

## **‘In Search of Ornament’**

**An exhibition at the tm•gallery, January 2018**

Every morning soon after waking up, I hold in my hands a coffee cup with a language of form inspired by a stone shaped by a stream. I admire the flawlessness of the light-grey porcelain and I wouldn't stop using it for the world. The cup and its saucer are from the Suomi tableware collection designed by Timo Sarpaneva in the 1970s, and it is without doubt a classic of Nordic design.

This manifestation of pure form has nonetheless revealed how it produces ornament in a very natural way. At some stage, I began to notice light stains from the morning coffee on the outer rim of the cup. As a result of my drinking coffee, the stimulant placed itself in new and different patterns on the faience. I had before me organic designs on an organic shape. I began to collect these formations and after a period of consideration and several explorations of materials, I decided to use small pieces of stone to record the marks: mosaic proved to be a suitable method for this task.

Once the crafting of the pieces came under way, I overcame a feeling of shame over the nature of the process. I had soiled the object with my lips and with my mouth full of a hot beverage. I enjoyed the stain and even wanted to present the results. My interest, however, is purely visual, and even physical. Among other factors, the anatomy of the chin, the shape of the cup, the thickness of its wall and the angle at which it is tilted affect the marks. I often consider myself and the cup as a machine producing information in the form of stain patterns.

Each piece measures approximately 9 x 16 cm. I regard them to be portable works of art, being as they are roughly the size of a mobile phone. At any rate, they feel good in the hand. In view of mounting the works, the tm•gallery is an ideal venue for the series. The small size of the mosaic pieces, ca. 3 x 3 mm, falls into a relationship with the cubic metres of volume in the gallery. The works are in regular intervals in a row extending throughout the gallery. With this display I want to create the impression of a border strip signalling the existence of decoration.

Blank is always a concept that challenges thought. As biological creatures, we seek signs in the void whether we want to or not. I have thought whether the stain is modernism's own ornament with its unavoidable existence which it would be wisest for us to accept. Or would we be prepared to fill the unfilled and take ornaments back into use?

My own background is dichotomous in relation to the aesthetic of Finnish modernism. I grew up in an environment in which a modernist aesthetic was cherished, but where at the same time ornament denied by modernism (in my case Karelian ornament) had both its own meaning and history. In practice, these two systems coexisted in my childhood environment, although they did not exist for each other. In some way, this conflicting model lives on in my mind. And perhaps with this project in which I have found coffee stains on a reduced form I am addressing this schism of tradition and the modern through the blemishes of modernism.

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