

Salla Tykkä

*Thriller*

Since 2000, Salla Tykkä has been developing a trilogy of 35mm films. *Thriller* is the second part to be completed but will be the first chronological part when all three films are finished. The title, *Thriller*, relates primarily to the Michael Jackson album that was so popular at the time when the artist was the same age as the girl in the film. It also refers to the suspense that we feel upon watching the film.

A young woman is central to Tykkä's trilogy and in *Thriller* we encounter her as an adolescent girl, living with her parents. Although no words are spoken in the film, it is clear that this three-way relationship is not an easy one. The girl conveys a great deal of anger and resentment through her dark looks and, from her vantage point inside the house, she almost seems to control the activities of her parents working below her. Eventually, the girl's anger leads her to commit a violent and shocking act, which can be seen as a loss of innocence.

Replacing words in each of the films to date is a musical soundtrack. In *Thriller*, this is taken from two horror films – *Hallowe'en* and *Carrie* – which both have young women at their centre. In doing this, Tykkä enhances the tense atmosphere of *Thriller* and draws our attention to the power of music in films. In each of the films in the trilogy, the artist refers to another style of film-making; in *Lasso* (2000), it was Westerns – partly achieved by using the music from *Once Upon a Time in the West* – and in *Cave* (due for completion 2003), it will be science fiction.

Tykkä's films are very much grounded in the Finnish landscape and people and *Thriller* is no exception. Entirely filmed in the Middle Finland, the house and grounds are very typically Finnish and we see the father and mother involved in outdoor work and tending sheep. We also catch glimpses of the seasons as the more sinister parts of the story take place along a snowy path and snow falls at the end of the film as if to cleanse the scene.

As it takes anything up to one year to research, shoot and edit a film, Tykkä simultaneously works on photographic projects. During the making of *Thriller*, she worked on one series of the different moods conveyed in the face of Anni who plays the main character in the film. Another series, called *Animals*, that the artist has been working on for some time also matured during the making of *Thriller*. This is comprised of 25 photographs – five groups of five – in which a young woman is seen acting as a particular animal – an ape, cat, peacock, pony or rabbit – in

their 'natural habitat', swinging from tree branches or running through wheat fields. Tykkä has identified the phase in which girls imitate animals as a particular point in their development, before they begin to adopt the traits of women more acceptable in society. This is consistent with the film works of the trilogy which show a woman in different stages of her development. The teenage girl in *Thriller* appears in her twenties in *Lasso* and will be more adult still in *Cave*.

Salla Tykkä was born in Helsinki, Finland, in 1973 and has achieved a considerable amount of international success. Recent appearances in group exhibitions include the 2001 Venice Biennale and Greyscale/CMYK (Tramway, Glasgow and Royal Hibernian Academy, Dublin). One-person exhibitions have followed premieres of her individual films in London, Helsinki and Dublin and include Kunsthalle Bern, Galerie Yvon Lambert, Paris and the Bawag Foundation, Vienna.

Upon entering the Helsinki Academy of Fine Arts in 1995, Tykkä began to work with photography as a cathartic means of dealing with anorexia, which led to experiments with film and video. Following these earlier investigations, Tykkä's mature body of work dates from 1997 with her two 16mm films *Bitch: Portrait of the Happy One* and *Power* (1999). *Bitch...* examines the false happiness of a beautiful woman in a glamorous world while *Power* enacts the battle of the sexes through a boxing match. In what has become Tykkä's signature way of working, both these films are accompanied by series of photographs and by a powerful musical score taken from the world of pop music or, in the case of *Power*, from the boxing film *Rocky*.

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