

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Esko Männikkö
Harmony Sisters

Project Gallery: Sharon Core
February 27 – April 10, 2010



The Yancey Richardson Gallery is pleased to present *Harmony Sisters*, an installation of new work by Finnish artist Esko Männikkö. Winner of the prestigious Deutsche Borse Prize in 2008, Männikkö has exhibited internationally since representing Finland at the 1995 Venice Biennale.

An ongoing series begun in 2005, *Harmony Sisters* is comprised of intimate photographic portraits of domestic and wild animals, including horses, cows, dogs, monkeys, and birds, taken near the artist's home in northern Finland or in zoos in Europe. Building upon an earlier series, *Flora and Fauna*, *Harmony Sisters* testifies to Männikkö's deep and respectful relationship with nature and his subjects. Tightly composed and closely cropped, Männikkö's highly detailed renderings of swirling fur, fleshy tongues, wrinkled muzzles and glistening eyes approach beauty while bordering on the grotesque. In certain images the animal subjects return the unflinching scrutiny of Männikkö's camera and the gaze of the viewer with an equally steady and powerfully engaging eye. As described by Julia Bryan-Wilson in *Artforum* (Nov. 2006), "These engrossing – and gross – details resist the romantic conventions of anthropomorphism: Each eye is singular, impassive, and intensely focused, a metaphor for Männikkö's camera and its sharp, monocular gaze."

Filled edge-to-edge with strong, formal compositions in deeply saturated color pressed close to the picture plane, the photographs take on the character of a painting. This quality is underscored by the large wooden frames made by Männikkö, which both complement his images and comment ironically on photography's relationship to painting.

Recognized as "Young Artist of the Year" in Finland in 1995, Männikkö first gained international prominence with his portraits of isolated Finnish bachelors in the "Far North" who epitomized a kind of loneliness and self-reliance. In 1996, he was awarded an ArtPace international artist residency in San Antonio, Texas, where he photographed the residents of two small Mexican American communities on the border of South Texas. His ongoing series, *Organized Freedom*, focuses on abandoned houses resulting from rural depopulation throughout northern Finland.

Works by Esko Männikkö are held in the collections of major museums including the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, Foundation Cartier, the Moderna Museet and the Malmö Art Museum, among others. He has been the subject of mid-career retrospectives at the Kursaal Art Museum, San Sebastian, Spain and Millesgården Konsthall, Stockholm, Sweden. Männikkö has published three books including *The Female Pike*, which was selected for two compendiums of the most important books in the history of photography.

The gallery and artist are grateful for the support of the Consulate General of Finland.

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