



## Joakim Ojanen's wobbly, lonely characters find comfort and company in Mykonos

**Mykonos, 15 July 2019** — Swedish visual artist Joakim Ojanen returns to Dio Horia in Mykonos for his first solo exhibition in Greece. The exhibition *Island* is the result of the artist's residency with Dio Horia (November 2018) and will be opening on July 25 in the presence of the artist.

**Joakim Ojanen's** artistic practice consists of ceramics and oil paintings. He is essentially self-taught in both mediums, having worked in animation and character design before studying illustration. Ojanen is a character-maker: his sculptures and paintings always show cartoon-like figures with exaggerated features that at first seem funny and playful but possess layered, nuanced personalities and emotional depth. He builds his characters carefully so that they balance between the comical and the tragic, using the objects they carry, their clothes and their pets as elements that reveal their personality.

Each work by **Ojanen** is an expression of his own thoughts and memories, like self-portraits that exist outside a linear perception of time. He describes his characters as being children and adults at the same time, like a condensed expression of personal memory and experience. As such, his works are also about growing up; for some, they capture that strange feeling of being a child that grew up too fast, as they can reveal the accumulation of life's experiences and our constant negotiation between our personal history and living in the present. This is also why he sometimes talks of his works as being like pages of a diary, where each page captures a specific mood and emotion, but all combined create a continuous red line that runs across his entire work.

**Ojanen's** visual language is deeply rooted in his early love for comics and graffiti. It is also reminiscent of Philip Guston's later work and influenced by the imaginative and unconforming work of zine artists and self-publishers. He consciously avoids clear outlines and solid color fields, taking extra time and effort to add texture in every shape he paints, resulting in a signature visual style that is at the same time cute and unsettling. His paintings are very tactile, always preferring oil instead of acrylics and using the paint's thickness to accentuate shadows and forms on the canvas. In ceramics he has found the perfect medium to achieve this tactility: the surface of his sculptures is always uneven and full of traces from their handmade process, painted in a muted palette and given a lustrous glazed finish that brings the whole work to life.

During his residency in Mykonos **Ojanen** created four paintings that loosely reference his experience on the island. The centerpiece is an enormous canvas featuring an elaborate composition of a main character sitting down on what looks like a cobbled Mykonian alley, holding a smiling Greek amphora full of daisies. Three smaller canvases show a small green dog looking up to someone outside the frame, and two figures that seem to be in love, with hearts coming out of their faces and their knees shaking with excitement. A group of ceramic sculptures is also part of the exhibition, which have been created after the residency at the artist's studio in Stockholm.

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## NOTES TO EDITORS

— **Joakim Ojanen** (b. 1985, Västerås, Sweden) studied arts at the Konstfack University College of Arts. He began his artistic career as a street artist and illustrator, which led him to pursue an independent artistic practice from a young age. He works with sculptures — mainly ceramics — paintings and drawings. He has exhibited his work in over 40 solo, duo and group exhibitions, including museum shows at the Ebelingmuseet (Sweden), the Spritmuseum (Sweden) and the Västerås Konstmuseum (Sweden). His work is included in several public collections in Sweden, Spain, Belgium and the USA, and has been commissioned to create new work by The City of Gothenburg (2015) and Tensta Konsthall in Stockholm (2010). His work has been featured in Juxtapoz, the Los Angeles Times, Artnet and the Art Blog. He lives and works in Stockholm.

— **Dio Horia** is a gallery for contemporary art and culture that was inaugurated in 2015. Dio Horia Gallery strives to be at the forefront of cultural experimentation both in Greece and the world beyond, by representing young emerging artists from small peripheral countries. At the same time, Dio Horia is running an international residency program and also organizes group shows and publications with established and emerging artists that have not exhibited in Greece. Finally, Dio Horia engages in collaborative projects developed as a result of associations with artists, curators, non-profit organizations and cultural carriers. These fall into categories ranging from social, cultural and literary studies to music and performing arts. The gallery is based in Mykonos, Greece, and in the second half of 2019 it will open a new location in Athens. <http://www.diohoriamuseum.com/>

### — Exhibition info

Joakim Ojanen: *Island*  
Solo & residency show  
July 25 - August 23, 2019

### Dio Horia Gallery

Panahra Square, 846 00 Mykonos, Greece  
Tel: +30 2289026429  
Email: [info@diohoriamuseum.com](mailto:info@diohoriamuseum.com)  
<http://www.diohoriamuseum.com/>

Hours:  
Daily, 19:00-02:00

### — Now showing at Dio Horia Gallery

Javier Calleja: *Those Little Things*  
Solo & residency show  
June 28 - July 24, 2019

### — Upcoming

Spyros Aggelopoulos: *Donut Factory*  
Solo show  
July 25 - August 16, 2019

Sam Friedman: *Days of Kindness*  
Solo & residency show  
July 25 - August 23, 2019

Amir Fallah  
Solo & residency show  
August 23 - September 30, 2019

Hulda Guzmán  
Solo show (Athens)  
September-November 2019

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