

# LAURA HORELLI

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Laura Horelli's works investigate history subjectively, frequently by means of family history. She combines found footage – such as TV programmes or photographs – with images of her own, the public with the private. In her videos, the chronology of events is often dissolved, and anecdotal memories are woven together with historical facts. In this way Horelli uses proximity to enhance the critical potential of her works, distancing herself from the (supposed) objectivity that is traditionally associated with documentary film.

## *Letter to Mother, 2013*

In her latest work, Horelli sets off on the trail of her mother, who died young. As a small child she had lived in Queens, New York, as her father was a diplomat and the family often moved home. In an imaginary letter the artist wonders what the city must have signified to her mother. She tries to understand why the family talked so little about this period in their lives.

Further, the fact that her grandparents settled in Brazil after the Second World War triggers all kinds of questions. It is clear from the fine mesh of personal memories, family stories and anecdotes how closely the private and the political tend to be interlinked.

Horelli shows us views of Flushing, the district where her family resided, and in so doing she implicitly addresses the situation of immigrants in New York in the 1950s: their daily lives were often confined to a small suburban radius.

The interweaving of apparently unrelated facts – such as how the band Kiss was named after a park in New York – also adds an element of puzzlement, and increasingly the spectator begins to wonder about the speaker's intentions, opening up space for personal associations.

## *Haukka-Pala (A Bit to Bite), 2009*

Laura Horelli's mother also plays a central role in *Haukka-Pala*: we see her in her mid-thirties presenting a children's programme about healthy eating. Horelli makes use of VHS footage from the Finnish broadcaster YLE TV2, adding a second level to the sound track by commenting the

material: we hear memories of her mother's illness and of family habits, extracts from the diary her mother kept as a young woman, and a letter to the artist's grandmother.

In this way, personal reminiscences about her mother are compared with the image she cultivated in public. There are some surprises: the same woman who had worked for a women's organisation in Kenya only a few years earlier is shown on television playing the board game "Africa's Star", which today reeks of colonialism. Apart from the discrepancies between public and private perceptions of the same person, another theme is the reliability of memory, as when Horelli compares her mother's expressions on screen with her own visual memories. In addition to this, *Haukka-Pala* can be read as a reflection on the medium of television: the slow, calm narrative of the children's programme clearly illustrates how much our viewing habits have changed over recent decades.

Laura Horelli was born in Helsinki (Finland) in 1976. She studied at the Städelschule in Frankfurt/Main, where she attended Thomas Bayrle's class, and at Kuvataideakatemia in Helsinki. Her works have been exhibited, among other places, at the 7<sup>th</sup> Momentum Biennial (Norway), the Academy of Arts in Berlin, the Neuer Berliner Kunstverein (n.b.k.) in Berlin, Kiasma in Helsinki, Ludlow 38 in New York, and the 49th and 53rd Venice Biennales. In 2007 Horelli was a Visiting Professor at the University of Fine Arts (UdK) in Berlin. In 2011 the City of Berlin awarded her the Hannah Höch Förderpreis, designed to support women artists in the middle of their careers.