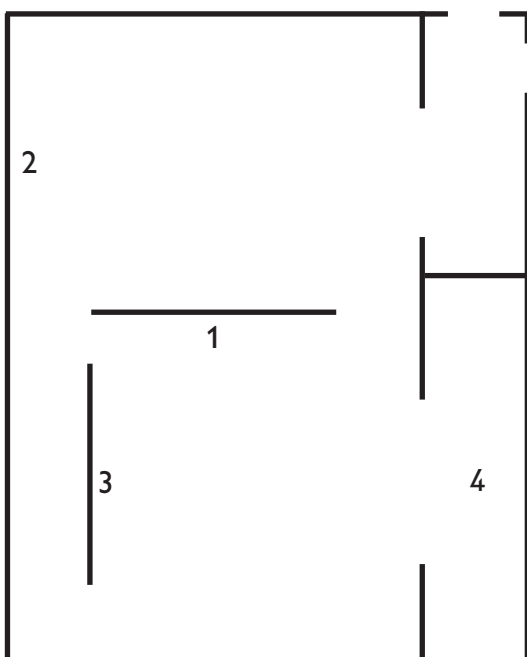


M VAN
MUSEUM
LEUVEN

SALLA TYKKÄ

24.06.16 × 11.09.16



The three videos *Lasso*, *Giant* and *Retrospective* are played successively:

1. *Lasso* (2000) **3 min 48 sec**
2. *Giant* (2013) **12 min 20 sec**
3. *Retrospective* (2015) **15 min 17 sec**
4. *Torso I*

The films made by the Finnish artist Salla Tykkä are succinct moments in time, which demonstrate the power of images and the effect they have on us. The unusual situations in her films are often historically or psychologically charged. The images of a man performing with a lasso in his sitting-room or of young, top-class gymnasts who train for hours in a gym, hark back to Westerns or to propaganda films from Communist Romania.

Tykkä's dramatic and cinematic montage is suggestive and the interaction between sound and image arouses the viewer's emotions. Her films are open to more than one interpretation; they are realistic but at the same time fleeting and layered like dreams. Antitheses like looking and being looked at and the contrast between dream and reality are central to her work.

At M Tykkä is showing three films. She will juxtapose the two older films *Lasso* (2000) and *Giant* (2013) with the recent *Retrospective* (2015), which the artist sees as a reflection on her own work.

LASSO (2000)

3 min 48 sec, 35mm film / HD video

In the opening shot of *Lasso*, a young girl dressed in a tracksuit approaches the camera while she is jogging. She slows her pace and tries to control her breathing in the cold. She arrives at a door and rings the bell, but nobody answers. As she walks to the back of the house she finds large windows. She draws closer. Through the window we observe, together with the girl, a young man performing with a lasso. He seems to be withdrawn, concentrated in his private performance, unaware of the girl watching him. The girl is transfixed by his masterly control of the rope.

Here Tykkä plays with the power of the gaze, with looking and being looked at and with the contrast between inside and out. The girl is literally but also figuratively outside, while the young man is totally absorbed in his own world.

Tykkä uses the well-known music score by the Italian composer Enno Morricone that was originally composed for the film *Once Upon a Time in the West* (1968). The music calls to mind the tradition of western films and also evokes questions about how strongly fiction (films) can integrate in our daily life and how we look at ourselves.

GIANT (2013)

12 min 20 sec, HD video

Giant was made in 2013 at two boarding schools famous for training young, world-class gymnasts in the Romanian cities 'Onesti' and 'Deva'. The film shows skilful adolescent girls training, images of the empty gymnasiums alternating with archival materials of the same locations from the 1960s to the 1990s, showing little change compared to the present day. The sound track of the film lets us hear repetitive fragments of the interviews of the young gymnasts, interpreted from English to Romanian and back. The girls' answers are very similar and highly controlled. By highlighting the sound of the gymnasts' movements, the video creates a hyper-reality with the focus on the physical aspects.

In *Giant*, Tykkä looks at the gymnastic tradition of Romania as a relic of the Communist era. Romania was Communist from 1947 to 1989 and the gold medals won by its gymnasts at the Olympic Games in 1976, 1980 and 1984 made the country famous for its gymnastics. The discipline of the gymnasts and the beauty and purity of their movements are a reflection of the ideals of that era. *Giant* shows how the power of a long-gone regime still exerts itself today over the human body.

The title *Giant* refers to an artistic gymnastics skill in which the gymnast rotates 360 degrees round the bar

while in a fully extended position. Tykkä was once a gymnast herself and after she finished her career she had a recurring nightmare. In the dream, her hands come away from the bar in the middle of the movement, as she expects the pain to begin.

RETROSPECTIVE (2015)

15 min 17 sec, 35 mm, 8 mm / HD video

Retrospective is the artist's most recent video.

Here Tykkä takes an autobiographical approach to examine the link between memories and personal identity. The video shows the artist talking about the various analogue cameras she has used in her life and the pictures she has taken with them. In most of the video only her hands are in view as she opens the cameras and tests them. In-between these images we are shown clips on 8mm film of landscapes in Patagonia and Tierra del Fuego where she travelled in her youth. The film consists of three different recordings: the audio recording, the archival images and the staged shot in a studio.

Though on the face of it the video would appear to be a technical description of various types of camera, it is in fact very personal: one of the camera's belonged to her parents, one camera she bought from her teacher, one camera allowed her to take the most personal self-portraits, etc. The cameras become characters and thus a testimony to the artist's career. Tykkä juxtaposes this video with the black and white photograph *Torso I*. Like *Retrospective* this is a self-portrait. The intimate reproduction of a self-portrait contrasts with the bigger than life-size format of the photograph.

Salla Tykkä (1973, Helsinki) has been engaged in photography, film and video since 1996. She studied at the Academy of Fine Arts in Helsinki where she gained her Master of Fine Arts diploma. Salla Tykkä achieved international fame with *Lasso* at the Venice Biennale in 2001. She has since shown her work internationally both in group and solo exhibitions. In Belgium she had a show at the S.M.A.K. museum in Ghent (2006).