

## Press Release

### Yael Bartana

TRUE FINN - TOSI SUOMALAINEN

06.09 – 18.10.2014



Yael Bartana, *True Finn – Tosi Suomalainen (still)*, 2014

Annet Gelink Gallery is pleased to present *True Finn – Tosi Suomalainen*, **Yael Bartana's** (1970, Kfar-Yehezkel, Israel) fifth solo show at the gallery. Based around Bartana's newest video work, *True Finn* (2014), explores themes often dealt with in Bartana's work: the issues surrounding national or cultural identities and the concepts of homeland and belonging. This exhibition also marks the premiere of the film outside of Finland, where it was first shown as the IHME Project of the 2014 IHME Contemporary Art festival. Bartana was invited by the

Pro Arte Foundation, which runs the festival, to create the film as a temporary work of art in the public space. To suit the requirements of the project, Bartana conceived the work as a reality T.V. series, whilst still using a more filmic approach. As such, the work also marks a departure from the style of her previous video works.

'True Finn' is a loose translation of the name of the rightwing Finnish political party Perussuomalaiset, which in recent years has grown to become the third largest political party in Finland. For *True Finn – Tosi Suomalainen* (2014) Bartana asked eight Finnish volunteers, of differing cultural, religious and political backgrounds, to live together for one week in an effort to create a utopian moment. They were assigned an array of tasks that deal with the issues forming modern-day Finnish national identity. These tasks and the everyday routines and discussions between the cohabitants form the basis of the film and give insight into how each of the eight individuals feel both part and apart of the larger Finnish society. Interspersing the modern reality of Finnish nationality with more traditional, propagandistic depictions, *True Finn – Tosi Suomalainen* ultimately asks what it means to be Finnish today and how that changes depending on who is answering the question.

At the entrance of the show a neon work is on view. The text 'Black Stars Shed No Light' that forms the neon also forms the opening line of a new Finnish anthem made by the eight participants, to which each of the eight individuals contributed a sentence. Created to better suit and reflect Finland's current society, this new anthem features as a running thread throughout the film, as an emblem of the vision of Finland being presented. Bartana offers it as a both counterpoint and reversal of rightwing Finnish nationalism.

*True Finn – Tosi Suomalainen* asks us to reflect not just on Finnish society, but the new (European) tradition of multiculturalism. Who is a true Finn nowadays? Are some truer Finns than others? What remains of national identity when who we are, as nations, changes? And what does this identity then become?

Known for her films, photographs and installations, **Bartana's** work has been shown in numerous leading museums and biennials: 31st Sao Paulo Biennial (2014), 19th Biennial of ydney, PAMM (2013) Walker Art Center (2013), Carnegie International (2013), Van Abbemuseum (2012), Secession Vienna (2012), 7th Berlin Biennale (2012); 54th Venice Biennale (Polish Pavilion, 2011).

Her work is part of the collection of a.o.: van Abbemuseum (Eindhoven, NL); Centre Pompidou (Paris, FR); Gemeentemuseum Den Haag (The Hague, NL); Guggenheim Museum (New York, US); The Jewish Museum (New York, US); Kadist