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ANTI – Contemporary Art Festival delighted Kuopio and attracted a record crowd

ANTI – Contemporary Art Festival, in its eighth year, took place on 23rd to 27th September 2009 in Kuopio. The festival that focuses on site-specific art brought the city to life over the course of five days. ANTI-festival attracted a lot of media attention and the largest audience in its history, 7500 people. The art works that spread themselves around the Kuopio urban environment and public spaces stirred up a lot of discussion, delight and reflection. For the very first time, ANTI-festival works were taken to the provinces and some could be observed online.

The programme, structured around the theme of walking, attracted a lot of interest from the audience. The two-day seminar *Askelten ääniä* that took place in conjunction with the festival drew 150 participants. ANTI-festival brought art teachers from all around the country to Kuopio, as well as festival visitors from different corners of Europe. The festival included a series of workshops, run by the artists for children and professionals, and several debates and meetings with artists. At weekends the festival club INTRO was filled with festival guests.

In the works that spanned the length of the festival Alex Bradley (UK) staged a protest, Stephanie Nadeau (US) created a shortcut, Vincent Chevalier (CA) walked the red carpet, Erik Mavric (SL) warned about slippery surfaces and Rachel Henson (UK) led the audience through the magical Puijo forest.

On Thursday evening, Tähtitorninmäki observatory was filled with a large audience who came to admire Andrew Whall's (UK) skillful bouldering in *Blocart*. Members of the public in Kuopio, Nilsia and Siilinjärvi were delighted by the appearances of Cindy Baker's (CA) giant mascot. Sarah Ross (US) and her work *Archsuit* challenged the audience to look at their familiar urban environment from a different angle. The all-familiar grocery shop was revealed in a new light in Rotozaza-group's (UK) work *Wondermart*. Feasts for all senses were furthermore on offer in *Streams*, by Flow Productions (FIN) & Riato Fabrik Nomade -group (FR) at the ball room of Town Hall on Friday night and in Tom Marshman's (UK) *Sentimental journey* at the perfume section of a department store.

Many unforgettable and stunning moments were experienced in the performances of La Pocha Nostra – (US/Mexico/FIN) at the airport, Sokos underpass, at Musiikkikeskus performance hall and the train station. Audience members were invited to join in these performances. Essi Kausalainen (FIN)

produced a performance installation entitled *Kasvihuone (Green house)*, which moved the visitors to the lobby of Valkeinen hospital. Endurance was tested by Adele Prince's (UK) work *Daily Commute* and BodyCartography Project (US/NZ/FIN) brought dancers to the streets of Kuopio, delighting the local residents.

Kuopio people were gripped by a local group of artists KuvanNaiset, with their work *Walk of Fame*, where enthusiastic fans would scream and applaud at locals who walked the red carpet. Everyone was invited to take part in creating a sound work called *Traipsing(ing)* with Alexis O'Hara's (CA), and to join with Regin Igloria (US) on a performance hike to Puijo. The audience also had the opportunity to experience what it's like to be guided by the wind, as they took part in Tim Knowles' (UK) performance *Live Windwalks*. Alternatively, they could become acquainted with the virtual *SLaaristokaupunki*, in Stephen Hodge's (UK) work. Gwendoline Robin (BE) attracted a large audience for her poetic and visual performances at the harbour market place. Robin used pyrotechnics in her works and in the performance created in the children's workshops. ANTI – Contemporary Art Festival culminated on Sunday 27th September, when fireworks and children's imaginative sculptures were combined to create a spectacular finale for the festival.

During ANTI-festival a substantial number of local people had surprise encounters with the works, and hundreds made advance bookings. Unfortunately due to the demand and the high number of performances requiring a reservation, the booking system was at times oversubscribed. In the future, measures will be taken to improve the system.

The artists of ANTI – Contemporary Art Festival have continued processing their work even after the event. Daniel Gosling (UK) created an audio work of all the material he recorded during his walk performance. This can be accessed and downloaded online at www.antifestival.com, where you will also find links to *Walk The Line* by Antti Laitinen (FIN) and *Hajek a Porcal*, a Geogatching work by Lukáš Hájekin and Zdeněk Porcal (SL).

ANTI – Contemporary Art Festival would like to thank the audience, the artists, supporters and all the volunteers for making the 2009 festival happen. We would like to welcome all Kuopio people to next year's festival on 29th September to 3rd October 2010.

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