

NIKO LUOMA
„ONE OF MANY EPILOGUES“

19 January – 19 March 2021

The title of our exhibition refers to a poem by Pier Paolo Pasolini, written in 1969. He always had a special connection with the region of Friuli and thus with Trieste, the adopted home of Finnish artist **NIKO LUOMA** (b 1970 in Helsinki). The poem describes the personal and professional freedom of action longed for by the protagonist, at the same time representing an ode to the present moment, without retrospection or anticipation.

Besides five adaptations of famous masterworks from art history, in his fourth solo exhibition in our gallery, **NIKO LUOMA** presents his latest series, shown internationally for the first time. These new works, entitled *Pictures*, are based on a brilliant but simple principle: a film negative is exposed three or four times (in red, green, blue and yellow or orange), with the aid of an analogue camera, and developed. Then the scanned film is digitally folded, according to an analogue template. The enlarged print, developed in the Diasec process, is the final result of an apparently simple process which is in fact highly complex: since the photo is not developed until the end of the process, the negative serves as a record of its own origin. Overlapping lines and colour fields give the impression of space. The artist also welcomes the participation of chance. As in his adaptations, it is the photographic process, "writing with light", that fascinates him. Since the start of his career, his interest has never been in what happens in front of the camera, but in what happens inside it. His working method is unique in the international art world; only the 1920s "new seeing" photographic experiments introduced by László Moholy-Nagy with his photograms, are comparable with **NIKO LUOMA**'s abstract visual language.

His *Adaptations* are paraphrases of masterworks from art history: *La Danse* by Henri Matisse (1910), David Hockney's famous *Pool Paintings* (1960s), still life photographs by Irving Penn (1980), Japanese prints from the celebrated series *36 views of Mount Fuji* by Katsushika Hokusai (1832) and a photograph showing futuristic painter and composer Luigi Russolo (1914), are the source and origins of his abstract works. **NIKO LUOMA** examines these examples from art history for the spatial conditions within them, dividing them into lines and fields which he notes in his sketch-book. He makes a template from each sketch and positions it under a coloured light in front of the lens of his studio camera, before pressing the release. He repeats this process with different combinations of form and colour until a pattern of irregular overlapping colour fields emerges on the negative. In 1993, Hokusai's work *Travellers Caught in a Sudden Breeze at Ejiri*, from the Fuji series, was the subject of a re-enactment by Canadian photographer Jeff Wall, developed in a light box as a colour print. So **NIKO LUOMA**'s work is a double reinterpretation. In regard to technical questions, Hokusai and his contemporary compatriot Utagawa Hiroshige are also important influences: the process used for Japanese woodblock prints, with their variously coloured plates, is equivalent to the many layers of the photographic multiple exposure. The aim of the classic Japanese print is not the faithful reproduction of the subject, but the representation of its essence. The artist merely suggests, the image itself coalesces in the viewer's head. This brings us full circle to **NIKO LUOMA**'s works, full of radiant colour.

Salzburg, January 2021

Katja Mittendorfer