



Gallery Taik Persons is highly pleased to present **Nelli Palomäki** with her solo exhibition *Shared*. Palomäki's photography, continuously pioneering the tradition of classic black-and-white portraiture, has established the artist among the most celebrated to evolve from the Helsinki School and Aalto University School of Arts, Design and Architecture over the past decade. *Shared* explores the complex theme of siblinghood, decipherable in its powerful, dynamic manifestations of human relationships and familial bonds. The captivating portraits of this series focus on children and young adults as subjects, who are shown solemnly engaged in situations and constellations that reveal their identities as siblings; a shared identity shaped ambiguously by elements of togetherness and separateness alike. The artist's dedication to the theme of siblings has grown out of personal observations and experiences made in the context of past work and exhibition projects centered on children and adolescents. Without a doubt, the life-changing momentum of becoming a mother of two children herself has also affected Palomäki's recent and current work.

Siblinghood describes a carnal bond that we are born into. It is inherent to the human condition, it is unchosen. As siblings, we are forced to be close, to carry the same name, the same inheritance. Simultaneously, the state of being sibling implants in us the potential to fate our lives by expressing difference. Sometimes, a simple gesture of the hand, the raising of an eyebrow, or a slight change in body posture can possess the power to demarcate whole dimensions of unison and partition, commonality and individuality, resonance and dissonance. Once friend, once foe; closest allies, most rivaled competitors the subtle hierarchies of power between siblings are continuously shifting. A heartfelt embrace can turn into a heated wrestle within seconds: this is the shared life of siblings.

Through her portraits, Palomäki aspires to capture these facets of shared siblinghood in all its physical, psychological, and emotional complexity. Though nearly every portrait is carefully planned and staged beforehand, an element of the accidental is always retained, thus animating the work with unforeseen results and revelations, and carrying a magic life of its own. Here, the act of posing presents a crucial moment, in Palomäki's words, being "the moment when a person changes into an image." The way the sitters perceive and present themselves as autonomous individuals as well as in direct rapport, literally entwined, with one another determines which stories are told through their portraits, whether intentionally or not: these stories range from tokens of solidarity and appreciation, and caring moments in sync, to struggles for equality and recognition; from assertions of authority, to the search for emancipation. The adolescent age of Palomäki's subjects makes the threshold nature of siblinghood all the more present: while the somber discovery of alterity and unhomeliness in a seemingly familiar world marks the end of our childhood innocence, novel feelings of estrangement are likewise reflected in our changed perception of self and other as sisters and brothers.

In photographing the kindred sitters, most of whom initially are strangers to her, Palomäki seeks to come closer to them. Next to her essential focus on light, of utmost importance is that the portrait result in a work imbued with the presence of both the portrayed and the portrayer. She chooses her sitters carefully, for she knows that with each portrait, a unique, binding encounter comes into effect. The moment of intimacy shared between those before and behind the camera can, and, in Palomäki's view, even should be of discomfiting quality. It may not only bring forth power structures among the sitters, but also between the sitters and their portrayer. She states: "Each and every portrait I have taken is a photograph of me too. [...] [T]he intensity of the moment shared with the subject controls the portrait. [...] One is blind and lost without seeing one's own appearance, the other desperately trying to reach the perfect moment. The complexity of portraiture, its greatest trap, eventually always lies in its power relationships." As viewers, in responding to the portrayed subjects who gaze at us tenaciously, vulnerably, we are also seeing Palomäki's gaze, and sharing with her our own, thus becoming akin.