

AiR Loviisa 2005 seminar evaluates residency activities

The Artist-in-Residence seminar organized in Loviisa on September 1–2 brought together more than 40 people who were representatives of residency programmes or had expertise on the international mobility of artists. The two-day seminar assessed the current state of residency activities in Finland.

The subject was approached through presentations by researchers, artists and representatives of residencies. The speakers included among others Catarina Ryöppy, who examined residency activities from the artist's perspective, Irmeli Kokko from FRAME, who dealt with various aspects of residency activities, Sari Karttunen, who presented her own research on increasing international activities by young artists, Riikka Suomi, who talked about the results of the questionnaire on residencies in Finland and Professor Annika Waenerberg, who put the mobility of artists into a historical perspective. The seminar participants were introduced to the Loviisa Guest Studio by Jouni Jäppinen and they also visited the studio itself.

Quotes from the seminar notebook

“Without Jouni Jäppinen's hard work, there wouldn't be a guest artist studio in Loviisa, nor would there be this seminar.”

Pia Wilhelmson, Director of the Loviisa Culture and Leisure centre

“As an additional 'bonus' from the residency activities, the City of Loviisa has acquired an art collection comprising 55 works and numerous exhibitions, lectures and other events.”

“For the town, the residency is a matter of image. By and large, the local residents are satisfied. Some of the guest artists have been disappointed at how quiet the town is while others have been pleased for the same reason.”

Jouni Jäppinen, Metal Artist, Producer of the Loviisa Guest Studio

“It all started in Loviisa – it was the model for our own residency. It took us two years to get things going. Sometimes, it has been difficult to justify our existence to local residents. At the beginning, nobody came to our exhibitions, for instance, until one of the guest artists made a film about the locals; people began to show an interest once they actually had some contact with the artists.”

Evelyn Müürsepp, Artist, Director of the Mooste Guest Studio (MoGS), Estonia

“MoGS is a former collective farm, but now it's a centre for art and social practice. Community spirit is the key.”

John Grzinich, Sound Artist, USA, Medialab Coordinator at MoGS



“When it comes to artistic activity, residencies can take bigger risks than galleries or museums. They increase the ability of the institutions to take risks and rejuvenate the art world at the same time.”

Irmeli Kokko, Curator, FRAME

“Travel customs have changed, but people remain more or less the same.”

“Formerly, people only travelled if it was unavoidable, nowadays people have the opportunity to travel. Respectable people stayed at home, disreputable people went travelling. The reason for being *obliged* to leave Finland might have been the prohibition laws, for instance – artists set out for continental Europe so as to be able to drink wine.”

“In the old days, wealthy artists may well have been jealous of those with slender means, because a wealthy artist could never share the same motives for working as an artist.”

Professor Annika Waenerberg, University of Jyväskylä

“The changed identity of artists is undermining the myth of the charismatic bohemian artist.”

“A very clear majority, 85–90%, of Finnish visual artists have training in their chosen field. Only about 10–15% are self-taught.”

“There are considerably more women in the younger generation of artists than there were before.”

“Many artists work outside their professional organizations or associations. Internationalization may be one way of bypassing the organizations and political spheres of influence.”

Sari Karttunen, Senior Researcher, The Arts Council of Finland

“When I arrive in a new country and a new location, I try to clear my head and try to establish contact with people and places, seeking to study via image what one really sees when one looks at strange towns and places. How to represent the physical and mental non-space created by our society.”

“I collect things from the streets and the flea markets that are characteristic of that particular town. I study the culture of everyday objects, for example, the things that people throw away, and look at how people are behaving in their everyday surroundings.”

“The theme of my photographic work *Nothing happens, really* applies to the residencies, too. A residency is really only a starting point from which some process can begin. On the other hand, great things can be tried out at very small scale and through very small changes.”

Catarina Ryöppy, Visual Artist, Helsinki