

So Little Changed, So Little Remained

Mikko Rikala

Opening: Friday, 13 September 2024, 6 – 9 pm

Exhibition: 10 September – 2 November 2024

Persons Projects is proud to present Mikko Rikala's solo exhibition *So Little Changed, So Little Remained*, a poetic reflection on the paradoxes of time and memory. The title evokes both the subtle shifts in time's passage and the illusion that everything remains constant. Drawing inspiration from German Romanticism, Rikala's body of work alludes to the sublime and to being fully immersed in nature as a way of slowly observing natural phenomena and cultivating an awareness of the present moment. His images balance the fleeting yet pivotal moments of daily life with the essential role of memory in shaping identity, offering a nuanced exploration of humanity's relationship with the natural world.

Throughout his career, Rikala has delved into various conceptual approaches to visualizing time. In his series *Echoes*, he incorporates collected objects, both natural and man-made, each infused with personal memories. The tactile interaction with these objects symbolizes the deep connection between sensory experience and memory. As Rikala explains, "I have been collecting small items from both the natural and man-made worlds since I was a child. Each of these objects has a story behind them. By touching and looking at these objects, I am activating my memory. Similar to how seashells and coins are part of a greater natural system, my memories are intertwined with a collective memory that shapes and sustains our humanity." Rikala's process involves a meticulous blend of digital and analog photography, utilizing darkroom techniques such as overdevelopment and solarization. He prints images, rephotographs them with black-and-white film, and repeats the process to achieve desired tonalities. The film is developed using an overly warm developer, resulting in errors, uneven development, and thin tones. After making prints from the negative in the darkroom and further manipulating the image, Rikala rephotographs the image, scans it, and produces an inkjet print. This repetitive process mirrors the concept of a world in constant flux, with the images themselves starting to decay like memories. Each layer of introduced imperfections affects the photograph itself as an object, continuously transforming it into something new.

In the second part of the exhibition, Rikala draws upon his Nordic sensibility, employing minimal aesthetics to explore the essence of German Romanticism. His works *Quotidian sublime (heartbeat/waves)* and *Quotidian sublime (thunder/wind)* embody the paradox of finding the sublime in the mundane, inviting the viewer to reflect on how deeper meanings can emerge from the ordinary through focused observation. In an ongoing project with works titled *Silence*, he records his presence in various natural locations, concentrating for one hour at a time on the silence and subtle environmental sounds around him. This deep listening and attentive presence, a concept also central to the works *The Joy Prevails*, create a heightened

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sense of visual consciousness, allowing the passage of time and the simple act of being alive to take on new significance. By incorporating both natural and human-made elements into his work, Rikala encourages contemplation of the intricate interconnectedness of existence. His multisensory works invite viewers to engage with their own memories and personal histories, blurring the boundaries between past and present, self and surroundings, and revealing the complex tapestry of human experience.