

Minna Suoniemi and Petri Ala-Maunus chosen as curators for the Mänttä Art Festival 2023

Minna Suoniemi (b. 1972) and **Petri Ala-Maunus** (b. 1970) have been chosen as curators for the Mänttä Art Festival 2023. The Helsinki-based artists, who are also a couple, are avid followers of the contemporary art world.

Ala-Maunus and Suoniemi have a close and warm relationship with the Mänttä Art Festival. “Mänttä is a quite specific place, with an interesting past as a hub for the forest industry before becoming a famous art town. This context is an inspiring background for us as well as the artists’ work. The Mänttä Art Festival is an event where artists’ works will be seen. We believe that we will put together a surprising exhibition that might even be a bit wild.”

Both Ala-Maunus and Suoniemi have participated in the summer exhibition as artists, and they have also visited the exhibitions – including the latest one – as members of the public. When Ala-Maunus participated in the summer exhibition at the Art Festival in 2007, the visitors picked his pieces as their favourites. Suoniemi’s *Miss Kong* was exhibited at the Art Festival in 2009.

Ala-Maunus and Suoniemi are known as passionate exhibition visitors. “We have similar ideals and tastes in art. We like to work through discourse. Our purpose is not to curate the works of art, but to engage in a dialogue with the artists. For us, discussion with them is a fundamental part of the process”, Minna Suoniemi says.

Petri Ala-Maunus is one of the best-known contemporary Finnish painters. Some of his works are currently exhibited in the Makasiini Contemporary gallery in Turku. In autumn 2021, his extensive retrospective exhibition *La La Land* was on display in the Salo Art Museum, from where it then moved on to the Jyväskylä Art Museum.

Ala-Maunus paints impressive landscapes that, at first glance, bring to mind Romantic era nature depictions, such as the landscapes of the Düsseldorf school of paintings. A certain strangeness and unreality are fundamental qualities in his work – their mood is suggestive of the beginning of time, or the end of days. In his work, Ala-Maunus has dealt with the meanings that landscapes can provide as the subjects of paintings.

Minna Suoniemi is a video artist originally from Tampere. She is interested in themes such as families, inter-generational and bodily experiences, control, and class. Her exhibition *Dense Water*, a spatial installation consisting of two video pieces and pinhole camera photographs, was displayed in the Forum Box gallery a year ago. Suoniemi also participated in the *Pehmee, pehmee, pehmee* (“Soft, soft, soft”) exhibition held in Gallery Halmetoja last year.

Suoniemi’s works of art are represented in the collections of the Espoo Museum of Modern Art (EMMA), the Finnish National Gallery Kiasma, and the State of Finland, among others. In addition to Finland, she has participated in exhibitions in places such as Sweden, Austria, Poland, the United Kingdom, the United States, South America, and Asia. Suoniemi works as a lecturer in Aalto University’s Department of Art.

Held for the first time in 1993, the Mänttä Art Festival is the largest modern art event in Finland. The merits of the summer exhibition have been recognised by awards such as the Finland Award (Suomi-palkinto) granted by the Ministry of Education and Culture. The XXVII Mänttä Art Festival will be open every day from 11 June until the end of August.

Press photos are available at: www.kuvataideviikot.fi/medialle.htm

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