



Milja Viita
SKÖNÄRIT

Filmed by Jukka Salokaarto, solarised 16mm Milja Viita 2024

THE SIXTH LÖNNSTRÖM PROJECT IS A MULTIFACETED ART FILM ABOUT SEAFARERS

“We haven’t seen land or a beacon for many hours,” writes the captain in the ship’s log on 8 December 1925, during foggy and windy weather. Almost a hundred years later, a young seaman, Jalmar Yrjänen, takes us on a journey to five distant ports.

The sixth Lönnström Project, *SKÖNÄRIT*, is a film by media artist **Milja Viita**. Funded by the Lönnström Art Museum with a total budget of €100,000, the film will premiere at Rauma Hall on Friday, 20 September 2024.

The Finnish title derives from an old maritime slang word meaning seafarer. The film is based on footage shot by sailors around the world, both as souvenirs and as records of their travels. Milja Viita has arranged and edited this material into a collage, an artistic interpretation of maritime stories about hard work in demanding conditions, unique working environments, and the strong sense of community among sailors. Some of the footage used in the film comes from the Rauma Maritime Museum’s collections, and the project also involved a significant amount of archival work. Any previously unarchived materials has now been added to the maritime museum’s collections.

The film’s narrative and footage span different periods. While the borrowed footage was shot between the 1960s and the 1990s, the script also draws on letters written by **Jalmar “Jallu” Yrjänen**, a 17-year-old who set sail from Rauma in the early 1900s. Other sources include ships’ logs, telegrams, newspaper articles, and interviews with seafarers. As the narrator of the film, Jallu travels the globe to places like northern and southern Africa, China, Arctic Canada, and South America. He finds his place in the seafarer community, until his adventure unexpectedly turns into tragedy. While Jallu’s story touches on major themes arising from cultural encounters, such as colonialism and globalisation, the film also shines a light on the fates of individuals, both those at sea and those left behind on the home front, who had to accept the merciless power of the elements and live with the constant longing and worry for their loved ones at sea. In the film, Jallu’s story is interpreted by actor **Aapo Salonen**.

Milja Viita is master of photochemical film and filmmaking, and the materiality of the film stock itself becomes tangible in her work. In spring 2023, Milja Viita had the use of a special optical printer to process the footage for *SKÖNÄRIT*, while working in a lab in the mountains of southern France. The solarisations and fleeting tonal shifts at key moments in the film were created through a slow and meticulous craft process.

Throughout the film's creation, Viita has collaborated with the Rauma Youth Band. Together with music educator **Kalle Kataja**, she conducted workshops for the orchestra, with the resulting improvisations forming a key part of the film's musical score. She also worked closely with instrumentalist **Juho Laitinen**, whose compositions *Matka* and *Eksymä* are featured in the film. At the Rauma Hall screening, the score will be performed live by Laitinen and the Rauma Youth Band.

An installation version of *SKÖNÄRIT* will be exhibited at the Teresia and Rafael Lönnström Home Museum in 2025.

Milja Viita (b. 1974) earned a Master of Fine Arts from the Department of Time and Space Arts at the Academy of Fine Arts in 2005. Her works have been shown in exhibitions and festivals in Finland and internationally. She won the prestigious Risto Jarva Award at the Tampere Film Festival in 2019 for her film *Animal Bridge U-3033*. She has been working on the current Lönnström Project since 2022. The project previously had the working title *Fata Morgana*. Milja Viita lives and works in Porvoo.



Filmed by Ari Mylly
Re-exposed and solarised by Milja Viita 2024

Milja Viita: *SKÖNÄRIT*

2024 | 63 min | colour | 35mm, stereo | DCP, 5.1 audio | 1.37:1 | 24 fps

Script and direction: Milja Viita | Narrator: Aapo Salonen | Cinematography: John Konkola, Sakari Leino, Martti Mankonen, Yrjö Mankonen, Ari Mylly, Jukka Salokaarto, Milja Viita | Wind band: Rauma Youth Band and Kalle Kataja | Score: Juho Laitinen | Radio traffic sounds: Matleena Mäkelä, Matti Lahti, Jezreel Limpangog | Foley effects: Miro Mantere | Sound design: Veli Granö | Graphic design: Jari Laurén

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Press photos and Tytti Rantanen's essay on the film are available at:

www.lonnstromintaidemuseo.fi/en/press-images

Password: 1942Kaivopuisto

*Founded according to the will of Industrial Counsellor **Teresia Lönnström**, the Lönnström Art Museum has since 2015 undertaken extensive contemporary art projects in collaboration with artists based in Finland. The museum finances these ambitious projects and acts as partner to the artists. A new project is launched every 1–2 years. The seventh Lönnström Project, an outdoor sculpture titled Big Botanic by **Pia Sirén**, will be completed in 2025.*