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“I FEEL VERY BLESSED TO BE IN SO MANY INTERESTING INTERNATIONAL PROJECTS. BEING PASSIONATE ABOUT THE SUBJECT CAN TAKE ONE TO SURPRISING PLACES. THE AUDIENCE FOR GLASS ART IS QUITE SMALL, SO IT’S GOOD TO THINK OUTSIDE THE BOX TO CREATE NEW AUDIENCES. I HAVE ALWAYS WANTED MY ART TO BE EASILY APPROACHABLE.”

As an artist I see myself as a storyteller. It’s my passion to bend glass in new ways, to reflect something unseen.

I work between two very different cities. Helsinki is the busy capital of Finland. This is where my creative process usually begins and I start to plan the exhibitions, make my glass colors, take all the studio photos and so on. When my process needs some heating up, I hop on the train and travel seventy kilometers north from Helsinki to Riihimäki. The town has a long history with glass. There is a sense of romance in that place - old industrial redbrick buildings with wild vines hanging from their walls and huge windows. The studio where I work has an idyllic atmosphere.

My first job was a fashion designer and I also created 3D videos and movies. I made unique wedding dresses and artistic sculptural clothes from rare materials. The clothing world took me to China Fashion Week in Beijing. It made me realize how important it is to work internationally. One of my clothing exhibitions was also in Helsinki and it showcased many different talents and materials. In the exhibition, my video installation was next to the legendary Oiva Toikka’s glass sculpture. He is one of the most well known and beloved Finnish glass designers. I was very impressed with his work. I believe that was when I decided to learn to work with glass as a material







“Exhibitions and festivals are important venues to introduce art and get new connections. A good exhibition usually leads to good magazine articles and new exhibitions. This year I’ll have had thirty exhibitions; in United States and all around Europe. When I visited London, I got new connections from glass collectors and museums. Exhibiting in New Mexico led to multiple new opportunities with exhibiting and manufacturing glass. I was at the Frankfurt’s Tendence 2016 retail fair during June, the audience was very different compared to the galleries. Most people were from companies looking at new ideas for their design. There were also many international reporters and design publications. It was also interesting to meet other artists and designers. Connecting with professionals in multiple ways is always super important.”

I studied glass design in Aalto University in Helsinki and fashion design in the University of Lapland. Aalto gave me a strong background in material sciences and glass techniques. The University of Lapland offered me a good skill-set in marketing, 3D design and fashion. The deeper knowledge about art comes from working with the medium and meeting people. With my background in fashion design, sometimes I realize how something from the fashion world has followed me into glass. The femininity of the fashion world is in many of my pieces that are close to fashion illustrations. There are limitless possibilities with this material. I’m driven to innovate something new. Lately, I have been mixing up one hundred year old techniques with 3D design. The reason why I’m working with glass is because it’s a

rare and magical medium. It reflects the world around it, bends light and has interesting optic properties. When I’m blowing glass the material is alive until it is frozen into its final shape. It’s an incredible hot material that needs to be kept in constant motion so it won’t drip on the floor. In a way it’s like a wild animal that you need to tame. The sense of magic that it has makes it a perfect medium for creating solid dreams. Images are restored inside the layers and will never fade away. They have the potential to last for thousands of years or shatter in the blink of an eye.

Working with hot glass is beautiful. It looks like lava or one-thousand degree hot honey that glows in the dark. The glass-making process takes time. Some of my more complicated works take a year to make, one glass

look at the festival. The audience of the show was everyone from young to old. There were also two dog owners at the fair. The smaller dog spotted a bigger labrador and they started a dogfight right under the glass cartoons' plinths. I never would have believed where that dogfight-exhibition would lead. After the exhibition, the glass cartoons were invited to Toronto, The Finnish Glass Museum and The Netherlands. I was also invited to Taos, to an international glass art biennial held in New Mexico, USA. It was my first big scale glass exhibition and my professional starting point. Because of the good studio photos, design magazines and glass publications started to get interested in the glass. Little by little, I got new invitations to exhibit in important contemporary glass events. This year I represented Finland in the European Glass Festival held in Wroclaw. Super exciting for me because they only invited eighteen European glass artists to participate.

My first cartoon story in glass was about a woman that dressed up as a bird and set the town on fire. The woman figure has always been important in my stories and the atmosphere has been evolving as the works have grown technically in more challenging directions. The first pieces had only one layer of images inside the glass and one piece took about one week to create. There are three to six image layers in my recent works and the most complicated ones can take a year to finish. As my creative process gains length, I have been getting closer to each creation. They have more hidden levels in them, such as messages and illustrations that can only be seen from the exact angle and in certain light. I hope that the works make the gaze wander, and get lost into the works. My most recent works are about a woman that realizes that she is



layer at a time like an onion. So each time the sculpture is blown, it evolves and has a new image layer to work on and previous layers are drowned underneath the new one. It's possible to visit glass studios around the world and also use the glass in the process. Usually people working with glass are the friendliest kind. I have been visiting glass places and always get some new inspiration, from blowing glass in an abandoned gas station in New Mexico to by a river in The Netherlands. The creative process can be taken everywhere and I usually travel with my sketchbook. It takes the working space on top of a table mountain or to an abandoned town in the middle of the desert. In a way this is the most important place to work; on the road. Mixing up the places, atmospheres and memories is how the dreams are build up. In my artistic work I'm aiming to capture dreamlike visions inside the glass, so it's good to understand how the dream logic works. I'm mixing different locations together and taking pieces from the real world and old beliefs into the objects. There might be a chair from my childhood's country house and a window from a Budapest Art Nouveau building in the same object.

My first glass exhibition was in a small boutique in central Helsinki where I showed my glass vases with birds and horizons that change color in natural and artificial light. Cartoons have always been an important way to keep my drawing line alive, so the next exhibition at the Helsinki Comic Festival was comic stories captured in glass. The glass cartoons were exhibited in a festival tent in the middle of the busy city center. People heading to the metro stopped by and took a

dreaming and doesn't want to wake up. Each sculpture is a scene from the story and together the pieces make a narrative that continues from sculpture to sculpture. Multiple image layers create surreal and dreamlike visual in the works. The thick and heavy glass gives interesting optical properties to the dream scenes as the illustrations seem to move and distort as they are observed from different angles. The face of a woman looks sad when looked from above and angry when looked from behind. You can also see under and behind the image layers, there might be something hidden behind a window or deep into the woods in a thick forest.

I have this burning inside me, to create something meaningful to last forever. My creative passion rises from the magical world of glass and from the beauty I see in the world. When I'm onto something I lose my sleep, knowing that this something needs to be captured. It might be a woman that I have seen in a cafeteria with her sad eyes, or a stormy seacoast. It might be a story that starts to lead me onto something. Coffee gives a good boost and it also creates a certain routine for the day; moments of relaxation when all the ideas start to flow. I have been trying to find my own path in art. It's a great strength to pioneer in the field and do something totally new; to use materials in a surprising way and tell stories that deserve to be told. Good quality is also something that I highly appreciate, using only the best materials and techniques is important. I strongly believe that anyone who wants to make it, and works for it, will eventually find their way. Images that are drowned inside the glass will never change color or fade. They have the potential to last for thousands of years. I want to

capture something valuable and beautiful inside the glass. A favorite artwork that I have created lately is called *Rain*. It is a part of the *Flying Boat* series. It's about a woman who is trying to capture the rain in her hands, something impossible to do. It is something that she believes will let her stay in her dream forever. I'm very satisfied with the piece because as I slowly created it, it found shape, color and optic properties that are very captivating. Raindrops are creating an interesting space around her. It is also one of the works that don't have that much happening inside, so the focus is of a simple purpose; capturing the rain.

I usually start planning my exhibitions one year ahead because the glass medium takes it's time to bend into the right shape and visual. It has always been important for me to also record the process. It is a wonderful way to create a good buzz around the exhibition before anything is done. Videos and photos about the process also open-up the value of the piece to the audience. It's sometimes good to show the hidden world behind the finished objects, because it helps people understand the material, technique and to get more interested in the art itself.

Each exhibition has a story-line that is flowing from one object to another. Creating the narrative in a way that it follows the logic of dreams is a journey that takes time. It must be told in a way that dreams are told. Old beliefs interest me and unrecorded stories. I mix these stories together into new fairy-tales. I have been working with a story about a wolf that is protecting sleeping children by carrying them as a bird on her tail when they are in the dreamworld. She makes sure that the child is waken




up and not lost in the dream. This wolf is a guardian of our dreams. Traveling is a good way to improve and motivate myself outside of my art. I went hiking on the Scottish Highlands to find new ideas; in the green and open landscape, clouds were touching the mountaintops when it rained sideways. Sometimes it might take time to catch the creative flow. You can't force it, so it's good to sometimes step away from the piece until it is ready to be continued again. Pieces develop in the process and find their final shape as the layers are slowly gathered on top of each other, the glass bends and turns the images.





"I'm from Suonenjoki, a small town famous for its strawberries in the countryside. My family has always been super supportive, given me strength and lots of help. For example, my brother built the plinth for my exhibition that was held in Kuopio Gallery G12. My family are always there for me. Sometimes I get surprised by how much help I get from the people around me. For example, Peltolan Juustola - a local cheese-maker - sponsored blue cheese to our design event. The cheese was just wonderful and handmade from their very own cows' milk. I'm very lucky to have found many talented friends and co-workers. Heidi-Hanna Karhu is my trusted studio photographer and she takes all of my pictures. She can capture the glass stories in a vivid way. Professional photos open doors to design magazines and get galleries interested. Photos reach a larger audience on the Internet, they go far."



When an exhibition opens it's good to talk to people, to open up the stories behind the works and lead people to really study and look at the art. Seeing my art in front of the public is always exciting. You never know what to expect and how people will react to it. It's always surprising how people experience the works in their own individual way. People are living near to the material that can be used in everyday objects. This is why it's sometimes a new thing for people to understand what unique studio glass is all about. That there is only one glass sculpture made and it's a piece of art, when glass is seen in tableware and decorative items. Opening-up the artistic process helps to understand the value and also the meaning behind the sculptures. The Flying Boat exhibition in Helsinki was a great success. People really took their time and got lost inside the story. I was also happy to see so many works find a new home and continue to international exhibitions. Maybe someday the pieces of the story will find their way back together.

Working together with the media and finding new ways to reach people is a huge part of successful exhibitions. People tend to be old fashioned and read their favorite local newspaper in the morning whilst they have their tea. Those small local papers are one way to reach all those people who live

near an exhibition. Also, the most interesting journalists are working with those small newspapers. They have been writing their whole lives there so they also know hidden things about the surrounding town. Most of my customers are art collectors and investors. My sculptures are also companies' and universities' presents. I'm happy to learn that people understand the value of the works and want to invest in them. I'm selling most of my art in contemporary art galleries and reach customers in the exhibitions. Because of demand, I have also opened online purchase opportunities during the exhibitions. It's a way for international collectors to buy art that is exhibited.

My intention has always been to make art easy to approach for anyone and to people who are not familiar with glass. So too young families and people who are interested to bring something new with inspiring details into their homes with my art. It's also nice to arrange open studio days where people can see the process of the piece and have a glimpse in the secret and hidden world of art. Sometimes the works can be sold directly from the blowing-pipe. I encourage people that are interested in my work to call or email me, if they are looking for something special.