

Leena Kuumola Named Curator of the 2026 Mänttä Art Festival

The curator of the XXX Mänttä Art Festival will be Leena Kuumola, an award-winning art critic who has played a significant role in the art world for many years. Her career began in the early 1990s, first as a gallerist in Stockholm and Helsinki, and later as an art critic. Kuumola is known as a prolific art writer who, in addition to reviews, has written essays and columns for publications such as *Taide-lehti* and *Hufvudstadsbladet*, contributed to exhibition catalogues, and taught at institutions including the Theatre Academy in Helsinki.

"I have had a very close relationship with the Mänttä Art Festival. I have always regarded it as one of the few truly significant summer exhibitions of contemporary art, and it has consistently showcased compelling work. I also see it as a positive sign that so many artists themselves visit the Festival regularly. I have attended the Mänttä Art Festival almost every year since its early days and have written reviews of it on several occasions. Many times, I have travelled from Helsinki to Mänttä for the opening with the festival bus and returned in the early hours of the next morning on that same bus – so I know the place well," Kuumola says.

During the XXX Mänttä Art Festival, she sees her role primarily as that of an exhibition organizer. "In my view, the roles within the art world have been turned upside down for quite some time. It's important to remember that curators and other professionals wouldn't exist without art – and the artists who create it. So there is no reason to place special emphasis on my own role as curator," Kuumola stresses.

Leena Kuumola is especially interested in how even minimal artistic expression can convey rich layers of meaning – and how taking things away can often achieve more than adding to them.

"As a writer and gallerist, I have always been fascinated by the impossible. I believe art should always strive towards the impossible. That's why it is unfortunate that audiences are so often offered only what is already familiar. Yet it is entirely possible to create something that allows viewers to experience the insight that reality could also be perceived in another way," she explains.

"It would be difficult to live without art. I am inspired by artists who create independently and follow their own paths. Originality and independent thinking as well as observing and crystalizing issues are qualities that always delight me in art," Kuumola says.

The artists invited to the XXX Mänttä Art Festival share a sense of timelessness and a desire to reflect on the world through their work. The exhibition will feature a rich selection of moving-image and sound pieces, installations, paintings, and black-and-white photography. The list of artists for next summer's exhibition will be announced in spring 2026.

"Next summer's exhibition will be the opposite of a spectacle. The exhibition will not feature flashy or loud works, but rather quiet works that gradually reveals something new to the viewer. Poetic, ephemeral, fragile art that almost does not exist – but nevertheless does, Kuumola describes.

"I hope that visitors to the 2026 Mänttä Art Festival will leave the exhibition with a sense of wonder that the world can be seen in this way – a sudden realization of something they had not noticed before," says Kuumola.

For more information

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