



contents

BELOW ZERO

Finnish Art

Prize

2020

foreword
introduction Beaconsfield3
essay David Lillington7
prizewinning artist Tuula Närhinen
shortlisted artist Sara Bjarland21
shortlisted artist Pekka and Teija Isorättyä23
shortlisted artist Kati Roover25
shortlisted artist Elsa Salonen
afterword29
colophon 31



foreword

There is still no easy answer as to who might win the Below Zero Finnish Art Prize. However, we continue to assert that their work must be intriguing, critically engaged and their project non-existent: non-existent in the sense that Below Zero seeks to commission experimental contemporary artworks with the substance to fully engage the broad and discerning audiences to be found within London's cosmopolitan community.

The Below Zero vision is to open up opportunities for exceptional Finnish artists emerging from the somewhat hermetic art community of Finland into its wild-west, metropolitan correlative. The vehicle for this vision is the artist-led commissioning organisation Beaconsfield, working in association with its long term cultural partner, the Finnish Institute in London. This partnership has flowered from foundations in the early 1990s when Beaconsfield initially ventured to Finland, leading to the first exhibition of contemporary Finnish Art ever to be presented in the UK (RAX, 1996) and many subsequent projects with Finnish artists.

For Below Zero 2020, Finnish curator and climate researcher Taru Elfving was invited as guest juror to a selection committee that included Jaakko Nousiainen, Head of Arts & Culture for The Finnish Institute in London, independent curator Hannele Tilles and Beaconsfield's artist-curators David Crawforth and Naomi Siderfin. The jury would like to warmly thank all the Finnish artists who applied for Below Zero 2020. The five artists shortlisted and celebrated in this publication were all supported to develop competitive proposals that are sure to excite audiences in the future. The jury was unanimous in its selection of Tuula Närhinen, the second recipient of the Below Zero Finnish Art Prize, for a site-determined proposal to engage intimately with the River Thames during her London residency, and a demonstrable long-term commitment to Resilient Futures—our theme for the 2020 prize.

I RAX, Eija Liisa Ahtila, Andy Best & Merja Puustinen, Pia Lindman, Pekka Niskanen, Roi Vaara, 14 September-13 October 1996, Beaconsfield, London. Produced in collaboration with Muu ry, Helsinki.



Tuula Närhinen, Deep Time Deposits: Tidal Impressions of the River Thames (detail), 2020. Cyanotypes on Saunders Waterford 300gms, mudlarking finds, steel shelves, 34 tape measures, steel tape, magnets, gaffer tape, flight cases, evidence of material processes. Photo Tuula Närhinen

Below Zero Commission 2020

Beaconsfield Gallery Vauxhall

Tuula Närhinen has pioneered artistic research into human anthropogenic impact on the Baltic Sea and other waterways for many years, poetically transforming her findings into artworks. She speaks about water as a dynamic agent and a naturally occurring archive of the Anthropocene. In her quest to 'fathom the subconscious of River Thames', Närhinen's project was to build a visual portrait of this central waterway with particular reference to 19th century photographic chemistry and to the layers of 'deep time', geologically embedded over thousands of years and visible through material fragments preserved in London's unique, anaerobic river-mud.

During her Beaconsfield residency in two sections (16.1.-3.2. and 13.2.-27.2.2020), Närhinen worked every day at low tide on the Thames foreshore in the tradition of the London Mudlark, making a daily selection from the rich pickings of flotsam and jetsam to be found on the widely differing urban beaches along the river. Here, the artist exposed her finds in situ to natural light, on watercolour paper prepared with the iron compounds used in early photography; then, to fix them, washed her images in running water back at the gallery. This part of the artist's process was a tribute to the English botanist Anna Atkins, the first protagonist of the 'blueprint' or cyanotype; an early photographic method she used to catalogue British algae between 1843–1852. It was within this industrial, mid-Victorian time frame that Henry Doulton's Lambeth Pottery was flourishing on the Albert Embankment, making decorative ceramics and also stoneware pipes for London's new sewage system whilst, around the corner, the philanthropic Lambeth Ragged School (now Beaconsfield Gallery Vauxhall) was built in 1851. Taking up residence in the remaining Girls wing of the Ragged School as studio and then exhibition space, the artist methodically processed and compiled the evidence of each day's work on the riverbank, eventually installing both photographic images and the objects they record.

Tuula Närhinen's exhibition in Beaconsfield's Upper space, Deep Time Deposits: Tidal Impressions of the River Thames, offered an image of the river on both horizontal and vertical planes. On the horizontal, a black taped line defining three sides of the room, referred to the zero level indicated on the Port Authority of London Tide Tables. In relation to this waterline, a series of blueprints were mounted on the wall at the low tide water level of the day on which they were made. The blue tones of the photograms reflect sun levels and weather conditions; for example the unseasonally tempestuous Storm Dennis made prints taken on 16 February particularly pale and washed out. On the vertical and at the deepest point of the room thirty four tape measures displayed high-tide levels, raising spectators' awareness of the extreme tidal action and depth of the Thames, through its relation to their own bodies. The central group of metal cases that would eventually transport the work back to Finland were employed in the exhibition context to display the mixtures, compounds, materials and equipment of Närhinen's methodologies.

In the Lower space, the artwork A Nice Cup of Thames Low made more explicit reference to local histories. Närhinen's visual analysis of the properties of Thames mud borrowed another method from chemistry, chromotography, and used contemporary Royal Doulton crockery to demonstrate her adaptation of the scientific process. Installed in the same space, the work Tribute to Mudlarks, embedded coins from both Sterling and Euro currencies in river silt. Served up to the public on two Royal Doulton dinner plates, the piece aknowledged the economic significance of mudlarking for the poor of the Industrial Revolution, and at the same time noted the fiscal implications of contemporary political shifts in the UK.



Tuula Närhinen, Vettä, Räntää, Lunta [Rain, Sleet, Snow] (detail), 2020. Performance scores, gloves, music stands, stopwatches and blueprints. Photo Jill Mead

The Covid 19 global pandemic curtailed Tuula Närhinen's exhibition in London and cancelled the premier of Vettä, Räntää, Lunta (Rain, Sleet, Snow) a new sound composition by Finnish composer Tytti Arola, conceived in collaboration with Närhinen. Fifteen Londoners had been recruited to participate in a live Rainmaking performance, to be conducted by Tytti Arola in Beaconsfield's acoustically resonant railway Arch Space, and scheduled for the final day of the exhibition. We are grateful to the artists for responding to the crisis by making a virtual version of this work, performed by Arola and filmed by Närhinen.

We would like to thank guest jurist Taru Elfving for slow-travelling from Helsinki to London to celebrate the opening of Deep Time Deposits by engaging in public conversation with the artist. We also thank the Finnish Institute in London for its proactive response to the exhibiton in lockdown—sharing an extensive gallery of photographic and video documentation online.

Events and works

Below Zero residency 16 January-25 February (16.1.-3.2. and 13.2.-27.2.2020) Open to visitors on Fridays Thames Foreshore walks on 31 January and 14 February

Below Zero exhibition
26 February-5 April (curtailed from 16 March)
Wednesday-Sunday, I Iam-5pm
Exhibition opens on I March with Taru Elfving and Tuula Närhinen in public conversation

Beaconsfield Upper space

Deep Time Deposits: Tidal Impressions of the River Thames, 2020. Cyanotypes on Saunders Waterford 300gms, mudlarking finds, steel shelves, 34 tape measures, steel tape, magnets, gaffer tape, flight cases, evidence of material processes.

Beaconsfield Lower space

A Nice Cup of Thames Low, 2020. Chromatograms of Thames clay, tea bags, filter paper, silver nitrate, sodium hydroxide, Royal Doulton crockery.

Tribute to Mudlarks, 2020. Thames mud, Sterling currency, Euro currency, Royal Doulton crockery.

Vettä, Räntää, Lunta (Rain, Sleet, Snow) in collaboration with Tytti Arola, 2020. Performance scores, gloves, music stands, stopwatches and blueprints.

Thames at low tide, 2020. Video, 105 mins.

The Making of Deep Time Deposits, 2020. A video documentary by Rosaliina Elgland.

Tuula Närhinen selected past works. Video presentation, 34mins.



Tuula Närhinen, Deep Time Deposits: Tidal Impressions of the River Thames (detail), 2020. Cyanotypes on Saunders Waterford 300gms, mudlarking finds, steel shelves, steel tape, magnets, gaffer tape. Photo Tuula Närhinen

David Lillington

Tuula Närhinen: Deep Time Deposits

'I always show my process, my DIY. I like to show that anyone could do what I've done. It doesn't come out of some "genius-of-the-artist". Natural phenomena leave traces. That's what I'm interested in.'

And then she says, 'I might think I have a stable identity but everything changes all the time.' So, in part at least, her piece is a metaphor for something to do with the self. 'I am seeing the river as a person. It's a portrait.' This discussion starts up because on the wall she has put this version of a famous quotation from Heraclitus:

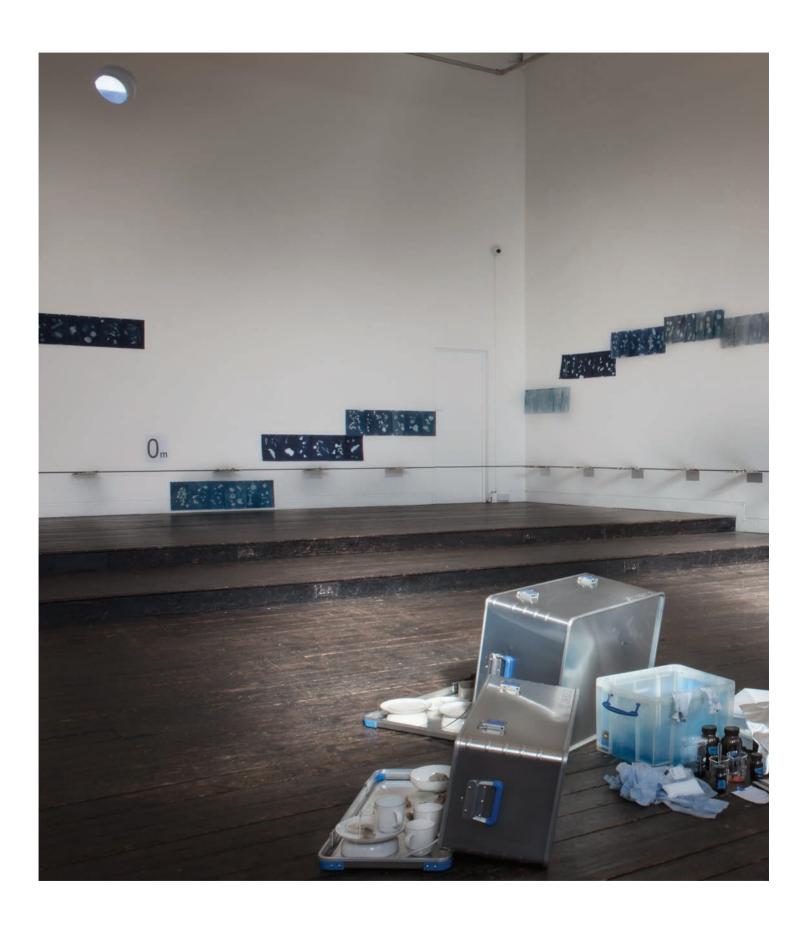
'On those stepping into rivers staying the same other and other waters flow.'

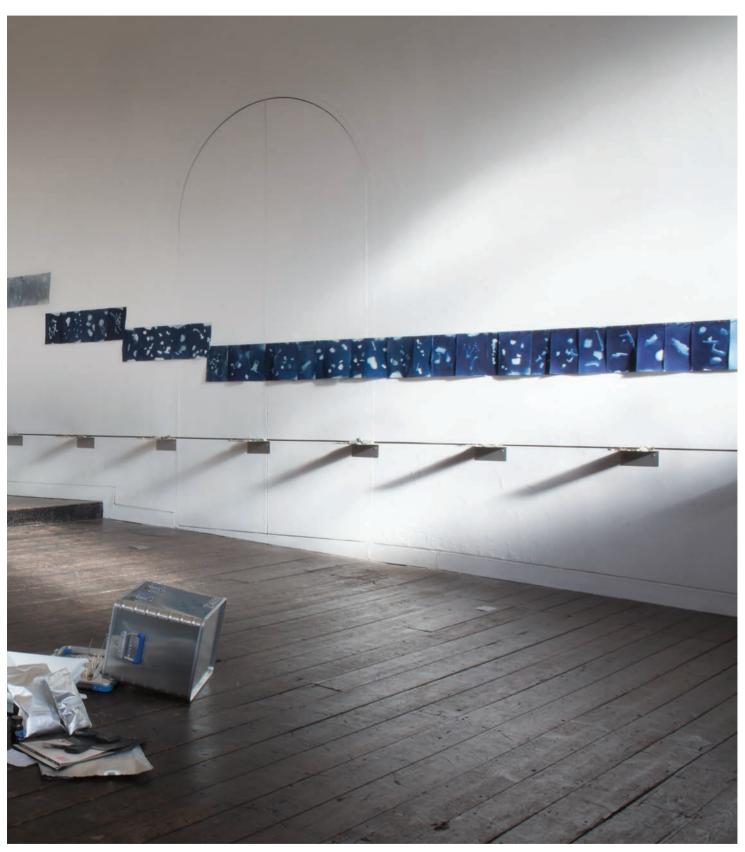
I see something akin to humour here—something that sees unexpected possibilities. Into 'rivers staying the same' (which already sounds ironic) other and other (in case we were stupid enough to think there was only one kind of water) waters flow. It has the sense of the unexpected possibility that a joke has. There could be some irony in the show's title as well, since the project doesn't really reveal 'deep time' and deals mostly with the I7th, I8th and I9th centuries. (And especially the mid-I9th.) The idea, however, of deep time, and the idea of this river, the Thames, as an image of it, are important—and this reveals something of the metaphorical aspect of the piece, which I see as being, in part, about the making of art: if the river, and the whole project, are hinted at in the very title as being metaphorical, then the whole piece is shown to glimmer, so to speak, with ideas about art.

The river, then, is presented as a metaphor for human identity, which is changeable. But the whole artistic project, which is conceived to be, like the river, subject to all sorts of forces, might also be seen as some kind of image of the self. (It could be remarked here, as an aside, that all sculpture, however abstract, has generally been seen as standing in for the human figure.) The unexpected possibilities and the forces of all sorts are somewhat stabilised by her trust that 'nature will leave traces' and that these traces mean something. They reveal things. So it is not all randomness and chaos. Hence the idea of the Anthropocene, which represents a real record of things that have had, and have, a real effect on nature and on us. You can see why she likes Heraclitus.

Närhinen says that the Anthropocene is one of her concerns, not her only concern. For the viewer the idea of the Anthropocene is one important lens through which to see the things that interest her. 'And I don't see myself as an environmental artist. I'm a gallery artist.' She wants the process, and to show it, but she also wants a visually resolved result. We see the research, and the objects her processes produce. (Maybe there are three things then: research, processes, objects.) Taru Elfving says she is a photographer. On photography, Närhinen says, 'I always look back to originators like Henry Fox Talbot. And Anna Atkins was the first to do a book of photography.' But in terms of her art practice in general, 'I don't really think about forbears,' she says, 'and I don't know who they would be.'

It's also easy to see why she likes Anna Atkins, whose work has such an immediate aesthetic but is nonetheless raw, is just a trace of nature, is about light, and the sea—the blue sea Atkins' seaweeds came from, as Närhinen points out. 'Atkins was measuring light,' she says.





Tuula Närhinen, Deep Time Deposits: Tidal Impressions of the River Thames (detail), 2020. Cyanotypes on Saunders Waterford 300gms, mudlarking finds, steel shelves, 34 tape measures, steel tape, magnets, gaffer tape, flight cases, evidence of material processes. Photo Tuula Närhinen



Tuula Närhinen, Deep Time Deposits: Tidal Impressions of the River Thames (detail), 2020. Flight case, evidence of material processes. Photo Tuula Närhinen

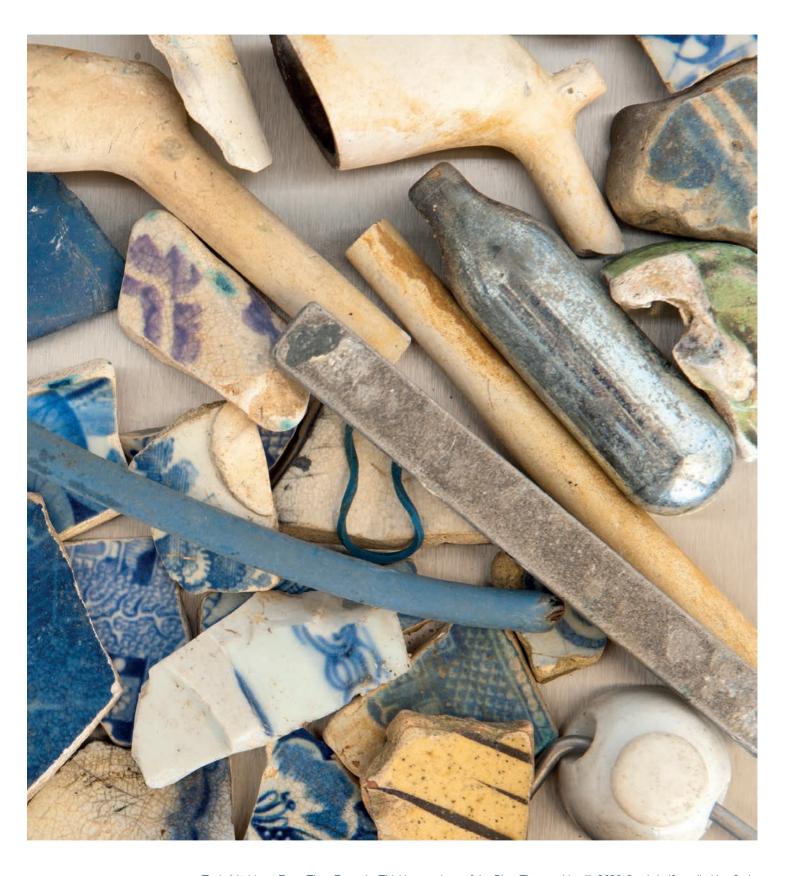
The connection between Närhinen's artistic product–primarily, here, an installation of cyanotypes—and the forces it is describing (natural, historical, human) seems to be a description of, or acting out of, the way art comes into being. The relationship between her subject (what is her subject? History revealed in the river?) and her medium (which is really a string of natural processes) has something to say about what art is. (What does it have to say? Well: it looks like a picture of how art is made—as if her processes were metaphors for other artists' own processes, though they might be quite different, and her results comparable in various ways to other artists' results. The point of all this would be, in the end, to say that art both has something to say about the world and has a real and vital connection with it, is a part of it.

It is as if she recognised some kind of duality. There is the aesthetic result, and there is—what I see as the world invading the work. The forces of the sea, the forces of history, the world invading her research; these are the forces her processes allow in. This might be why Elfving calls her a photographer, meaning that she is so in all her work, and that it is all reminiscent of, for example, Atkins' way of allowing nature and light to make those beautiful images of seaweeds.

The formal means Närhinen uses in this show involve yardsticks: her method is to measure things. She brings to a collection of old-fashioned measures (height of tides above 'chart datum', for example) her own ideas, her own agenda—which is nonetheless a common agenda, is what concerns all of us. Some measures are of depth, or of distance, some of time, some of light, and Närhinen tells a story through the things measured. The focus of her piece is the images of a collection of objects. The metal shelves crowded with broken bits of objects (ceramic ones mostly) are only temporary collages, and the present, social, 'common to all of us' aspect of Närhinen's works here is perhaps their most important aspect: it is what we are left with, this concern with the common good and the good of nature. ('Works', plural, since there are other, smaller pieces, downstairs. For me these function here as 'satellite' pieces to the main tides-and-cyanotypes piece).

'I don't use real scientific measures. But I am using measures. They are visual measures. You can see in this piece where it rained, you can see Storm Dennis, and sometimes the wind blew the objects away. And with the chromatography pieces [chromatograms of Thames clay, downstairs] chemistry can show what molecules are present—but I've used it visually. Elfving: 'scientists often know a lot but can't or don't communicate it visually and tangibly. They don't express visually natural and anthropogenic things.' She seems to think Närhinen is more articulate than most scientists are. Anthropogenic, meaning having to do with mankind's effect on nature, is a word first used around 1883, according to Merriam-Webster. So not long after the period that most interests Närhinen in this piece. The mid-19th century provides a historical focus point for this project. Openly considered or just under the surface are: Anna Atkins' work; the beginnings of the commercial cultivation of tea in British India; the Victorian Ragged School that is now the gallery space; the crisis of the pollution of the Thames and the consequent building of a sewage-system, for which Royal Doulton supplied ceramics.





Tuula Närhinen, Deep Time Deposits: Tidal Impressions of the River Thames (detail), 2020. Steel shelf, mudlarking finds. Photo Jill Mead



Tuula Närhinen, Deep Time Deposits: Tidal Impressions of the River Thames (detail), 2020. Cyanotypes on Saunders Waterford 300gms, mudlarking finds, steel shelves, 34 tape measures, steel tape, magnets, gaffer tape, flight cases, evidence of material processes. Photo Jill Mead

Atkins published her images of seaweeds, 'Photographs of British Algae: Cyanotype Impressions', between 1843 and 1853. There is an obvious and curious contradiction at the heart of 'Deep Time Deposits' which I didn't at first notice or think about. If we say, for the sake of argument, that Närhinen starts from a love of nature and that Anna Atkins' works are pictures of nature, are a love of nature, then we have to note that Närhinen's cyanotypes are not of flowers, or seaweeds or anything natural but of broken or discarded things, and are images not of growth but of a kind of rubbish-dump. But there is a sense that they are ambivalently pictures of life and of some kinds of destruction, at the same time.

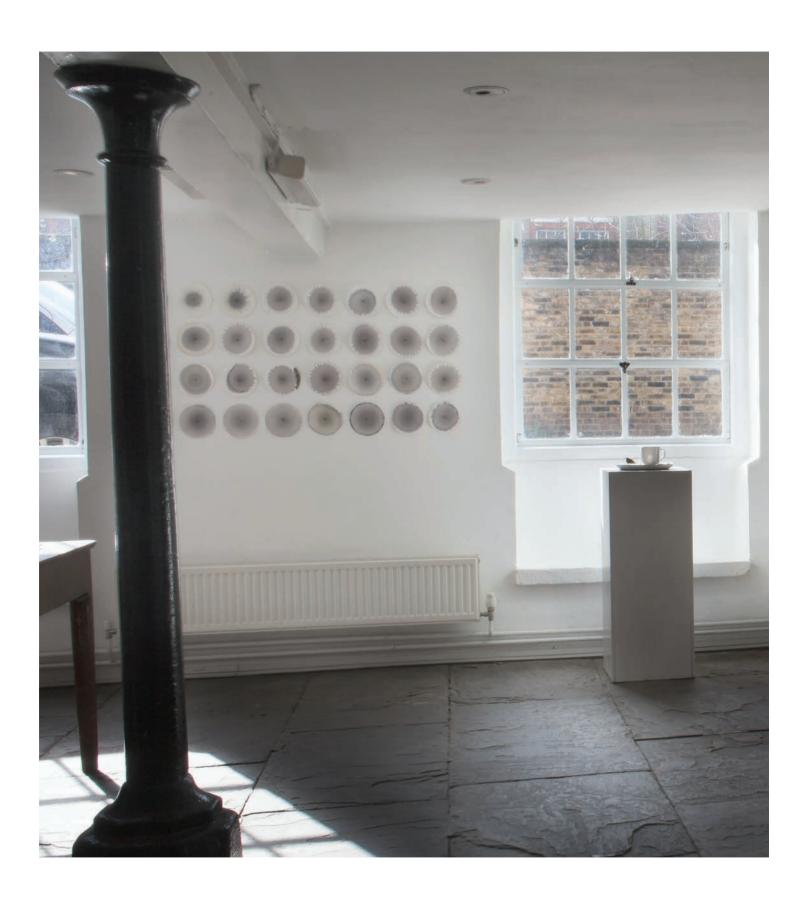
The floor of the upper gallery (the schoolroom) is the floor of the river. We are standing in water, and most of the time it is over our heads. The row of extended tape measures, which reach up to the ceiling and show the high tides, make this even clearer. The whole show is cut through with time. And because of the way the piece is set up, visually, physically, with its horizontal and vertical elements, we can imagine the time-measures as having a vertical and horizontal format, like in a graph. And this is the nature of tides—they work vertically and horizontally, because beaches slope. The sloping floor of Beaconsfield's big upstairs room doesn't really take part in this geometry, but it is nevertheless strange and serendipitous and visually apt that it is as it is.

Looking at the show this way (since it goes around us, on the walls) the time dimensions involved become clearer. Time-measures are going round the room and going up and down in it, with the rising and falling tides, and this understanding of different measures splicing into each other creates the way we see the whole show. We understand a little the perceptions and thinking of this artist. 'The installation also measures the weather conditions,' Närhinen says. 'In that corner it's very sunny.' (The cyanotypes are bright deep blue, the objects' shadows white.) This a real, an 'indexical' measure.

'On the first day, when I arrived, I was overwhelmed by the richness of the things I found—it's not like what you find on a seashore.' She is used to beachcombing on the shores of the Baltic. 'With the Thames everything seems human. I developed an eye for the tinier things, which tell the history. Fashions can be traced. Blue Delftware was easy to see, and clay pipes going back to the 17th century. In the Baltic what you get is not from hundreds of years ago. Here culture comes back to us from centuries past.'

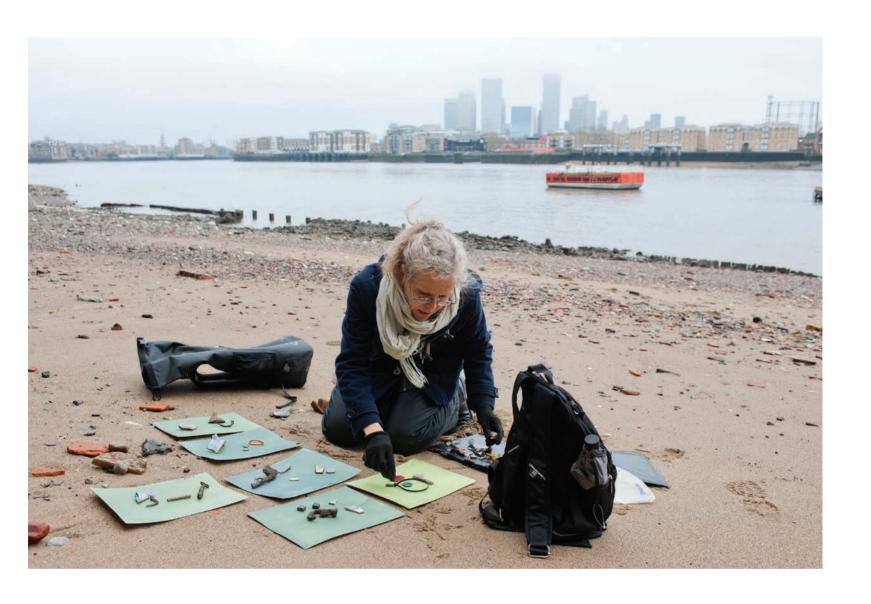
If the piece is about measures—and it is, and in a way this is the fun part of it ('anyone could do this', as Närhinen says)—it is also of course about nature, and about our now extremely fraught relationship with it. And if it's about history, and evidently it is, it's about history brought—washed up even—into the present. And this 'present', 'social' aspect is vital in a work that seems almost to be living. If we see a collage aspect to the work, even: well, collage has always combined history, the present, and things we have in common. But all these aspects—and especially the shape of a project in which messy processes lead to a concrete, visually spectacular result—lead me to be interested in the image of art itself that it presents. There are other ways of approaching it, I am sure, but that is the nature of a work such as this—that different approaches will not exhaust it.

David Lillington is a writer on art, curator and independent scholar. He is a member of the International Association of Art Critics.





Tuula Närhinen, A Nice Cup of Thames Low (walls and plinths), 2020. Chromatograms of Thames clay, tea bags, filter paper, silver nitrate, sodium hydroxide, Royal Doulton crockery. Tribute to Mudlarks (floor), 2020. Thames mud, Sterling currency, Euro currency, Royal Doulton crockery. Photo Tuula Närhinen



prizewinning artist Tuula Närhinen

Tuula Närhinen's works explore the physical and conceptual underpinnings of pictorial representation. She constructs experimental visual interfaces that connect the observer with the fabric of the world. Images that emerge from this interaction expose the pictorial potential inherent in natural phenomena.

Re-adapting methods and instruments derived from natural sciences, Närhinen facilitates the transcription of different naturally occurring movements, such as water or wind into visual plots. She has developed methods for letting trees trace the shape of wind in their branches and found techniques that enable the waves of the sea to inscribe their signatures on paper: thus the tracings and photographic records are created by the agency of nature itself. Her works result in spatial installations that, alongside the yielded (photo)graphs, artefacts and renderings, showcase the methods of inscribing and the DIY instruments implicated. The practice is characterised by the artist's corporeal enactment and exposition of the material process. By making her working methods transparent and positing the gallery spectator as an embodied eyewitness to the spatial, mediated translation of a natural event, Närhinen encourages the viewer of her works to participate in the (re)presentation of the phenomena.

Tuula Närhinen lives and works in Helsinki. She gained her Master's degree in Fine Art from the Finnish Academy of Fine Arts and an MSc in Architecture from the Helsinki University of Technology. In 2016 she received a Doctorate in Fine Arts from the Helsinki University of the Arts. Närhinen has exhibited widely both in Finland and abroad. Her exhibitions include: Insects among Us at the Helsinki Uniarts Research Pavilion in Venice (2019); Flux at the 8th Turku Biennial in the Aboa Vetus & Ars Nova Museum (2018); Baltic Sea Plastique at Unseen Amsterdam (2018), Corner College Zürich (2018), Stadtgalerie Kiel (2015) and in Helsinki Photography Biennial (2014); Seawatercolours at Oulu Art Museum (2017); The Touch of Rain at Kluuvi Gallery, Helsinki (2013); Animal Cameras at the Finnish Museum of Photography, Helsinki (2011); Océan plastique at the Institut Finlandais, Paris (2010) and Liplatus-Clapotis at Gallery Sculptor in Helsinki (2009). International residency fellowships have included Skaftfell Center for Visual Arts, Seyðisfjörður; Centre d'Art i Natura in Farrera, Spain; the Finnish Foundation for the Visual Arts in New York; Cité Internationale des Arts, Paris; A.I.T. Tokyo; Maison d'Art Contaimporain des Chartreux, Brussels and Binz39 foundation in Scuol, Switzerland. Her works are represented in the collections of the Museum of Contemporary Art Kiasma and the Helsinki City Art Museum.



Tuula Närhinen, Blueprint (detail), 2020. Cyanotype. Photo Tuula Närhinen



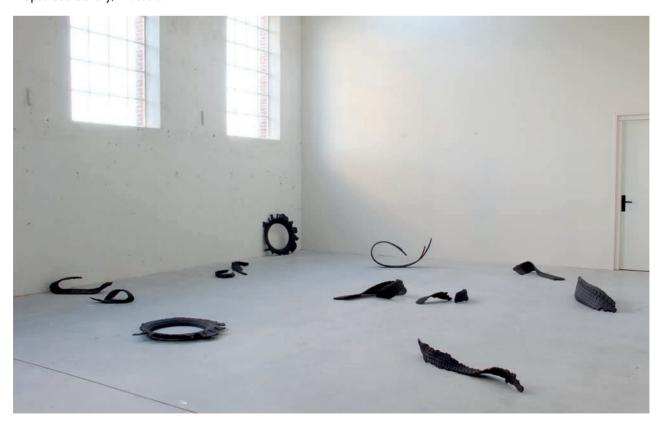
Sara Bjarland, Climbers (detail), 2019. Found sunblinds

shortlisted artist Sara Bjarland

Sara Bjarland works with discarded objects and materials to investigate overlaps and encounters between the natural and the artificial, the living and the non-living, object and organism, in sculptures, installations and photographs.

'I'm especially interested in 'post-consumer materials'—also called waste—as a consequence of our consumer culture and as a form of abject matter that nobody wants to look at or touch. I see these objects as important carriers of meaning and as material with potential to transform into more ambiguous forms that can trigger new associations. I search trash piles on the street corners, collecting things like broken furniture, plastic garden accessories, old floor mops, dead house plants, bent drying racks; everyday household objects without any apparent aesthetic value. Sometimes appropriating or altering the objects, sometimes casting them into materials like ceramic, bronze or concrete, I imagine them as artefacts or future inhabitants in a world without humans, where lifeless matter seems to spring to life, only to start fading again.'

Sara Bjarland is from Helsinki, and currently lives and works in Amsterdam. She received her Master's degree from the Slade School of Fine Art in London (2007), her BA from Kent Institute of Art and Design, Rochester (2004) and participated in a studio programme at Higher Institute for Fine Arts in Ghent (2012-2013). Solo exhibitions include Constant Eruptions at Hopstreet Gallery, Brussels (2020); Uncertainty and Ground Conditions at DASH, Kortrijk (2019); Tre studier i metamorfos at the Finnish Institute in Stockholm (2014) and Forsaken at Hippolyte, Helsinki (2012)—with two upcoming solo shows at Sinne and Muu in Helsinki in 2020. Recent group exhibitions include The Sound of No-one Listening, Corridor Project Space, Amsterdam (2019); The Prophecy of Bees curated by Julia Geerlings at Kunstfort Vijfhuizen (2016); Formations, curated by Alexandra Landré for Witteveen Gallery, Amsterdam (2015) and 'Invasive Exotics', RAM Galleri, Oslo (2015). International artist residencies have included European Ceramic Work Center in Oisterwijk, Temple Bar Gallery + Studios in Dublin and Kunsthuis SYB in Beetsterzwaag. Her first publication, Groundwork, was published in 2019 by Art Paper Editions. Sara Bjarland is represented by Hopstreet Gallery, Brussels.



Sara Bjarland, Post-Blowout, 2019. Unglazed ceramics



Pekka and Teija Isorättyä, Nature Morte (detail), 2017. Kinetic installation with surgical instruments, acrylic glass, electronics, flowers. Collection of National Gallery of Finland (originally built for Ars Fennica 2017 Kiasma, Helsinki)

shortlisted artist Pekka and Teija Isorättyä

Pekka and Teija Isorättyä are an artist couple who work in the fields of sculpture, new media, BioArt and environmental art. Their artworks often reference medical science, exploring the relationship between nature and machine and probing the boundaries of what it is to be human. Materiality itself is a key inspiration for creating a new body of work; they often engage in a long and detailed process, using found objects with strong stories. Robotic or kinetic movement constitutes a significant aspect of the artworks, opening up a dialogue between organic and inorganic lifeforms.

'We have left personal expression behind to achieve a state where individual needs and gender roles stop dominating. We think of our worldview as a post-individualist shared reality. Through mutual psychoanalysis and constant dialogue, as well as comprehensive sharing in every sector of life, we achieve advanced inner experiences of the world together. Alongside all other concerns, this method of sharing maintains the theme of love.'

Pekka and Teija Isorättyä's collaboration began in 2006 with their Master's degree exhibition at Aalto University, Helsinki. Their first museum exhibition as a duo was held in Mexico City's Museo Ex Teresa Arte Actual (2008), followed by exhibitions at Diego Rivera Anahuacalli museum and Polyforum Siquieros (2009). In 2010 the couple won first place in the NordArt Public Choice Award, Büdelsdorf, Germany and then ran their own art space, Invalid Robot Factory, in Neukölln, Berlin until 2013. The Isorättyäs have held residencies at Gängeviertel, Hamburg, C.A.P Kobe, Japan and the International Studio and Curatorial Program (ISCP) in New York City. They have exhibited internationally at a number of galleries and museums, including Kobe Studios; Ierimonti Gallery, New York City and KIASMA Museum of Contemporary Art, Helsinki. Their public art project for Kakslauttanen Arctic Resort (2016-2020) included creating the architectural form of the building and several large indoor sculptures. In 2017 the Isorättyäs were nominated for Finland's Ars Fennica art prize and the work acquired by the National Gallery of Finland. In 2019 they won the public art competition of the Finnish State Art Commission. Their work is held in a number of national and private collections.



Pekka and Teija Isorättyä, Lillyjellynight, 2016. Electromechanic installation with 623 infusion tubes used by 2.5 year old girl Lilja, tubes, waterpump, iron, hydrostatic pressure



shortlisted artist Kati Roover

Kati Roover is a multidisciplinary artist whose mediums include moving image, installation, sound, text and photography. Her working methods combine poetic storytelling with an investigative focus. Roover approaches environmental change through imaginative projects that combine her research with a broad range of perspectives drawn from Natural Science, ecological and de-colonial thinking, mythical storytelling, feminist new materialisms and documentary essay film:

'I am continually engaged in rewriting dualities as mutual co-becomings; between mind and body, human and more-than-human, humanity and the environment, the spiritual and the material. Recently in my work I have been researching hydrofeminism as a form of solidarity across all watery bodies.'

Kati Roover lives and works in Helsinki, graduating in 2016 with a Masters degree in Time and Space Arts from the Finnish Academy of Fine Arts. Recent solo exhibitions include Coexistence, Gallery Huuto, Helsinki (2018) and Do Rivers Really Ever End, Third Space galleria, Helsinki (2018). Group exhibitions have included The Earth, Gallery of Emil Filla, Ústí nad Labem, Czech Republic (2019); Coexistence, Contemporary Art Museum Kiasma, Helsinki (2019); Listening Being, Gallery Titanik, Turku (2019); AND TOMORROW AND, Index Foundation, Tukholma (2018); Swamp Biennial, Art Lab Gnesta, Gnesta (2016) and Save Our Souls, 9th Ewha international Media Art Presentation, Seoul, South Korea (2016).



Kati Roover, Do Rivers Really Ever End (detail), 2020. Full HD video, 21min, 12sec



Elsa Salonen, Veden väelle (detail), 2019. Natural objects found in the Finnish Baltic Sea, distilled and ground pigments, glasshouse, glass, silver, LEDs

shortlisted artist Elsa Salonen

Elsa Salonen's experiments with naturally occurring materials aim to create works that unite mysticism with science. Using raw materials ranging from meteorite dust to colours distilled from plants, Salonen prepares her own pigments according to the conceptual requirements of each individual project. The form of her work draws on the traditions of painting, installation and conceptual art and is marked by the influences of animism and alchemy; especially by the idea of a 'quintessence'—an eternal force running through and connecting all humans and nonhumans.

'According to Finnish mythology, each natural environment is governed by its own sprite, who guards the region affecting its well-being and prosperity: to ensure good fishing fortune various offerings, such as silver, were brought to the mighty Water Sprites. For the installation Veden väelle (For the Water Sprites) various natural elements were collected from the Finnish Baltic Sea and its shores; such as algae, aquatic plants, seawater, seabed sand and pieces of cliff as well as shells and fish bones that had drifted onto the beach. From these I distilled or ground colours with which I then painted the walls of a glasshouse. The remaining algae were dried, powdered and used to create the symmetrical pattern in the middle of the installation.'

Elsa Salonen graduated from the Fine Arts Academy of Bologna in 2008 and has been based in Berlin over the past decade. Salonen has exhibited widely in solo and group exhibitions with institutions including, Schwartzsche Villa and Grimmuseum, Berlin and Kunstverein Wiesbaden, Germany; Kunsthal Viborg, Denmark; Miguel Urrutia Art Museum, Bogotá; Lissone Museum of Contemporary Art, Milan and Ama Gallery, Helsinki. Salonen's practice has developed through a number of international artist residencies including sustained periods of work with Puerto Contemporáneo (2018) and Lugar a Dudas (2016) in Colombia and SewonArtSpace (2014) in Indonesia. She has organised talks, screenings and lectures related to her work including Science and Mysticism at Ama gallery and Ursa observatory, Helsinki (2017) and Approaching Plant Consciousness at Prinzessinnengärten, Berlin (2016). Her work is held in international private and public collections, including Finland's Wäinö Aaltonen Museum of Art, Turku and Saastamoinen Foundation, and Italy's Lissone Museum of Contemporary Art, Milan.



Elsa Salonen, Veden väelle (detail), 2019. Natural objects found in the Finnish Baltic Sea, distilled and ground pigments, glasshouse, glass, silver, LEDs



afterword

Below Zero is open to Finnish artists who have studied to degree level, either in Finland or the UK, and may be resident anywhere in the world. The selection committee focuses on artists who have not previously won a major prize (this does not include bursaries or educational grants) and who would benefit from exposure in the UK. The prize offers the winner a Beaconsfield Commission: a mentored London residency where artists are encouraged to respond to the unique physical character of the venue and the distinctive creative identity of Beaconsfield, followed by a solo exhibition. The selected artist is invited to work within Beaconsfield's tradition of outward facing, public residency, thereby fostering positive relations and creating new opportunities for intellectual cross-fertilisation between Finland and the UK.

For forthcoming information regarding the Below Zero Finnish Art Prize, please refer to https://www.beaconsfield.ltd.uk and https://www.fininst.uk in Spring 2021.

colophon

BELOW ZERO

Finnish Art

Prize

Tuula Närhinen

Deep Time Deposits

16 January - 5 April 2020

Beaconsfield Commissions 2020

Editor: Naomi Siderfin Design: Postmodular

Cover photograph: Jill Mead

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