

Mänttä Art Festival attracted 17 400 visitors. Multisensory, insightful creations and a carefully planned installation pleased the audience.

The XXVII Mänttä Art Festival came to a close in good humour today. Over the course of the past two and a half months, approximately 17 400 visitors attended the exhibition. The number is slightly above the previous years' volume of attendees.

– In July we were close to a record number of visitors, and reached a similar turn out to the years 2016 and 2021. The exhibition visitors were extremely impressed by the exhibition as a whole. In particular, the multisensory, insightful creations and a carefully planned installation pleased the audience, explains festival director, **Tiina Nyrhinen**.

In addition to the Pekilo building, the artwork in this exhibition, curated by video artist **Minna Suoniemi** and painter **Petri Ala-Maunus**, was also located on the Taavetinsaari Island next to the Gösta Museum and at the Mänttä Sports Centre. **Ida Palojärvi**'s pier-like installation, *Anlegestelle*, on Taavetisaari Island hides a surprise for the visitors, while the artwork installed on the trees by **Mariam Falaileh** encourages the visitors to listen to the sounds of nature. The artists **J.P Köykkä**, **Kim Somervuori** and **Peetu Liesinen** collaborated on a painting along the wall of the Pumptrack at the Mänttä Sports Centre.

The exhibition presented 36 artists or artist groups, totalling in 44 artists. The artwork exhibited included paintings, sculptures, ceramics, video-art and installations. Musician **Amare Kuukka**, known as rap artist **DJ Yeboyah**, was also included alongside visual artists in the exhibition.

Painting had a strong presence in this summer's exhibition. Among the artists presented were Ars Fennica awarded **Kari Vehosalo** with his ultra photorealistic and atmospherically dense, enigmatic forests and **Sirkku Rosi**'s sensual, polyptic watercolours. As well as **Hanna Kanto**'s forest themed oil paintings that spread out over the walls and floors without prejudice, using materials such as ceramics, coloured plaster and silicon.

– Curating the Mänttä Art Festival has literally meant the taking care of many things and people: our discourse together, the artists and the public as well as the Art Festival's small yet incredibly dedicated group of workers, Suoniemi and Ala-Maunus declare.

– It was very meaningful to learn that different audiences were touched by the exhibition and artists' work. The Mänttä Art Festival is an important connection point in which unexpected experiences are possible. We are very thankful to all the artists who participated in this exhibition, whose multi-faceted work enabled these experiences.

Some of the summer's highlights were **Kati Outinen**'s, now almost traditional, poetry tour and art collector **Seppo Fränti**'s discussion with the curators on the significance, collecting and the therapeutic dimensions of art. As a hostage on Jolo Island in the year 2000, drawing and documenting life became an important survival mechanism for Fränti.

The humoristic *Birch-women* performance by artist duo **Linda** and **Aura** entertained audiences on two different weekends. On the last weekend of the festival, the relevant, anti-war installation, *Climbing a Memory* by **Pavel Rotts**, allowed visitors to climb the climbing wall constructed up Pekilo's entrance wall, under the supervision of a professional. The climbing grips were moulded from bomb craters left on various Helsinki city walls, from the war.

This year the Mänttä Art Festival celebrated its 30th anniversary. Finland's largest summer exhibition of contemporary art organised its first exhibition in 1993, curated by **Juha Sääski**. For the first few years the exhibition was held every second year, but starting in 1999 the festival has been held annually. The anniversary was celebrated on the last weekend of August at both the Mänttä Club and Pekilo.

– The seminar fulfilled our expectations: it revived many great memories of artists, themes and artwork from over the years, and the panel discussion offered fresh perspectives for the future, Nyrhinen reported.

A diverse audience frequents the Art Festival. In recent years, many young families with children have also started to attend the exhibition, which indicates that art is becoming a meaningful and inclusive experience for all. This year, contemporary art also became part of the Mänttä youths' pastime, as one of the artworks was situated along the popular pumptrack. The Art Festival continues, as it has for many years in the past, to offer guided tours of the exhibition at Pekilo for local schools. Articles written in the local paper, produced by the Art Festival, are also part of a collective art education, which helps inform the readers knowledge of contemporary art and thereby increase its accessibility.

The next exhibition will be the 28th Mänttä Art Festival and will open next summer on June 16th, 2024. The exhibition curator will be announced in October.

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