



# ATENEUM

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## Paintings by Swiss artist Not Vital invite viewers to look slowly

From 19 October 2018 to 20 January 2019, one of the exhibition galleries at the Ateneum Art Museum will host an exhibition of works by the Swiss artist Not Vital (born 1948). The artist, whose career started in the 1960s, is best known for his sculptures and the architectonic installations he has created around the world. This exhibition presents him in a new light: as a painter. The exhibition features a series of 26 Vital's most recent paintings.

Vital began painting in 2009 in his studio in Beijing, where he lives for part of each year. Many of his paintings in the exhibition are self-portraits, in which he often slips into different roles ranging from a Chinese rice farmer to an Alzheimer patient or a singer. In Vital's portraits, we furthermore encounter his family members, friends and assistants, as well as familiar figures from the worlds of art and literature.

Vital's ascetic colour world is linked to the rugged, majestic landscapes of Switzerland's Engadin valley and the snowy, fog-shrouded mountains that surround it. The artist's home region is known as the Grisons or 'the Land of the Grey'.

"Painting is the best way for me to see, feel and smell the light," says Vital. His working process is meditative and introspective. In his portraits, he aims to connect with his models' inner worlds by clearing away the non-essential from the surface. Light, dimness and darkness – white, grey and black – activate our senses. Vital's portraits invite us to slow down while sharpening our gaze in a concentrated, unhurried way.

The exhibition has been curated by **Susanna Pettersson**, Director General of Nationalmuseum, Sweden. In her article in the exhibition catalogue, Pettersson makes this revealing insight: "Looking at his portraits is like making a commitment to climb a mountain or to begin a long journey without end."

A book published by PARVS in conjunction with the exhibition also sheds light on the underpinnings of Not Vital's work. The lavishly illustrated volume features text by the artist as well as an article by the exhibition's curator, Susanna Pettersson, entitled 'Seeing in the Dark'. The publication is available in English.

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**Images:** [press.ateneum.fi](http://press.ateneum.fi) | username: ateneum | password: mediat

**Opening hours:** Tue, Fri 10–18 | Wed, Thu 10–20 | Sat, Sun 10–17 | Mon closed

**Admission fees in 2018:** Normal admission fee €15 | S-Etukortti loyalty card holders €14 | Concessions €13 | Under 18-year-olds free of charge

**Admission fees in 2019:** Normal admission fee €17 | S-Etukortti loyalty card holders €16 | Concessions €15 | Under 18-year-olds free of charge

The Ateneum's main corporate partners are Helsingin Sanomat, HOK-Elanto and KPMG. The Ateneum Art Museum is part of the Finnish National Gallery, together with the Museum of Contemporary Art Kiasma, and the Sinebrychoff Art Museum. [www.kansallisgalleria.fi/en](http://www.kansallisgalleria.fi/en)