

Pilvi Takala:



Pilvi Takala is, one could say, a rule breaker. Except the rules she breaks are not actually clearly inscribed in a society's codes of conduct. Instead, her work explores conduct enforced but not necessarily written down or even discussed – strictures that are perhaps not even known as 'rules' until she exposes them. The young Finnish artist furtively stages social situations that run counter to some unspoken societal convention, documenting her acts in films, installations or books. In the process, her seemingly harmless yet inevitably subversive gestures touch at the very core of how politics, culture and society quietly function.

Once, she dressed herself as Snow White and queued for entry to France's Euro Disney, only to be stopped by guards. In *Real Snow White* (2009), video footage of her attempt to buy a ticket and enter – after having graciously signed autographs and posed for pictures with excited children waiting in line with her – reveals the inability of Euro Disney employees to adequately explain why she should be treated differently than any other visitor who wants to visit the theme park. Takala-as-Snow-White, it seems, looked just too much like the real thing (no matter that Snow White is not even 'real', as she points out).

The recorded discomfort of Disney employees and even some parents thus exposes what no one dares articulate: in the microcosm of society that is Euro Disney, the order of things is maintained through the strict policing of a fantasy that depends on everyone knowing who is playing a role, and who is not.

For *The Trainee* (2008), Takala assumed the identity of a new office trainee in a Finnish company's marketing department. At the beginning of her monthlong stay, she acts like a typical marketing trainee, but some weeks into her training, she basically stops working. She is 'thinking', she replies to anyone who asks (and many do). But her acts, or rather her absence of acts (indeed, the lack of any quantifiable or 'acceptable' work activity), slowly make the trainee a questionable, even dangerous, element in the company. Hidden-camera videos and other documentation reveal the discomfort, speculation and whispered controversy she provokes among colleagues. Before long, the trainee's lack of a visible work ethic or, perhaps more importantly, her refusal to mask inactivity as do so many others (think of all the office employees pretending to work while actually consulting Facebook), reveals some of the implicit rules – and lies – of that very pillar of modern society, the workplace.

by
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from top: *Real Snow White*, 2010, video; *The Trainee*, 2008, video installation. Both courtesy the artist