

**Outi Martikainen, Paradise Tramps, May 29, 2015 - August 30, 2015  
Museum of Central Finland, Jyväskylä, Finland**

The title *Paradise Tramps* of Outi Martikainen's textile art exhibition refers to Astrid Lindgren's story called *Rasmus and the Vagabond*. An orphan little boy makes friends with a tramp, and together they continue wandering around and looking for the dream home for Rasmus. Just like in this story, every child needs a loving person next to him. There is not a more important time in life as is the early childhood, which impacts strongly for the rest of the life. During those years one builds up the respect for peace, nature and humanity.

The textile works by Outi Martikainen are based on photographs, which she has elaborated for models and then weaved with digital jacquard loom. The pictures are built by combining weave structures and four different braided polypropylene cords, which Martikainen has also designed herself.

Outi Martikainen became interested in jacquard technique already while studying at the university. She wanted to move towards a more pictorial and diverse expression and detach herself from the limitations of the traditional weaving looms.

Do we picture us in these happy moments of children and pets? Do they make us recollect the child in ourselves? "Last winter in Jyväskylä, I was following the familiar houses and streets of my old school way and feeling happy to sense the eight-year-old Outi inside me, walking in freezing early-morning weather through the city to school. Or sensing the even smaller Outi years before on mother's kicksled to MäkiMatti day-care, feeling her warm breath on my cheek and her sheltering arms."

Many children of the 50's recognize *Pepita*, the elephant who toured around the country with Suomen Tivoli. At the time circus was a shelter to these *Paradise Tramps*, since the world was still very homogeneous, and diversity was tolerated only on circus arenas. The colors of the work are based on the every fall's simple school set – the pencil, eraser and blue-red pencil. The whole color scale of the exhibition refers to the faded and soft tones of Finnish rag rugs. These almost disappeared colors are part of the Finnish cultural history, of that time when all material was used cleverly to its very end.

Outi Martikainen has graduated as a textile artist from the University of Art and Design Helsinki (now Aalto University) in 1999. She was nominated The Textile Artist of the Year by Textile Artist TEXO in 2006 for her pioneering cooperation with architects, of which to mention the facades of the headquarters of KONE and Finnish National Board of Education. Martikainen lives and works in Helsinki, but she has spent her childhood and youth in Jyväskylä. These memories are reflected on her works of lake views, the presence of nature, and the rally car in the work *Fraternity*, "think about father's happiness, when in the 50's he drove his fancy French car in the middle of Finnish rural landscape".

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Pictures by request.