

Growing Connection Kaarina Kaikkonen (Finland)

WHO MADE THIS SCULPTURE? Kaarina Kaikkonen is an artist who works primarily in sculpture. She studied at the Finnish Academy of Fine Arts (Bildkonstakademin) from 1978-1983. After the tragic death of her father due to a heart attack when she was young, Kaikkonen initially studied medical physics at the University of Kuopio with the intention of saving others with heart troubles. Finding herself uninterested in medicine, she applied to art school and initially began painting. She came to enjoy creating sculptural objects in public spaces and works with clothing as a medium due to the comfort her father's old garments provide her. She has since risen to prominence and has undertaken many large-scale public works.



1



2



3

HOW WAS THIS SCULPTURE MADE? Kaikkonen's works are always site specific, using to her advantage the geography and architecture of the location as well as the political.

The construction of this piece consists of 3240 articles of recycled clothing. Kaikkonen always opts to work with used clothing as it embodies a unique history, that of the previous owner. Some of the clothing was brought with her from Finland and some was purchased in local Vancouver thrift shops. The garments were tied together and with the help of volunteers, hung in rows from a wooden lattice structure for plants.



4



5



6

WHAT IDEAS ARE BEING EXPLORED IN THIS WORK?

Kaarina Kaikkonen's works engage both visually as well as emotionally. The clothing elicits a sense of ephemeral beauty and can be seen as an abstract sculptural element, yet we cannot escape the human connection of the material. The clothing, left in tact, shows us through its form that it once shrouded a human occupant and as we investigate these articles we cannot help but weigh the significance of the history the garments have endured and the histories and lives behind them. Kaikkonen believes that Art exists in the mind of the viewer and



7

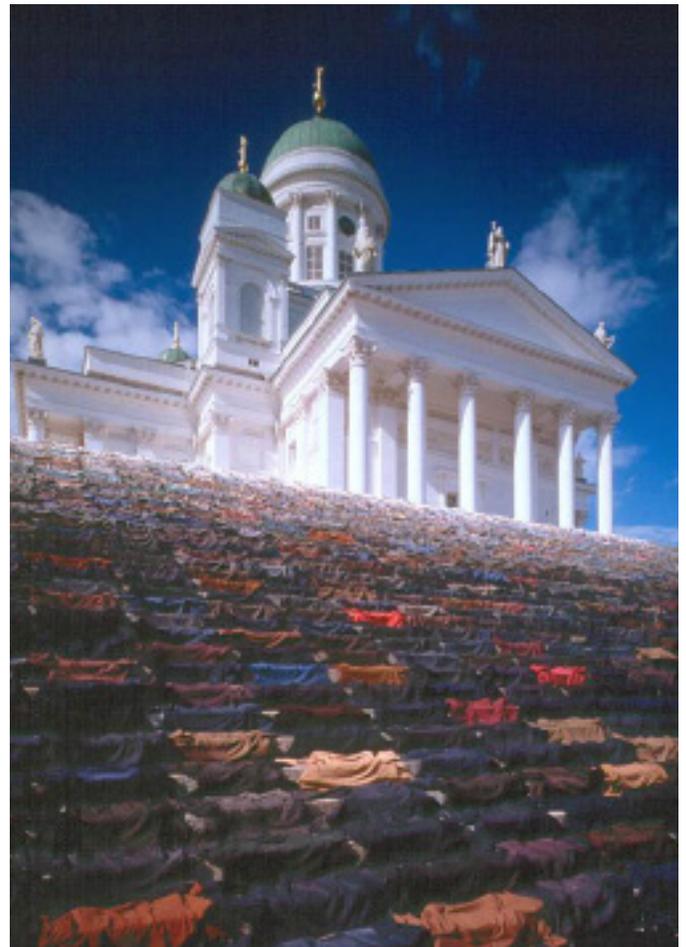
HOW DOES THIS WORK CONNECT WITH THIS ARTIST'S OTHER WORKS? Kaikkonen's other works are often similar to *Growing Connections* that we find here in Vancouver. She has become quite notorious for working with clothing as a medium and often works with suits and shirts but has also been known to utilize shoes ties and any other type of fabric garment. Kaikkonen has also used toilet paper in her installations as it is a temporary and ephemeral substance, poetically seen to be as fleeting as our existence.

One of her most noteworthy (and controversial) pieces was a project she completed called "waves" saw her cover all of the steps leading up to a cathedral in rags.

the meaning of the work changes every time a viewer encounters it. Kaikkonen brings to her work the intention of displaying many lives, strung together in a new unique and purposeful configuration. Kaikkonen also allows the viewer to insert their own narrative into the works, as it is her expectation that the work will accumulate a wide array of understandings as have many of her other works.

People are represented as family of trees in *Growing Connections* with women and children as branches extending towards the light. The growth symbolizes making connections to the outside world and creation of new life. Men are characterized as the trunks and roots providing nourishments to the trees.

8



WHO PUT THIS SCULPTURE ON DISPLAY IN VANCOUVER? This sculpture is part of Vancouver Biennale 2009-2011 Exhibition. The Vancouver Biennale is a non-profit charitable organization that celebrates art in public space. Each exhibition transforms the urban landscape into an Open Air Museum, creating globally inspired cultural experiences where people live, work, play and transit. The Biennale features internationally renowned and emerging Contemporary artists that represent a diversity of cultural perspectives and artistic disciplines including sculpture, new media, performance works and film.

The objective is to use great art as a catalyst to transformative learning and social action. The Vancouver Biennale also creates supporting public programs, events and publications including the award-winning BIG IDEAS Education program, the International Artist Residency Program inspired by Martin Luther King's "I Have a Dream", the CineFest LIVE documentary film festival and the Tour de Biennale and BIKennale arts & culture cycling events.

TO LEARN MORE you can search the terms **BIENNALE**, **PUBLIC ART** or **OUTDOOR SCULPTURE PARKS** on-line. Also Visit the Vancouver Biennale website at www.vancouverbiennale.com

IMAGE CREDITS:

- 1 Artist portrait; Dan Fairchild
- 2 *Growing Connections* (with Artist); Dan Fairchild
- 3 *Growing Connections* (detail); Dan Fairchild
- 4 *From Generation to Generation*; Lea Turto
- 5 *Mouths Open*, 1990; Artist
- 6 *Towards light 2003*; Artist
- 7 *Queen of Night 2003*; Artist
- 8 *Way 2000*, Helsinki Cathedral, 1990; Artist

Author: Scott Orjala
Editor: Katherine Tong
Designer: Julie Rudd