



Artists wrote onto, together with and in forest

August 17, 2020

The latest work by IC-98 opens in Juupajoki at the Hyytiälä Forestry Field Station.

Finnish artists Patrik Söderlund and Visa Suonpää, known as IC-98, have created, together with poets Mikael Brygger, Henriikka Tavi and Olli-Pekka Tennilä, a conceptual artwork called IÄI that immerses the viewer in the forest. The work is located in the 22-hectare protected Kuivajärvi forest next to the Hyytiälä Forestry Field Station in Juupajoki, as well as in the Forest Sciences Building on Viikki Campus in Helsinki, where a small section of the work can be found.

The work is composed of 38 words or syllables written on stones, rocks and trees in the forest, or in the case of Helsinki, in concrete, on a wooden railing and on a stone transported from Hyytiälä. Visitors can change upon the carvings, but due to the size of the artwork, experiencing it has been facilitated with a map brochure that helps in locating the carvings. The work will be debuted on 20 August 2020 at the Hyytiälä Forestry Field Station.

Immeasurable forest

In the beginning there was the forest, the story goes. They cut down clearings and built dwellings for themselves. They were followed by villages, towns and, eventually, seats of learning. Our language too originates in the forest – gradually forgetting its origins. Instead of defining, measuring and building, IÄI aims to return a piece of language back to the forest. (IC-98, IÄI map brochure, 2020)

Multidisciplinary research is conducted in the forests, peatlands and clearings around the Hyytiälä Forestry Field Station and in the nearby lake. The boreal forest ecosystem is measured and translated into data and time series, which are used to interpret events and changes occurring in the environment over time.

Additionally, the station has been training Finnish foresters from the early 20th century.

To students of forestry, the Kuivajärvi forest has been and still is an important place where they have learned knowledge and skills related to the utilisation of northern coniferous forests. There are spruce and pine bogs, as well as nemoral and peaty forests in the area. The forest slopes down to the Kuivajärvi lake, whose shores provide, in places, vistas with a national romantic hue at the top of rocks from where pine trees cast their silhouettes on the surface of the lake.

Casual hikers perceive the forest through its tree species, plants and topography, but experts look beneath the surface and understand signs which reveal the history of the place and its past changes. An ecological surveyor notices things that laypeople cannot see or are unable to look for and interpret. As their starting point, IC-98 wanted to understand the history of the Kuivajärvi forest and the effects of that history on the forest's current status. This is why the forest was surveyed, after which writings were made in, onto and with the forest.

Each of us experiences the forest through the prism of our personal values and experiences. IÄI by IC-98 challenges us to consider our relationship with the forest, by entering the forest. It leaves room for the viewer's insights and thoughts, personal associations and the development of narratives. In the natural forest of Kuivajärvi, temporal dimensions, history and storylines are mixed with the individual interpretations and experiences of visitors. The forest's time series are carved in stones, rocks, growth rings and topographical features. Experiences gained in the forest are not measured or archived.

Söderlund and Suonpää's method can be described as investigative and subtle. Much like IÄI (2017-2020-), their works *Khronoksen talo* ('House of Chronos', 2016-) and the upcoming *Luonnontuhopuisto* ('Natural Disaster park', 2020-) are a good reason to veer off the beaten track in Finland and experience art outside the walls of institutions. The works narrate and interpret Finnish cultural history, examine extensive timelines and aim to avoid the dichotomy of nature and culture.

In addition to IC-98 and the poets, the IÄI group includes ecological surveyor Jyrki Lehtinen, visual artist Andrei Baharev and Kaius Paetau, an expert in traditional construction, who completed the carvings in the forest. The work is curated by Ulla Taipale and has been handed over to the University of Helsinki art collection. The work was completed under the Climate Whirl Arts Programme between 2017 and 2020, with funding provided by the Institute for Atmospheric and Earth System Research (INAR) and the Kone Foundation.

The installation is open around the clock from 21 August 2020.

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