

RIITTA PÄIVÄLÄINEN / Statement

River Notes

Since 1997 my main interest has been “the unwritten history” – the history that you cannot find in library books, official files or archives, but can be felt in the rip of a coat or in the arm worn thin on an armchair. I have used second-hand clothing which I have for instance frozen or created temporary site-specific installations in the nature.

For me, a piece of clothing represents, above all, its former wearer. It tells you that somebody has been present. However, the person who wore it, is now gone. The faded color and tears in the fabric show the signs of the time passed. By freezing the garment or letting the wind fill it with air, I am able to create a sculptural space, which reminds me of its former user. This “Imaginary Meeting” represents, for me, the subtle distinction between absence and presence.

My latest series “River Notes”, consists of 16 color photographs. I have continued to work with the same themes as earlier but also look further into our subconscious. I have explored the combination of ribbons, water reflections and secluded places. By cutting and sewing fabrics together, I have made long ribbons, which I have entwined around the nature. The results are maze-like weavings, cobwebs, outlines without distinguished endings or beginnings, organic creations almost like done by the nature.

I want to emphasize the essence of place in my work. During the working process, I am looking for a certain place that after being found, works as a starting point – a specific feeling, memory, shape, structure, color or element of the surrounding nature functions as an inspiration.

Landscape is not only a topographical, objective phenomenon. For me, it is personal and subjective. Working with a landscape means going into it: experiencing and sensing the place, finally being one, equal part of it. By bringing the landscape and ribbons together, I create a dialogue - an interaction. My aim is to suggest and bring forth potential stories, mental images and associations.

Ribbons, racing through the landscape, are reflected on the surface of still, serene water. The semi-circular form, structure mirrors as a whole circle. The transparent lines merge, create entity. What is real? When wind blows, the view changes continuously. Reflection can disappear in a blink of an eye. The fluctuating quality of reflection rises up a question of its' true existence.

Wading in the rivers, streams, and flooded areas gives me a totally new perspective of seeing. I am in the world of beavers, fishes and water birds. I observe the nature from an angle that most of the people never do.

In “River Notes”, water represents for me a mirage to our dreams, memories and our subconscious. Combined with the ribbons, the result is a riddle that lures the viewer further into the image.