

A collection of colorful plastic toys, including bottle caps, straws, and a yellow ball, arranged in a vertical stack. The toys are in various colors like blue, purple, orange, green, and yellow. The background is dark.

Kristiina (Tikke) Tuura

09.2016

Kristina (Tikke) Tuura is a Finnish artist, based in Helsinki. She is best known in her home country for highlighting social and environmental issues, working with communities and activists to create large-scale public installations. These typically make use of discarded materials – ‘junk’ – in playful combinations that invite the viewer’s active participation. For example in *The Pot*, old cooking utensils donated by refugee groups are exchanged for new utensils and the old are transformed into percussion instruments, that viewers are then invited to play.

Tuura trained at art school in Finland and Sweden and enjoyed an earlier career as prop-maker, art director and scenic designer in Finnish theatre and feature film. Her installations frequently exhibit a sheer love of handicraft developed during this period. She has honed her organisational and diplomatic skills through her work as documentary film-maker, media trainer and mentor in Finland, Somalia, Uganda and Afghanistan, among refugees or in refugee camps where cultural and gender sensitivity is paramount.

Kristiina Tuura has been awarded both the Finland Prize (2004) in recognition of a significant career in art; and the Finnish Grand Prize for Journalism (2001).



Why do I want to make installations from rubbish?

In all my projects, I work with everyday life. Through my installations, I comment on our way of life in the home, in the cities and on the earth. My material is objects that have been discarded, useless, lost, thrown away, dirty or simply broken. Junk. Junk talks to me and challenges my thoughts and my hands. It challenges me with its rugged aesthetics, as dirty and smelly or bright but useless plastic. It also challenges me by being a huge global problem, whose solution lies within the everyday life of people everywhere.

When I work with junk plastic I feel that I am part of a conversation going on in our society. I take part in that conversation with the means I can, through aesthetic actions. I bring the discarded out from its hiding place, to be exhibited and so challenge my audience. I hope to raise questions in the minds of the audience; what is hidden and secret in our society? How does this thing that is hidden affect my life?

Beside these questions, I also want to touch people inside. In my installations I often dredge rubbish from the seabed to make something with a broken, ugly junk aesthetic. I tempt the audience to look at this 'ugly-beauty' and hope that they will think: what could I bring up to the surface from the muddy depths of my own mind?

The use of junk and rubbish is one way to make environmental art. Despite my training as an artist, I don't consider myself an artist in this field. I'm an activist who uses art to talk about, for instance, environmental issues. I aim to bring my art to where people live and breathe, to the streets, to parks, to public libraries. I don't think it belongs in a commercial gallery.

I feel that art is a part of our everyday life and should not be institutionalised or isolated in museums. I work for the world, not for art. In Finland I work with people; scavengers, divers, environmental organisations, Helsinki's environmental department and its planning and leisure offices as well as the Helinä Rautavaara Ethnographic museum and The Helsinki Festival.

My work in progress 'The Plastic Garden' uses tens of thousands of pieces of plastic in an organised chaos, with symmetry and a sense of humour. The discarded and useless are reborn. The old and worthless are reorganised into beauty and harmony; my own artistic philosophy.

My work is designing and constructing. The work is calm, but sometimes lonely. On other times it can be social and rowdy, as I buzz from place to place meeting the people and organisations making vital contributions to the work. *(continues)*

If I were not embedded in society, I could not do my work. Large numbers of people are needed to gather the materials I use and so I often work with people with a wide range of skills and from a wide range of communities. For example, Finland's Divers Against Debris; artist's organisations in Finland and Estonia; local schools, cultural centres and groups on social media. This social circle closes beautifully when the work is complete and my partners see their contributions incorporated into the final installation.

I also work internationally. For The Pot, Sandal and Crocheted Tent projects I collaborated with organisations around the world including: UNHCR in the Nordic countries and Thailand; and in the USA, the International Rescue Committee IRC. I have also partnered with non-governmental grassroots organisations that work in often difficult conditions, such as Burma's MANG THA; MON WOMEN in Malaysia; BEIT ATFAL ASSUMOUD in Lebanon and Hamaria Rehabilitation & Development Action HARDO in Mogadishu, Somalia. My work has also been supported by: Helsinki Cultural Centre; TAIKE Arts Promotion Centre Finland; The Kone Foundation; The Niilo Helander Trust. These partnerships are a vital part of my work and of all my installations.

Kristiina Tuura, August 2016



Refugee themed installations

Pot, Sandal and Crocheted Tent are a group of three artworks that deal with the status of refugees, commissioned by The City of Turku, European Cultural Capital 2011.

The material for these works was collected during 2007–2011 amongst refugees and asylum-seekers from four continents. The participants were photographed and short biographies were recorded. I collaborated with refugee organisations and other organisations that work with refugees. We collected objects and materials from refugees living in Finland, Sweden, Latvia, Kosovo, Lebanon, Somalia, Kenya, Uganda, Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, Thailand, Malaysia, Columbia and the USA. The refugees came from up to 30 different countries.

Crocheted Tent 2011-2016 is a tent of 30 square meters. The roof and walls consist of work handcrafted by female refugees. The works were purchased from the makers for whatever sum was requested. This work is still touring Finland.



Refugee themed installations

The Pot Installation 2011-2015 is being continuously rebuilt, using pots and pans belonging to refugee families. We collected these objects by swapping old pots and pans to new. The pots and pans were re-purposed as percussion instruments and we ran drumming workshops at refugee centres. Lids formed a playable wall, displayed at an ethnographic museum, a cultural centre and an outdoor festival.

Sandal Installation 2011-2012 is a constantly renewable work. Sandals were collected from refugees by swapping their worn-out sandals for new footwear. The artwork was displayed in a number of places including Turku Concert Hall, libraries, on the streets and on a floating raft in the river Aura in Turku, on World Refugee Day 2011.



Junk plastic installations

Plastic Garden will be exhibited at Stoa Cultural Centre Gallery, Helsinki, from 4.10.16 to 5.11.16. It is a 100 square metre installation in the form of a botanical garden. Trees, bushes and flowers have been built from discarded plastic objects and organised to create paths for viewers according to species and colour. They form a mandala-like environment for visitors to wander and appreciate the diversity of junk plastic. A water fountain gurgles in the middle of the garden. It also features a miniature model of the conservatory of Helsinki Botanical Gardens, where my grandmother spent her childhood.

The material for the Garden is recycled plastic from homes and workplaces such as bottles, bottle tops, lids, toys, packaging, medicine bottles, ropes, ribbons, plastic machine parts etc. The volunteer collectors are a vast group, recruited through social media. The installation opens up many directions. It both revels in the joy of thousands of playful plastic shapes and colours and offers a critical statement about our consumption of plastic. You can walk inside the installation and be part of it and sit on a garden bench wondering about this material; a futuristic dystopia, or the natural scenery of the future. Empty allotments in the garden will be filled during the autumn. Schoolchildren and other residents will bring their own plastic junk and participate in a workshop to add to the species in the plastic garden.



Junk plastic installations *(cont.)*

Flowerbed is made from plastic junk, metallic grill and ski-poles. 1.2 x 0.4 x 0.8m. Exhibited as part of Everyday Things Earth Hour 2015.

A Bouquet for Havis Amanda is a floating installation in a well-loved Helsinki landmark, the Havis Amanda fountain and pond. Material: junk plastic, gathered from Finnish homes. 10 x 10m. Part of Helsinki Design Week 2015.



Junk plastic installations *(cont.)*

Chandeliers made from junk plastic:

Mexico 2012.

Exterior construction of junk plastic. 4 x 2m. Back Yard Exhibition, Hanko 2015.

White Chandelier. 11.3 x 1m. Made of junk plastic from homes and hospitals.





Installations made from rubbish reclaimed from the sea

Junk Aquariums 2015 and 2016 features sea debris inside aquariums. The plastic has been collected from the Baltic Sea. The latest one is part of Helsinki Design 2016.

Eight Installations of rubbish collected from the Baltic 2013-2016: these installations were made in co-ordination with Aware diving events in the Finnish cities of Helsinki, Turku, Hanko, Nauvo and Pori, working in co-operation with divers active in Baltic Sea conservation.

Leading concept and co-ordination of community based junk installations, Spring 2016: In Helsinki, Tallinn and Turku, the artist and residents completed sixty junk installations during local beach cleanups. These were documented and resulted in a digital exhibition. Co-organisers: The Baltic Sea Challenge; Centrum Balticum; the cities of Helsinki and Turku in Finland and Tallinn in Estonia; Hei Helsinki ry; Vedelik, Estonia. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qAdgxrl0Zy8>





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In Brief

Installation artist since 2011.

Producer/director of documentary films in the developing world from 1988. Set design and prop-maker for theatre and feature films from 1976

Artworks and exhibitions

2016

Plastic Garden: installation, Stoa Cultural Centre of Eastern Helsinki /

Trash-Aquarium: installation, Virka Gallery, Helsinki City Hall, Helsinki Design Week / Art from

Trash: concept lead and co-ordination of community-based junk installations and digital exhibition, Helsinki, Turku, Tallinn: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qAdgxrl0Zy8>

2015

PanContinental Dialogue: installation commissioned by Arts Council, World

Village Festival / A Bouquet for Havis Amanda: floating installation in a public fountain, Helsinki

Design Week / The Trash Raft: floating sea debris installation. Helsinki Design Week / Chandelier

II: installation, BackYard exhibition, Hanko / Junk Aquarium: Helsinki Aquarium Society anniversary exhibition, Helsinki

2014

The Hattifatteners Cave: installation, Virka Gallery, Helsinki / Sea debris installation: Helsinki /

Nickel Bar: River Kokemäenjoki, trash and pollution installation. SuomiAreena, Pori / Sea debris

installatio: Hanko harbour / Trash Pavilion: artistic lead, community art installation & festival, part

of Helsinki City festival / Single-Celled Red & The Migration of The Single-Celled: textile installa-

tions, 'Weaves Gone Wonky' exhibition, Helsinki / The Lap: textile installation, in collaboration with

Annikka Mikkola, 'Weaves Gone Wonky' exhibition, Helsinki

2013

Crocheted Tent - The Pot - The Sandal: series of installations using objects collected from refugee camps on four continents, in more than 30 countries. Stoa Gallery Helsinki and Helinä Rautavaara Museum, Espoo / Sea Debris Installation. Nauvo harbour / River Trash Installation. River

Aura, Turku

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2011

Crocheted Tent - The Pot - The Sandal: Turku European Capital of Culture programme. Touring other cities in Finland 2012-2016

2007

Wind-People: installation in a refugee tent and its surrounding, containing photos and stories of refugees in three continents. In cooperation with photographer Leena Neuvonen. The Art Center, Purnu

1995

The Tent: installation in a former hospital room. Group exhibition. Me 95. Kellokoski

Other professional experience

2006-2010

Planner & Media Trainer, NASIB Women's Media Training for Women, Somalia. / Gender and Media, visiting lecturer, Asia-Pacific Institute for Broadcasting Development AIBD

2007-2008

Cultural Diversity Coordinator, Finnish National Gallery

2006

Lecturer, Stadia / Metropolia University of Applied Sciences / Media Trainer, Kyangwali refugee settlement, Uganda

2003-2004

Media Trainer, Aina Culture & Media Centre, Afghanistan

1999-2005

Documentary director/journalist, cultural programmes, Finnish Broadcasting Company YLE

1988-1998

Director-Producer of nine documentary films in Africa / Producer-Co-producer of four African documentaries

1986-1996

Set design of three plays for independent theatre groups

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1976-1999

Props Master and later Art director, on 12 full-length feature films

Publications

2010 – At home in a Refugee Camp. Unpublished book about the life of children in three refugee camps in Uganda, Pakistan and Kosovo

2009 – Utopia of an Art Museum for All. Article in the publication Tulevaisuuden taidemuseo. Edited by Susanna Pettersson. Finnish National Gallery 2009

2009 – Diversity Strategy for The Finnish National Gallery 2009-2013 with Sari Salovaara

Training

1995 – MA Documentary Film. University of Art & Design (Aalto University) Film & Television, Finland

1983 – MA University of Art & Design (Aalto University) Film and Television, Finland

1971-1973 – Lahti Institute of Fine Arts / Lahti University of Applied Sciences

1969-1971 – KV Konstskola Art School, Gothenburg, Sweden

Main Grants and Awards

2010-2012 – Artist grant, Arts Promotion Centre, Finland

2004 – Finland Prize, awarded in recognition of a significant career in art

2001 – Finnish Grand Prize for Journalism

1991 & 1983 – Artist grants, Arts Promotion Centre, Finland



Thank you.