



RIITTA PÄIVÄLÄINEN

Woven memories in the wilderness

Riitta Päiväläinen is a Finnish photographic artist who is well-known for her temporary, unique, site-specific fabric installations in isolated landscapes of the North.

Themes & Visions

Guided by a singular creative vision since 1998, her practice explores the intricate relationships between memory, the past, and nature. Through her work, she delves into the subconscious, childhood, imagination, alternative narratives, collective shared emotions, associations, and the inner self.

The Creative Process

Operating entirely as a one-woman project, she works completely alone in the silence of the wilderness, where her creative process begins with an intuitive search for secluded and untouched environments. She is drawn to vast, barren landscapes—spaces where the stark emptiness allows her own thoughts, mind, and creativity to expand. Within these environments, she choreographs her precise *mise-en-scène*, intuitively sculpting fabrics into temporary installations that adapt to the landscape's rhythm and exist purely on nature's terms.

Her process remains a continuous, intuition-based, poetic dialogue between human absence and untamed nature. Ultimately, the photograph remains the only lasting vestige of these fleeting encounters—capturing a layer of existence that is not physically present, but made visible in the viewer's mind.

SELECTED SERIES by Riitta Päiväläinen

ICE AND WIND *"Stories of Deserted Landscapes"*

Set within white, snowy Nordic landscapes and the windy coastal village of Ravenglass, England, this body of work explores the forces of nature. In these desolate settings, freezing temperatures, falling snow, and biting winds sculpt abandoned garments into rigid, ghostly silhouettes.

IMAGINARY MEETINGS *"Sculpted by Frost"*

Through second-hand clothes frozen solid into statuesque figures, this series explores human presence, absence, and the fragile layers of a hidden self. During these "imaginary meetings", Päiväläinen seeks a glimpse of personality and individuality from the unknown past.

The project bridges two different worlds, connecting traditional Japanese obis and kimonos photographed first in the lush greenery of Aomori forests to their new, frozen, transformed existence. After returning home, she sculpted the same textiles into a new form using ice, associating the frozen fabrics with wintry flora and crystallized Ikebana blossoms.

RIVER NOTES *"Reflected Perspectives"*

In this series, Päiväläinen physically wades into streams, rivers, and flooded areas. She enters the quiet world of beavers, fish, and water birds to gain a completely new perspective of seeing. She entwines ribbons into temporary shapes that grow from simple forms into complex labyrinths, rosettes, and cobwebs. By utilizing reflections and submerged textiles, the work turns water into a mirage of our dreams, memories, and the subconscious.

SHELTER *"Childhood Refuges"*

Organic sculptures resemble primitive huts and secret sanctuaries built in pristine nature. Bringing back childhood memories of constant play and building brushwood huts, the structures recreate the harmony of being one with nature. The series explores the symbiotic relationship between humans and nature: "Nature shelters us—do we shelter nature?"

PHANTASMA *"Beyond the Visible"*

Moving past reality into the realm of imagination, dreams, and folklore, this series turns nature into an imaginary playground where the invisible becomes visible. Shot on location in the untamed wilderness of Lapland and Iceland, the work utilizes elemental materials like stone, wind, moss, and volcanic black lava to explore the boundaries between the physical world and the imagined.



CV SELECTED

RIITTA PÄIVÄLÄINEN

(b. 1969, Maaninka, Finland) is a Helsinki-based photographic artist. She graduated with a Master of Arts from the Department of Photography in 2002 from the University of Art and Design Helsinki.

Over the past decades, her work has been presented by established galleries and international institutions, including Galleri Andersson Sandström/ GSA in Stockholm and Umeå, Yumiko Chiba Associates in Tokyo, Camara Oscura Galeria de Arte in Madrid and Persons Projects in Berlin.

Her works are represented in numerous prestigious public and private collections around the world, including Kiasma – Museum of Contemporary Art in Helsinki, the Museum of Finnish Photography, the SpallArt Collection in Salzburg, and the European Investment Bank in Luxembourg. She is also recognized as one of the early members of the Helsinki School.

Artist Residencies:

SIM Residency, Reykjavík, Iceland
ÖRES Residency, Öró Island, FI
Muodosloppolo, The Artists Association of Lapland, FI
The Åland Archipelago Guest Artist Residence, Kökar, FI
The Saari Residence, Kone Foundation, Mietoinen, FI
Mustarinda, Kainuu, FI
Aomori Contemporary Art Centre (ACAC), Japan
Seascale, Ravenglass, UK (Jatulintarha-project)
Jenny and Antti Wihuri Foundation Residence, Rovaniemi, FI

Awards & Honors:

2020 Finalist and Jury's Pick, LensCulture Exposure Awards
2011 William Thuring prize of the Fine Arts Society of Finland

Selected publications:

2009 Imaginary Meetings (Artist Book), published by Kehrer Verlag, GER
2007 Catalogue "Riitta Päiväläinen, Imaginary Meeting, Structura, Camouflage", FI
2003 Catalogue "Riitta Päiväläinen, Vestige, Series Ice and Wind", FI

Documents and videos:

"Beautifully mysterious photography from Finland", artist document by Deutsche Welle (<https://www.dw.com/en/nature-in-finland-rendered-beautiful-and-mysterious/video-61561959>)
"Woven Memories", selected works 2000-2026, slideshow portfolio by Riitta Päiväläinen (<https://vimeo.com/1191570196>)

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