational policies, the custom of reforming things simply by changing their names so that they sound ever finer, bureaucracy and factionalism often receive a piece of his mind.

Jäppinen is in his own way an idealist who does not see boundaries between, for example, craft and art and who forgets during his work that for many people such boundaries exist and are absolute.

Jäppinen says that during his time at Helsinki's University of Art and Design he was greatly influenced by the teaching of Academician Bertel Gardberg and especially by Gardberg's views on functional design and by his philosophy of life.

The results of this influence include the pendants shown at the Suomi Muotoilee ('Finnish Design') exhibition in 1984. The simple form of Jäppinen's 'Leuka' ('Chin') pendant gives shows no evidence of the revolt against the educational system that lies behind it, of his interest in comics and the underground culture of the Eighties. These influences can perhaps be seen more clearly in his articles for everyday use than in his jewelry - for example, in the sugar bowls which he produced in the early 1990s and which were shown at Suomi Muotoilee exhibitions.

A half of a bicycle's cogwheel found in Iceland and elevated by Jäppinen to the status of jewelry represents the objet trouvé idea. An essential aspect of Jäppinen's cogwheel brooch is also the story of the place where it was found - a cracked volcanic island off southern Iceland. And it seems in fact that there is always some story hidden behind his works.

Often it involves memories of the archipelago, of his grandfather - generally it is a male story. Animals - elks, wolves, dragons and dogs - occasionally feature in Jäppinen's work. From the late 1980s we have a series of small-scale brooches with an animal figure placed in relief style on a forged copper plate.

The leaping animal on the 1988 piece named Hirven voima ('Strength of the Elk') is stylised but clearly recognisable. The shortened legs actually add to the feeling of movement. Red decorations painted on both the background and the animal encourage the viewer to ponder on the work's message.

Jäppinen's language of form as a jewelry maker is hard to define, as the pieces have been produced at wide intervals over a long period and exhibit a great variety. It is rather the spirit than the form which shows a common thread. There is nothing of the prettified in his one-off pieces.

In their departure from the forms of traditional jewellery, they become a part of modern art - independent miniature works of art.

Jäppinen has also made pieces from valuable materials. An example is a commissioned work made of gold, silver and diamonds for a person who had worked in Africa for a long time; it was given the name Afrikan yötaivas ('African Night Sky') (1994). When an artist is handed thirty diamonds and a chunk of gold and asked to proceed according to his own views, the result may be surprising.

Although the work's name sounds fairy-tale-like and dreamy, the piece is clear in its contours. The structure is solid and looks as if Jäppinen wanted to apply to it a production process for some much larger object, such as a machine part. The base has a square silver plate on which the artist has set diamonds in inlaid gold tubes. On top is a tarnished silver plate, in which diamonds are visible through round holes; they are surrounded by a golden ring and additionally by a bright silver ring on the base plate. The diamonds with their ring shine on the tarnished silver plate like stars.

The pendant is attached to a thick, round leather cord, which originally functioned as the power transmission belt of a sewing machine. A clasp has been designed for the belt; it is based on the clasping system of ships' anchor chains and is an integral part of the whole piece.

Of all the pieces of jewelry, Afrikan yötaivas perhaps throws the clearest light on Jouni Jäppinen's complicated way of viewing the world: the clasp represents life in the archipelago, the belt respect for traditions, the structure technical competence, but the clean form - almost paradoxically - stands for the tradition of Nordic modernism. Despite the diamonds and precious metals, the piece as a whole exultantly transgresses against the conventional valuable-object ideology still generally associated with pieces of jewelry.

Johanna Vakkari

Art Historian Dr.

University of Helsinki

(Translation by Rod Fletcher)

Jouni Jäppinen`s "NEN" in the Saltbodan

(An exhibition at Gallery Saltbodan in Loviisa)

Creation is keeping one`s balance, searching for the common denominators, striking out the irrelevant parts, revelations, uniting, creating syntheses, seeing the essential and daring. All creation is based on fundamental honesty.

The artist from Loviisa who can keep his balance, expose the essential, sketch and shape and who can first and foremost be his own self is metal artist Jouni Jäppinen. In the dimness of the log-walled old house there is a remarkable world to be seen.

The name of the exhibition NEN stands actually for JäppiNEN. Thus you can understand that the artist has had a certain diminutive aspect in mind. No doubt you can find microcosmic elements in the exhibition. Take for example the sculpture Tozoon; a bright red spermatozoon which has got a white, soft and aggressive head. Three tall sculptures named The figure of a boy are astonishingly beautiful obelisks.

The sculpture The woman executive, which is a lower part of the body made of copper, differs very much from the other works. There is something oppressing, female and proposing in this sculpture.

The copper sausage is like a part from a run down temple tower. And all of a sudden a strikingly beautiful vessel made of soapstone and silver. Next to the knife there is the arms of Tytärsaari, which surely is a heraldic direct hit. Finally, the only thing being present is the artist`s modesty.

Kim Wahlroos

Östra Nyland 9.7.1994

Loviisa

(Translation by Juha Varjola)

Nine Pictures

(An exhibition at Cafe Mirka - Marika)

There is a certain mystical shimmer in Jäppinen's photographs. A commonplace house, tall hay, the atmosphere before a thunderstorm. An item being stable foreboding movement and the tall hay there waiting for the wind to blow.

The black edges of the photographs are turning into dark shadows, into a sentiment which has something menacing to it. A vessel resting anchored in the sea with white-capped billows around. Two seamen working on the foresail.

An old statue with a badly weathered surface picturing Christ has got new light brown woman's hands. The artist has made a meager collage "Unexpected effects". A child is laughing delighted and embarrassed with his fingers in his nostrils.

In the contrasting picture there is a colored child with a football under his arm and a jungle in the background. An old man's face, a silhouette of a fisherman. The old face is smiling, merely smiling ...

Kim Wahlroos

Östra Nyland 28.12.1993

Loviisa

(Translation by Juha Varjola)

Sugar Bowls and Salt Cellars

(An exhibition at Gallery Listmunahus, Reykjavik)

Our Finnish brothers choose different ways in their art making and subconsciously their past is reflected in most of their production as well is pictorial art as in industrial art. In sculpture forests are always a very close thing. Consequently they have made some great wooden sculptures and the solid rock under their feet and metals are also enticing materials.

Metal artist Jouni Jäppinen`s pictorial art is very practical and it has got pure shapes in which one quickly perceives the same kind of national vision of material which sculptures and architects have. This is a completely right vision, which we have become convinced of in art and industrial art exhibitions which have taken place in the Nordic House in recent decades.

But Jäppinen goes along other trails as well and his articles point apart from the national vision to everyday life. Some pieces of his work are fairly progressive. It is remarkable how people who study at conservative schools often become quite progressive when they leave school. Jäppinen is an example of an artist who experiences things in a different way when compared to those ones who have only made acquaintance to reckless freedom and who have difficulties in getting used to discipline even if there could be a considerable amount of delight of creation involved. The name of Jäppinen`s exhibition The Trinity tells about three themes: jewelry arts, knives and spice vessels. Furthermore, there are two sculptures, which appeal to the viewer`s sense of form in a splendid way.

What I consider to be essential in this exhibition is the message of joy in craftsmanship and the handling of material which is rich in experience. It really doesn`t matter whether it`s a question of precious metals or commonplace remnants. Jäppinen`s craftsmanship is pure of style and it is very vivid, because it`s conscious and rich of experience as well for the material as for the form. In my opinion the trinket Memory from the Outside of the Island is in its plainness and choice of material truly brilliant. The bracelet The Fisherman`s Chain, which is made from old polymer and hemp, contains something mysterious, humorous and becomes some people quite well. But it`s always better to see for yourself, than listen to other people`s stories. That`s why I would like to say, that especially people who take an interest in something quite extraordinary should go and see this exhibition.

Bragi Asgeirsson

Morgunbladid/Art and design

Reykjavik 24.11.1993, Iceland

(Translation by Juha Varjola)

The Art of Survival

(An exhibition at Gallery Listmunahus, Reykjavik)

The Finnish metal artist Jouni Jäppinen's jewelry arts, knives and articles are to be seen in Ofeigur's Listmunahus, in Skólavörðustígur. The works are in the second floor of a well renovated old wooden house. Even though I'm not quite satisfied with the pink hue on the walls, because in my opinion exhibition halls are supposed to be neutral. It is not a coincidence, that white colour is so common in exhibition halls.

First there are the knives, simple and strong in the shape as if handcrafted according to a fortunate tradition which dates back to many centuries ago. One senses immediately, that whoever made these articles, preferred practicability to decorativeness.

Jouni Jäppinen's works are an ode to the past, our forefathers, who survived in difficult circumstances perhaps because they didn't make too great material demands on life. Jäppinen requires the same kind of values from his works, contentment to little things, the essential virtues of the past, the values which have vanished almost entirely. These virtues include artistic craftsmanship which is free from all kinds of overwhelming and ornamentalness.

There is no doubt a certain amount of freedom of expression in Jouni Jäppinen's salt cellars and sugar bowls. They certainly are conspicuous because of their pure and original forms. I dare say, that the artist has made his sculptures with the same language of form in mind. Jäppinen combines cast iron with corroded brass and stone with pure silver in his sugar bowls.

The exhibiting of salt cellars and sugar bowls is worth noticing and it certainly makes the exhibition more alive. Actually, here is a different kind of an exhibition, the articles of which deal with practical values and they are therefore connected with the basic issues of existence.

Olafur J. Engilbertsson

DV, Frjáls Ohad Dagbláð/Pictorial art critic

Reykjavík 15.11.1993, Iceland

(Translation by Juha Varjola)

As a Lump of Sugar in the Bottom

(An exhibition at Gallery Johan S., Porvoo)

”As a counterpart to the heaviness of the plain bowls there are the well formed lids, which are made of precious metals. When you look at the handles, you can immediately see that there is a certain amount of knowledge of ergonomics involved.

It is also quite clear that the artist is well familiar with the material and with its aesthetic effects. Jäppinen has certainly taken on an intricate and unusual challenge when he has started off in order to create a new kind of form for such an everyday household article as a sugar bowl”.

Pia Strandman

Form Function 3/1992, Finland

(Translation by Juha Varjola)

Counterparts in a Beautiful Concord

(An exhibition at A. Alm`s workshop in Porvoo)

The desire to experiment is clearly to be seen, but it`s not a matter of experimenting without prevention but an interesting game with new forms and material combinations, which will eventually become pure, harmonious entities.

Jouni Jäppinen exhibits mainly pieces of jewellerys, which come about from combinations of different metals. The pieces of jewellerys are pure in style but they often have tiny, piquant details, which give the works new, exciting dimensions.

There is a presentiment of a certain humbleness and a knowledge of materials own shimmer and weight. As a result there are entities in which as well the artist as the material gets a chance to speak. The jewellerys is modern but at the same time timeless."

Carola Stark

Borgåbladet 14.12.1989

Porvoo

(Translation by Juha Varjola)

Magician`s Drum Beating in the Sibelius House

(An exhibition at Sibelius House of Loviisa)

Jäppinen is still establishing his profile as one of the most interesting metall artists in our country. He has his own style, which is very remarkable. He dares to try out new concepts.

The work Hike, which is dark, big and has been carried out in wavelike fashion, is quite astonishing. It is actually like a black, beautiful boat with a tapered stern, which has got sharp extensions. It is a mythical vessel, the boat of Hades, which is crafted of wood.

His work Kari is indisputably one of the most interesting works in the exhibition. There is his own portrait gazing with big, round eyes in the middle of a knot. The mythic god Ranguma is watching around in a bleary way. A gigantic, green animal from the prehistoric era has stopped abruptly because of a convulsion. I can't help the feeling, that there is a substantial amount of revival involved. Jäppinen has certainly not made his thing too formal, too mannered. The various articles breathe joy and dynamic imagination.

Kim Wahlroos

Östra Nyland 8.8.1989

Loviisa

(Translation by Juha Varjola)

Monstrous Goldwork and Mythic Finery

(An exhibition at Loviisa Town Museum)

Metal artist Jouni J. Jäppinen, who comes from Ruotsinpyhtää, exhibits his jewelry arts, which is so solid, funny, aesthetic and appropriate as to its form, that it is an almost painful opposite to Antero Taussi's monstrous gold paintings.

Taussi's paintings are scary shiny pictures, expressionless, pretentious sceneries, which the artist has made either by spraying or slapping on bronze grist. There are crooked pines, lakes, forests, typical inland sceneries with a shiny gilt to every work. How is it actually possible, that two exhibitions, which as to their quality, technique and theme are so utterly different, are placed under the same roof? Hu-huu, do I feel scared in broad daylight? Also the prices of Taussi's paintings are quite monstrous and unashamed. The most expensive of them, " The Regatta ", costs a handsome 6000 FIM.

After this horrible experience of bad taste, it is ever so awe-inspiring to get acquainted with Jouni J. Jäppinen's valiant jewelry art. No doubt Jäppinen can do the handicraft thing and his forms are pure and considered. The pieces of finery in the exhibition are little articles which make you stop to think it over. They are not just made for people to dress themselves up. They are little works of modern art. They are like mandala where your thought can get in ... just like pictures where thoughts and feelings can strive for reality.

Kim Wahlroos

Östra Nyland 7.4.1987

Loviisa

(Translation by Juha Varjola)