

Press release

September 29, 2017

Kaija Kiuru

Dactylorhiza and the Vanishing Landscape

October 7–25, 2017

Gallery Napa and Studio Mustanapa, Rovaniemi

Vernissage on Friday, October 6, 2017 at 6–8 pm.

Artist Talk at 5 pm. The Artist Talk is attended by Timo Helle, PhD, and Riikka Karppinen, a Viiankiaapa activist.

The visual artist Kaija Kiuru's exhibition *Dactylorhiza and the Vanishing Landscape* speaks out in favour of a protected aapa mire. Viiankiaapa (65,95 km²) in the municipality of Sodankylä is one of the largest and most versatile aapa mires in Europe and therefore belongs to both the National Mire Conservation Programme and the EU Natura 2000 network. According to the species inventories made so far, the Viiankiaapa nature protection area enjoys 17 plant and 21 bird species that the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) classifies as near threatened or endangered.

Viiankiaapa also belongs to the Central Lapland Greenstone Belt. Green schist rich in ore is an ideal growing medium e.g. for the different marsh orchid species growing in Viiankiaapa. The same areas are valuable from the viewpoints of biodiversity and geology. Since the year 2004, Sakatti Mining owned by British-based, globally operating Anglo American has been searching for ores in the protected area. The nickel-copper deposit discovered so far is considered significant, and the company aims at starting mining operations in the area. At the moment, the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) procedure for the Sakatti mining project is being conducted. Granting of a mining permit for the protected area would also put many other Natura 2000 network areas in danger, as similar economic and employment aspects could be used as criteria. So, this is not a question of one wetland somewhere in the periphery only, but also of the plight of nature protection in general.

Sakatti Mining is not the only company prospecting for ores in nature conservation areas in Lapland. Metals will be needed in the future as well, but mines should not be allowed to operate in protected areas. IUCN says that states should prohibit mining operations and other projects threatening nature in all nature conservation areas. IUCN also recommends mining industry should voluntarily stay out of these areas.

Protected Aapa Mire

Kaija Kiuru made her first works of art commenting on the conflict between protection and mining plans in 2012 and gradually, individual works came to form an entire project. *Protected Aapa Mire* consists of Kiuru's exhibitions and a book about Viiankiaapa, which will be published in 2019. The book, which connects art and science, will be produced in cooperation between Kaija Kiuru and PhD Timo Helle, who is Adjunct Professor of Animal Ecology and a nature writer.

The *Protected Aapa Mire* project is a result of Kaija Kiuru's desire by means of art to take a stand on mining plans concerning a nature conservation area. One role of art is to bring about a social debate, in this case on the position of protected areas because of land-use pressures increasing for different reasons. Viiankiaapa is near and local, but at the same time also global, as we encounter similar clashes between human activity and the natural environment all over the world.

In addition to her own mire experiences, the origin of Kaija Kiuru's works of art is in scientific research data, the livelihood history of Viiankiaapa, and mining plans threatening the area. Her works of art deal with relationship between man and landscape/place, a threat to a landscape, geological natural resources and marsh orchids (*Dactylorhiza*) growing in Viiankiaapa. She selects her ways of working and materials to be used according to current ideas. For the exhibition in Gallery Napa and Studio Mustanapa, she chose an installation and photographic works from the years 2016–2017.

During the years 2015–2016, Kaija Kiuru took pictures of more than 100 marsh orchid specimens belonging to the *Dactylorhiza* genus. According to the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species, four of the marsh orchid species growing in Viiankiaapa are classified as vulnerable (VU): the Lapland marsh orchid, narrow-leaved marsh orchid, early marsh orchid and flecked marsh orchid. *Vulnerable* in the classification means that a species is facing a high risk of extinction in nature in the medium-term future.

For non-professionals, the *Dactylorhiza* genus is complex in an enchanting way. There is not always an agreement between researchers if a species, sub-species or a variation of a species/sub-species is in question. Species interbreed with each other, hybrids may become independent, and backcrossing is also common. It is estimated that there are 12–75 species in the genus. In Finnish legislation and endangerment reports, the Lapland marsh orchid and narrow-leaved marsh orchid, for example, are still described as separate species, but in Sweden, they are now regarded as one sub-species. Henry Väre, the Senior Curator of the Botany Unit of the Finnish Museum of Natural History, made the identifications of the marsh orchid species Kiuru took pictures of.

Kaija Kiuru moved back to Sodankylä, her municipality of birth, six years ago after having lived elsewhere in Finland for over 30 years. She lives with her husband Timo Helle in the village of Aska in Sodankylä. Kiuru has graduated as a sculptor from the Institute of Fine Arts in Lahti and as a Bachelor of Culture and Arts from the Lahti University of Applied Sciences. In addition to her artistic work, she has also studied art history as well as environmental protection and education. Kiuru's artistic production comprises installations, environmental art, photos and sculptures, and during her career, she has held numerous solo and group exhibitions in Finland and abroad. Kiuru is a member of the Association of Finnish Sculptors and the Artists' Association of Lapland.

In December 2016, Kaija Kiuru and Timo Helle were involved in establishing the Viiankiaapa Movement, which defends protection, as well as organising and generating ideas for a series of events called *Viiankiaapa Jubilee Year 2017*. The natural, cultural and recreational values of Viiankiaapa have been highlighted during the year, and a renowned group of artists, cultural practitioners and nature experts have given performances and lectures. <https://fi-fi.facebook.com/Viiankiaapa/>

Exhibitions of the *Protected Aapa Mire* project:

Exhibition 1 in September 2014: Galleria G maintained by the Association of Finnish Printmakers, Helsinki

Exhibition 2 in late 2016: Northern Photographic Centre, Oulu

Exhibition 3 in July-August 2017: Museum Gallery Alariesto and the library, Sodankylä

Exhibition 4 in October 2017: Gallery Napa and Studio Mustanapa run by the Artists' Association of Lapland, Rovaniemi

The last exhibition of the project and the publication of the book will take place in Helsinki in 2019.

The exhibition has been supported by the Arts Promotion Centre Finland.



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