

# HENNA VAINIO

## Stanzas

2 - 21 October 2014, 12 - 6pm daily  
Opening: 1 October, 6 - 9pm

*"Claiming nothing, not claiming anything, not a claim in everything, collecting claiming, all this makes a harmony, it even makes a succession."*

Gertrude Stein, *Tender Buttons*

I was reading Gertrude Stein's *Tender Buttons* when I received the invitation from Outpost, which formed quite a natural starting point for the show. I was interested in Stein's method of emphasis on the sounds and rhythms of words, rather than the sense of words to describe the ordinary things in everyday life. I drew a logical parallel to this initial textual/structural philosophy and how it applies to the representational/structural decisions in my sculpture.

*Tender Buttons* is divided into three sections — "Objects," "Food," and "Rooms" — with each section and stanza becoming longer towards the end, as if to reflect the volume and size of the spaces she describes. The word stanza comes from Italian, meaning room or station and is used to refer to an arrangement of a certain number of lines forming a division of a poem. I find this spatial dimension interesting, how she factors in this consideration for the space the words occupy on a page or when spoken, and in relation to how they describe an imagined space. There is also a sense of equivalence in these 'Object Portraits', which comes from Stein making her material - the words - carry equal weight. Each word seems to have a voice of its own, without a particular hierarchy, and often liberated from their conventional meanings through their being arranged together in an un-ordinary context. I find this makes her writing simultaneously purposely incoherent and abstract, yet it creates freedom for the reader, a chance to 'complete' the texts in an individual way. In a sense the words as individual elements, created a potential for meaning to become malleable and they were like anchor points to project meaning onto. It was this interchangeability, this malleability, almost a modular approach to moving around these separate pieces to form permutations of another 'thing' that I found close to my own logic in making. I have a great fascination with a material quality or a texture of something everyday, say the weave of a carpet or the corner of a piece of furniture, that I follow in order to understand and describe through recreating it. This re-creational appetite serves as a starting point but often changes through the process of making, resulting in multiple takes and translations. It is quite an intuitive approach, borne out of a curiosity and it means the work is often repeatedly added on, pulled down, continued or broken off in order to find the right rhythm and tone. I also, as in the ethos of arrangement in *Tender Buttons*, subscribe to a sense of equivalence between materials/colours/textures and like to play opposites against each other and combine so-called low/cheap materials with high/expensive ones, which I believe creates a certain tension and some levelling of hierarchies can be achieved as a result.

For this exhibition I have made my own sculptural 'Object Portraits'. The centerpiece of the exhibition will be a freestanding three-part steel and plaster division panel group. These three segments connect on hinges like screens and they are formed of mild steel rods, which have been bent and welded to undulate in and out of various plaster panel blocks. They contain sections of empty space and there is a tonal variance in the work where the rods continue on serpentine pathways or break off in an ending completely.

Along with this are other painted sculptural elements resembling furniture and several painted glass wall pieces, which are contrasted with cast wax rhubarb sticks. I have often used casts of basic things we eat like peanuts, cabbage leaves, etc. which in their remaking as sculptural objects show the humour and absurdity of when such an ordinary thing can seem so curious if only because it has been remade, or given a 'role.' Literally the act of sculptural casting becomes theatrical casting. By creating individual works which themselves are collections of atonal composite textures, colours, materials, in a way that moves with a freedom I hope will find a parallel with this structural philosophy I described earlier.

Henna Vainio (born 1981, Finland) graduated from the Slade School of Fine Art in 2013 and studied at Chelsea College of Arts, London, prior to the Slade. Recent exhibitions include *Bearing Traits*, Pracownia Potretu, Lodz, Poland, 2014, *Points of Contact*, No Format, London 2014, *LIMBO Associate Member's show*, LIMBO, Margate, 2014 and *Objectness*, *OUTPOST Members' Show 2013*, OUTPOST, Norwich 2013.

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