

Anna Ruth to Curate the 2020 Mänttä Art Festival

The XXV Mänttä Art Festival has selected **Anna Ruth** (b. 1975) as the curator for the 2020 exhibition. Ruth is a Canadian-raised visual artist, award-winning art event organizer, and versatile cultural activist living in Jyväskylä. After completing her education in France, Ruth moved to Finland where she has enriched the cultural scene of her adopted city for more than fifteen years. Though she has spearheaded several innovative projects, she is best-known for Äkkigalleria, a nomadic art gallery which appears in various locations around Jyväskylä.

Ruth has contributed to exhibitions in several countries including Italy, Norway, Portugal, and South Africa, and her work has been acquired by various collections around Finland and abroad. Recently, she has focused on murals. "A couple of years ago, I decided to stop producing new materials in art," Ruth says. "As I still want to draw and paint, my solution has been to create murals, and lately I have painted several in various public spaces."

Working outside the establishment, and crossing boundaries are central to her work ethic, though she recognizes the importance of collaborating with arts organisations and institutions. "I have always had problems with boundaries of all kinds," she says. "Whether between nations, people, or artistic genres. I come from a long line of first and second generation immigrants so movement across spaces and cultures is an important part of my identity. This is the first time I am working within an institution; as the curator of an established art event."

For the XXV Mänttä Art Festival, Ruth has invited artists working in multiple mediums of contemporary art. Her priority was to focus on artists who have never shown in the Mänttä Art Festival before, and to present voices not commonly heard in such an established setting. She has also tried to mirror the varied demographics of Finland, selecting people from different age groups, experiences, and geographies. The showcased artists come from all across Finland and beyond, and span generations, from twenty-three to ninety years old. Only a handful have previously worked with Ruth, making her job as curator more exciting. "I like to maintain a certain level of risk and uncertainty when putting together an exhibition," she says.

In the 2020 Mänttä Art Festival, Ruth hopes to build a bond between artists and community, and create a lasting emotional impact that inspires visitors to return again and again. Though she wants to differentiate the 2020 exhibition from its predecessors, she will carry on the thread of humanity that marked the 2019 festival. Above all, she hopes to continue the level of excellence of past exhibitions. "The Mänttä Art Festival is close to my heart," she says. "I visited on my first trip to Finland in 2002, and have attended every year but one since."

The Mänttä Art Festival is organized by Mäntän kuvataiteen ystävät ry and exhibited biennially from 1993 until 1999 when it became an annual event. In 2017, the Mänttä Art Festival was awarded the prestigious Finland Prize for its long-standing work in the field of Finnish contemporary art. The theme and artists for the XXV Mänttä Art Festival will be announced in February 2020.

Further Details:

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