

GALERIE FORSBLOM

Kaarina Kaikkonen: The Tears Shed Because of You

Galerie Forsblom, January 26–February 18, 2024

Sculptor Kaarina Kaikkonen makes installations out of recycled items of clothing that radiate a powerful presence. She began using discarded clothing as her raw material back in the 1980s, giving worthless, worn-out and tattered garments a second life as works of art. Kaikkonen handles her raw material with warmth and respect for its previous owners. The resurrected items of clothing convey memories and a sense of time's passage, embodying a wealth of meanings in their material presence. We can imagine how the fabrics would feel against our skin, how they provide warmth and protection, or perhaps they might remind us of a person, place or moment in our past. A whole life can be metonymically condensed in loops, stitches, threads and buttonholes, invoking experiences both intimate and collective.

Kaikkonen's new exhibition is themed around nature, featuring twists and folds of fabric transformed into flowers, foliage and tussocks of vegetation. They also deliver a commentary on human nature, capturing something shared and inherent about what it means to be human. Kaikkonen reflects on the painful aspects of life, but her art also embraces hope and celebrates growth. Originally trained as a painter, Kaikkonen uses fabrics as paintbrushes to capture expressive forms and invoke meanings with a painter's nuanced color sensibility.

Kaarina Kaikkonen (b. 1952) is one of Finland's most internationally acclaimed artists. She is known as a sculptor and creator of installations that reinvent urban landscapes and foster communality. Kaikkonen is an honorary member of the Finnish Sculptors' Association, and she is the recipient of numerous awards: the 1989 Finnish State Prize for Visual Arts, the 2001 Finnish Prize for Art, the 2013 Order of the Lion of Finland, the 2022 Finnish Lion's Pro Finlandia Medal and the 2023 Raimo Utriainen Foundation's Lifetime Achievement Award. Kaikkonen has also won numerous international awards. Her work is represented in the collections of prestigious European museums such as the MAXXI National Museum of Contemporary Art in Rome, the Museum of Contemporary Art Kiasma and the Kunsten Museum of Modern Art in Aalborg. In 2023, her installations were featured in Italy's Bergamo and Brescia as part of the Capital of Culture program.