



## NEWS RELEASE

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### **EIJA-LIISA AHTILA: *THE ANNUNCIATION***

**February 22 – May 6, 2012**

(30 minutes, continuous loop, in Finnish w/English subtitles)

The University Museum of Contemporary Art is pleased to present *The Annunciation*, a new work by Eija-Liisa Ahtila, the internationally acclaimed artist from Finland who is a pioneer in the development of multi-media art. Her work explores the potential of the film medium, weaving an intricate web of references – between film and theater, painting and poetry, fiction and documentary.

Eija-Liisa Ahtila is a master story-teller in moving images. Her multi-screen narratives reveal the fragile inner life of her protagonists, as well as the tenuous line separating fantasy from reality. Using the visual language of cinema, her work has the powerful effect of dramatizing a psychological perception of space and time for the viewer.

*The Annunciation* is an installation of three projected images in which one of the central motifs of Christian iconography and Renaissance painting is constructed and re-enacted through moving image. In this Annunciation the events are set in the present. The installation consists of both material made during the preparation for shooting, as well as an actual reconstruction of the event of the Annunciation. The film material was shot mainly during the winter season of 2010 in the snowy Aulanko nature reserve in southern Finland and on a set depicting the artist's studio and the scene of the Annunciation. All the actors, apart from two, are non-professionals and clients of the Helsinki Deaconess Institute's women's support services. Although based on an existing script, the events, roles and dialogue were adapted during the filming process in accordance with the actors' individual presence.

A viewpoint to Ahtila's *The Annunciation* is Jacob von Uexkull's idea that living beings' different worlds exist simultaneously. That idea provides the approach to the nature of a miracle and the possibilities of perception and knowledge.

#### **"A Stroll through the Worlds of Animals and Men" Jacob von Uexkull (1957) / EXTRACT:**

"We are easily deluded into assuming that the relationship between a foreign subject and the objects in his world exists on the same spatial and temporal plane as our own relations with the objects in our human world.

This fallacy is fed by a belief in the existence of a single world, into which all living creatures are pigeonholed.

This gives rise to the widespread conviction that there is only one space and one time for all living things. Only recently have physicists begun to doubt the existence of a universe with a space that is valid for all beings."

#### **NARRATOR'S VOICE-OVER / EXTRACT:**

"For something to get started, one must merely begin and connect with a thing that isn't yet - as far as one knows, at least. And to write more to it.

How does one know what things are, unless they're already familiar? What does one know of them at that stage? How do such things exist? How to get next to them and engage in dialogue - on what and in whose language?

One instinctively approaches such things through the familiar, the known - at times with such precision and force that one can see from a single angle only, in one direction, all things in a clear order - one thing in front, another just behind it, and so on - in perspective.

Can something already familiar fulfil the criteria for a miracle? Can one be shaken with surprise by something one knows through and through? What does one see then?

Perhaps one encounters a question, which one cannot understand. Or an image of something that begins to puzzle the mind. They are displayed somewhere, where they can be discovered, and then one waits to see who comes to look at them. And how they look at them."

EIJA-LIISA AHTILA

(b. 1959 in Hämeenlinna, Finland. Lives and works in Helsinki.) Eija-Liisa Ahtila studied filmmaking at the London College of Printing, UCLA, and at the American Film Institute in Los Angeles. In 1990 she received the Young Artist of the Year Award, Tampere, Finland. Since then, she has received numerous grants and awards, including an AVEK-award for important achievements in the field of audio-visual culture (1997), the Edstrand Art Price (1998), a DAAD fellowship (1999), honorary mention at the 48th Venice Biennale (1999), the Vincent Van Gogh Bi-annual Award for Contemporary Art in Europe (2000), and a five-year grant from the Central Committee for the Arts (2001), as well as the Artes Mundi Prize (2006).

Ahtila has had solo exhibitions at the Jeu de Paume, Paris (2008); K21, Dusseldorf (2008); the Museum of Modern Art, New York (2006), the Moderna Museet Museum, Stockholm (2012), among many others, and participated in group exhibitions around the world. Her work is shown at art galleries, art film festivals and art biennials such as Manifesta; Venice Biennale; Documenta, Kassel; and the Istanbul Biennial. Her work is held in many museum collections in Europe and North America. Ahtila lives and works in Helsinki and cooperates with a professional production company. She is currently professor at the department of Time and Space-based Art at the Finnish Academy of Fine Art.

### **High Resolution Video Stills Available Upon Request**

#### **Related Events:**

**Wednesday, February 22, 2012**

**UMCA Main Gallery**

**Opening Reception: 5:00 – 7:00pm**

***In Conversation:* 6 – 7pm,**

**Wednesday, April 18, 2012**

**UMCA Main Gallery**

**7:30 pm**

As part of the 19<sup>th</sup> annual Massachusetts Multicultural Film Festival *intersections: fiction/non-fiction*, spring 2012, a special screening of Eija-Liisa Ahtila's THE ANNUNCIATION will be followed by an interdisciplinary panel discussion including scholars from art history, theater, and film, followed by a reception.

Museum Hours: Beginning February 1, 2012

Tuesday – Friday, 11:00 AM – 4:30 PM, Saturday/Sunday 2 – 5 PM

Closed Mondays and Spring Break, March 17-26