

LÖNNSTRÖM project

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MILJA VIITA TO CREATE THE SIXTH LÖNNSTRÖM PROJECT

The Lönnström Art Museum in Rauma has selected the sixth Lönnström Project in the museum's series of contemporary art commissions: *Fata Morgana* (working title), an experimental film by media artist **Milja Viita** (b. 1974). The work will be completed during 2022–2023, and the Lönnström Art Museum Foundation has earmarked a budget of 100,000 euros for the production.

For the film, Viita will collect visual materials from home archives related to the work and lives of seafarers from Rauma. She is particularly interested in 8mm films, film negatives, photographs and letters that were shot, written and received by seafarers on the seven seas. As we get closer to the present day, the collected materials can also be digital.

Viita will study and process the visual materials with a rare optical printer at the *L'Abominable* film studio in Paris. The form of the final film will be determined by the found materials and interviews with their lenders.

Community process culminating in film screening

The film will be produced with top-of-the-line collaborators. The score will be composed by instrumentalist, educator and researcher **Juho Laitinen**, and it will be performed by the Rauma Youth Band. Foley effects will be produced in Rauma at a workshop for young people run by a foley professional.

The project will culminate in autumn 2023 at Rauma in a special documentary screening where the film is shown with a live band playing the score. The people who provided the materials will be invited on stage to tell their stories and talk about their memories, which will become part of the total experience. An installation version of the piece will be produced that can be screened indefinitely in the future.



The working title is a reference to a type of mirage that can be experienced especially at sea. “The idea for the piece first emerged when I was travelling on a cargo ship across the North Atlantic to Canada in 2018,” says Milja Viita. “During the foggy week, I got to know the hard-working seamen who live on the ship for months at a time. Many of them talked about their longing and their families waiting back home thousands of kilometres away.”

Jury was impressed by the multidisciplinary and historical approach

Milja Viita’s project was selected in an open call organised by the Lönnström Art Museum. A total of 35 applications were received by the deadline, among which the top entries were of a very high standard. The final selection was made by the Board of the Lönnström Art Museum Foundation at the presentation of a jury appointed for the task. The jury consisted of museum director **Silja Lehtonen**, curator **Arja Roivainen**, and photographic artist **Jorma Puranen**.

The jury justified its selection as follows: “Milja Viita’s work will be a poetic art-house film whose production will be enhanced by localism, history and a community approach. It will be possible to engage with the work in a number of ways in the course of its production, turning the participants effectively into a large, multidisciplinary ensemble. This approach can also give rise to new, unforeseeable forms of activity and new perspectives on the project. The final result will be a film of high artistic quality and local relevance, and its premiere in the form of a special screening in Rauma will be an exhilarating and unique event. The film’s themes are sensitive, relatable and timeless.”

Milja Viita earned a Master’s degree from the Department of Time and Space Arts at the Finnish Academy of Fine Arts in 2005. Materiality and craftsmanship are central to her approach to filmmaking and treatment of footage. She won the prestigious Risto Jarva Award at the Tampere Film Festival in 2019 for her film *Animal Bridge U-3033*. Milja Viita lives and works in Porvoo.

An active year ahead

The year 2022 will include several events associated with Lönnström Projects. Preparations for Milja Viita’s work will commence, and the two previous projects in the series will be completed and released in 2022. **Raimo Saarinen**’s environmental work *Floating Island* will be anchored in place in June 2022, and **Nastja Säde Rönkkö**’s video installation *Survival Guide for a Post-Apocalyptic Child* will have its premiere in the autumn.

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