

Passion for art can be seen and felt at the Mänttä Art Festival

At the Out of Nowhere, XXVII Mänttä Art Festival exhibition, an emotional speech generator growls truths and predictions, a ceramic slide gurgles invitingly and a ten-metre wooden mechanic sculpture undulates like waves.

A climbing wall, with colourful bouldering holds originated from the impacts of war, left on cityscapes. Nudity, the summer light and the beauty of the human body in large scale watercolours. A video which considers if the cormorants are worth a song. These are a few examples of the work in the Out of Nowhere, XXVII Mänttä Art Festival exhibition.

Elements of surprise, physicality and storytelling are strongly present in this year's work. In this year's exhibition there are paintings, moving images, ceramics, pen and ink drawings and installations. The curators **Minna Suoniemi** and **Petri Ala-Maunus** have invited 36 artist/artist collaboratives, or 44 participants in total. Most of them will appear at the Art Festival for the first time this year. Included are also accomplished artists, such as **Sari Palosaari** and Ars Fennica recipient **Kari Vehosalu**.

– The passion for making art, draws us in and we believe it can be felt through the artwork in this summer exhibition. Most of the artwork is new and made specifically for this exhibition. It is exciting to see how they come together in this large space, Suoniemi and Ala-Maunus explain.

Storytelling emerges from the artworks themselves but they also dialogue between each other as well. An example of this is the climbing wall by **Pavel Rotts** on the wall adjacent to the Pekilo entrance. The bouldering holds of the wall appear colourful and joyful, but they originated from second world war bomb craters that can still be seen in the Helsinki cityscape. The piece *Climbing a Memory* considers collective memory, identity and cultural inheritance. The artwork gained new meaning with Russia's attack on Ukraine. **Sasha Rotts'** installation *Half a room* in the far corner of the fourth floor, evokes a different perspective on recent history. The installation is based on a childhood memory from the Perestroika era in the Soviet Union, when personal space was created by dividing her parent's room in half.

On the first floor at the entrance, visitors are greeted by a ceramic sculpture by **Elina Nissinen** and **Max Hannus**, *boddcast della verità*, which tells the fortune of those who ask. The sound it utters, brings to mind a kind of breathing. The quest for truth is also alluded to in the paintings by **Emma Ainala**. The paintings are a surrealistic avalanche of feelings, colours and details that also hold darker tones in the background.

On the first floor of Pekilo, the artwork in the main hall are connected to nature, as in the forest. A gigantic bronze mosquito *Heavy Weather* by **Piia Hiltunen** sucks thoughts from glass globes. The sculpture sits well next to the over ten-metres expanse of wooden structure by **Alexi Martikainen**, which dominates the hall. *Theme from the nature* is a motorised sculpture that resembles slowly undulating waves on the water's surface, or a giant mosquito's movements on its surface.

– The wooden sculpture brings to mind log driving and the history of wood in forestry. In this piece wood has returned to nature; become part of the water, the curators consider.

Water and the movement of its currents is present in other artwork as well, such as the ceramic waterslide installation *And Then Jumped Away*, by **Ninni Luhtasaari**. – Water flows through us as well, most of our body is water. Humans are just one species among others, the curators specify.

Pasi Autio is among others in discussing the disappearance of species. In his video *Feel the Heat* dancer **Saku Koistinen** dances at the end of the world forest party to the rhythm of chirping birds. **Jan Eerala**, **Laura Naukkarinen** and **Ulla Taipale** and the Chorus Sinensis -collective have dedicated their audiovisual choral piece to the cormorant and ponder, is this hated bird worthy of a song?

This year the Art Festival shows painting in abundance. – We are both visual artists and love painting as an art form, the curators explain.

On the third floor, the Tapionsali hall is dominated by **Sirkku Rosi's** piece *Landscape Lovers* in which bodies playfully melt into plants and become part of nature. It is a large-scale watercolour installation that partly spreads onto the floor.

In a space opposite this piece, are large paintings and ceramics by painter **Jenni Hiltunen**. In this colourful room, the work by sisters Jenni and Piia Hiltunen return to the landscape and atmosphere of their childhood.

Paintings by **Eeva Peura** and **Kari Vehosallo** are both on the fourth floor. Vehosallo's paintings that breathe a mystical, strange atmosphere are a perfect match for the Phantom, video by **Venla Helenius** which is projected in the adjacent room. This recently completed video by Helenius, glows with an otherworldly ambience.

The room in which the work by photographer **Raakel Kuukka** (1955–2022) and music videos by her daughter **Rebekka Kuukka**, known as Yeboyah, is a very special and important space for the curators. – We wanted to honour the memory of Raakel by showing her video in which her sister plays the drums at the family's summer home. Yeboyah's videos are filmed at the same location. The relationship between mother and daughter was very close.

For Minna Suoniemi and Petri Ala-Maunus curating the Art Festival has been an incredibly inspirational and important task. – We both have a long history with the Art Festival. We have been here as visitors and artists and now as curators.

Suoniemi and Ala-Maunus hope that the exhibition visitors will get caught up in enthusiasm and curiosity about new experiences. – Someone once said that artists are united by megalomania and blind faith in themselves. Maybe that is precisely the famous spirit of Mänttä, the curators speculate.

In addition to the Pekilo exhibition centre, the exhibition also extends to the Taavetinsaari Island and the Mänttä sports centre. On Taavetinsaari Island there is a site-specific work by **Mariam Falaileh** and an installation by **Ida Palojärvi** in the pavilion. The large-scale mural by **J.P Köykkä**, **Peetu Liesinen** and **Kim Somervuori** *World Keeps on Spinning into the Future*, can be found by the skate park and pump track at the Mänttä sports centre.

The first Mänttä Art Festival was organised exactly 30 years ago. Since then, the festival has become Finland's broadest overview of contemporary art, and has received among others, the prestigious Finnish National Prize. The XXVII Mänttä Art Festival is open every day from June 11th until August 31st, 2023.

XXVII Mänttä Art Festival Artists

Emma Ainala
Pasi Autio & Saku Koistinen
Jesse Avdeikov
Risto-Pekka Blom

Jan Eerala & Laura Naukkarinen & Ulla Taipale + Chorus Sinensis -collaboration

Mariam Falaileh

Seppo Fränti

Terhi Heino

Venla Helenius

Jenni Hiltunen

Piia Hiltunen

Hinni Huttunen

Hanna Hyy

Hanna Kanto

Veera Kulju

Raakel Kuukka

Antti Kytömäki

J.P Köykkä & Peetu Liesinen & Kim Somervuori

Linda ja Aura

Ninni Luhtasaari

Alexi Martikainen

Rusto Myllylahti

Elina Nissinen & Max Hannus

Anneli Nygren

Ida Palojärvi

Sari Palosaari

Tuukka Peltonen

Eeva Peura

Iiri Poteri

Raisa Raekallio & Misha del Val

Sirkku Rosi

Pavel Rotts

Sasha Rotts

Maria Stereo

Kari Vehosalo

Yeboyah

More information

Press photos can be obtained from the website and/or the Communications specialist.

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