

Krister Gråhn chosen as curator of the Mänttä Art Festival 2025

Krister Gråhn (born 1979) has been appointed curator of the XXIX Mänttä Art Festival, which will take place in the summer of 2025. Gråhn has worked extensively in the realm of art since the early 2000s. Besides making his own art, he has been involved in the work of art societies, edited art magazines, and engaged in the practical operations of art museums. Over the last couple of years, he has studied curating and exhibition practices in the Praxis Master's Programme in Exhibition Studies at the Uniarts Helsinki Academy of Fine Arts. In 2023, as part of his studies, Gråhn produced and curated exhibitions for ten residential properties that were for sale in Mänttä. In November, he will also be curating the *FLASH4 – Uusi pimeä* ("The New Dark") light art biennale in Tampere.

Gråhn was born in Turku, but spent his formative years in the Ostrobothnia region. Before moving to Mänttä in 2011, he also lived in Liminga, Imatra, Tampere, and Helsinki for various periods of time. He recalls visiting the Mänttä Art Festival for the first time around the turn of the millennium. In 2008, he was one of the exhibiting artists, and in later years, he helped several times to construct the exhibition as a volunteer. For the last 13 years, he has experienced the art festival as a local.

For Gråhn, art means communication above all else. "While watching my own child grow up, I have often reflected on how children conceive the world before they learn the meaning of words and speech. Toddlers interconnect the sensations provided by the various senses, although they only learn the words for them at a later point in life. For us adults, words seem to obscure this ability. Is art as a medium comparable to this wordless power of deduction that frees us from the shackles of speech?" he ponders. Attempts to turn art into words are a perpetual source of reflection for Gråhn.

For Krister Gråhn, novelty is not an intrinsic value in art. Art is not disposable. In his work, Gråhn often seeks ways for the artistic community to take more responsibility for the environment, on both a local and a global level. For him, one of the most important tasks of a curator is to re-examine established practices from this point of view. Art can only endure through the views of different audiences, and works of art deserve a variety of curating practices during their existence.

Gråhn has purposefully organised exhibitions not only in established art hubs, but also in smaller localities. The objective of his work within the realm of art is to reach a wide audience and to advance the accessibility of art to all.

Gråhn is keen to leave his own mark on the history of the Mänttä Art Festival, just like previous curators have done. His aim is to honour past events by creating a natural continuum and promoting a narrative dialogue. He considers curating a continuous process rather than one that has a beginning and an end. "We won't be doing or creating anything novel as such next year; but we will also examine and merge various existing practices in the context of a traditional art exhibition to see what kind of communality they can create through art", Gråhn says.

The theme of the XXIX Mänttä Art Festival, as well as the exhibiting artists, will be announced in February.

Further information

Krister Gråhn, curator

+358 40 764 9847, krister@kristergrahn.com

Sampsa Virkajärvi, executive director

+358 44 259 9194, toiminnanjohtaja@kuvataideviikot.fi

www.kuvataideviikot.fi

www.facebook.com/kuvataideviikot

www.instagram.com/kuvataideviikot