

THE HELSINKI
SCHOOL OF
PHOTOGRAPHY

By Miguel Bermudez

Most people are unaware of the power of contemplation. It is an intensely personal experience of self-awareness and introspection. Moreover, most religions in the world consider contemplation as a central part of communication with the creator. Photographs from the Helsinki School of Photography provide us with a contemplative experience, and the resulting appeal is spreading through many cultures. In a planet where nature is showing humanity its displeasure with the relentless abuse inflicted by its inhabitants, we find the tranquility and enigmatic power of contemplation in the work of these talented photographers.

100 hectares. 2015
Jaakko Kahilaniemi © All rights reserved.



Vertical wave.
Mikko Rikala © All rights reserved.

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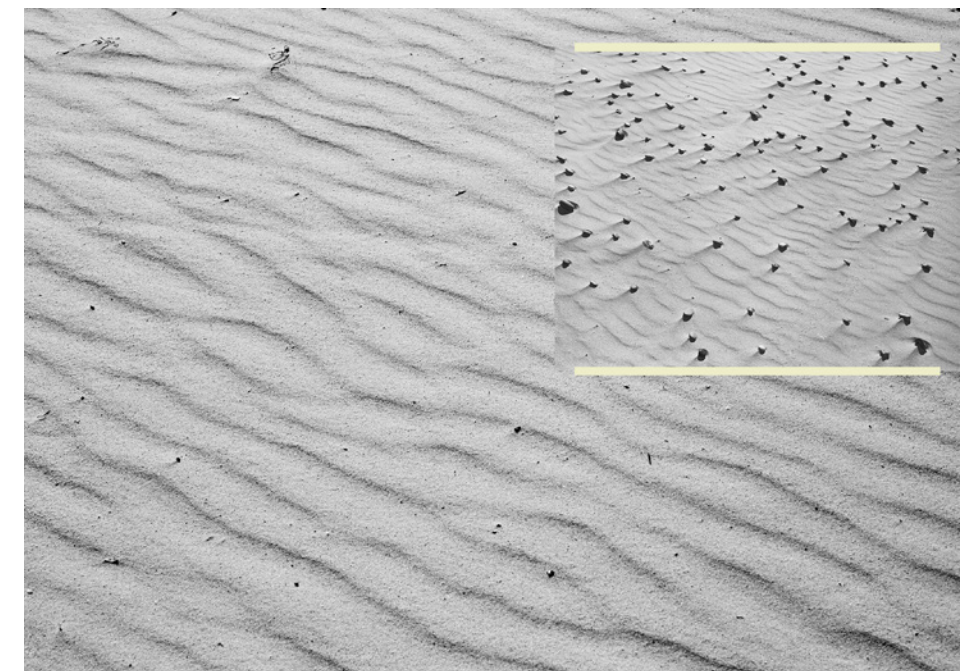
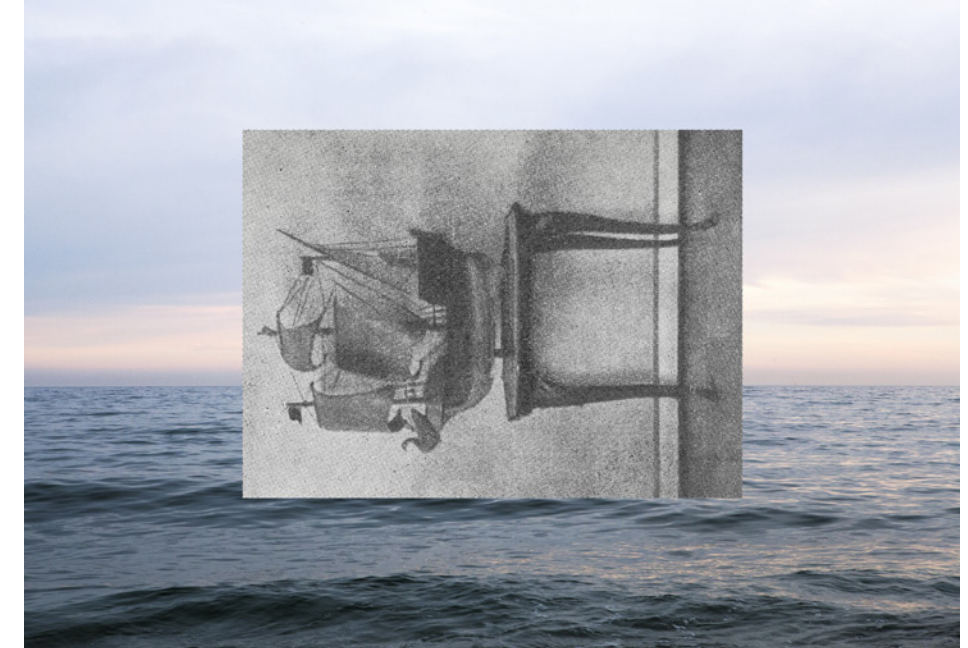
This school was born as a new educational program at the University of Art & Design Helsinki in the 1990s. It placed tremendous importance on collaboration. One could say that it can trace its roots to the work of John Baldessari, whose conceptual art demonstrated and, in many cases, combined the narrative potential of images and the associative power of language within the boundaries of work of art. (1)

It was Baldessari's initial concept that influenced Timothy Persons. Persons, having studied in California with Baldessari, was named adjunct professor of the newly formed program at the University of Helsinki. One can also find the influence of Donald Judd underpinning the work of these photographers. Judd's central theme of "seeking autonomy and clarity for the constructed object and the space created by it, ultimately achieving a rigorously democratic presentation without compositional hierarchy" (2). Whichever its origins, these artists have tapped into a hunger for simplicity and observation of nature through a very particular set of parameters.

Top Right: Niina Vatanen, Shipwreck , 2021
From the series Time Atlas
Archival pigment print
43 x 60 cm
© the artist, courtesy: Persons Projects |
Helsinki School

Right Middle: Edge of Europe. (South)
Mikko Rikala © All rights reserved.

Right Bottom: Revealed by wind
Mikko Rikala © All rights reserved.





Riitta Päiväläinen, Ferns, 2019
From the series Shelter
Archival pigment print
155 x 120 cm
© the artist, courtesy: Persons
Projects | Helsinki School



Top: Sanna Kannisto, Journey 1, 2019
archival pigment ink print
32 x 40 cm
© the artist, courtesy: Persons Projects |
Helsinki School

Jaakko Kahilaniemi, Flow over Flow, 2020
From the series Nature Like Capital
Pigment Print, sprayed light grey circle on glass, framed
65 x 86 cm
© the artist, courtesy: Persons Projects | Helsinki School

These photographs have found surprising and powerful allies in societies ravaged by war, cultural upheaval, and an unknown path of the future. Yet, some see the serenity of the landscape as lonely, the soft light of the northern hemisphere; the simplicity of their composition; and the respectful collaboration with nature that we find intriguing. We call it all 'contemplation.' The photographers, perhaps, unaware of what the world is so urgently seeking - serenity and peace with nature and within ourselves- have created a movement that is finding a niche in many different cultures and places of the world.

There have been, and there are many gifted photographers around the world that portray nature, life, and observation. Still, they seem to lack the collective appeal and set of circumstances that have made the Helsinki school what it is today. What we believe to be its powerful appeal is the mixture of solitude, observation, simplicity, the softness of light found in the northern hemisphere, its landscapes, and the fact that the viewer seems to look at nature at a distance, with respect and intrigue.



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Top: Plage de Sebald 3. diptych.
Elina Brotherus © All rights reserved.

Left: Villa Empain. Fenetre aux tuyas.
Elina Brotherus © All rights reserved.

Right Page: Seabound two nights in a row.
Elina Brotherus © All rights reserved.



Even when some man-made objects are included in some of these photographs, they appear as simple guests that will eventually leave the scene. These photographers remind us of the transient nature of those objects where nature plays the role of a host, just for a brief period.

As we become more aware of the damage we inflict upon nature, these artists bring us a message of calmness and serenity that trees, water, animals, and the overall natural world want to continue sharing with us.

Meb3



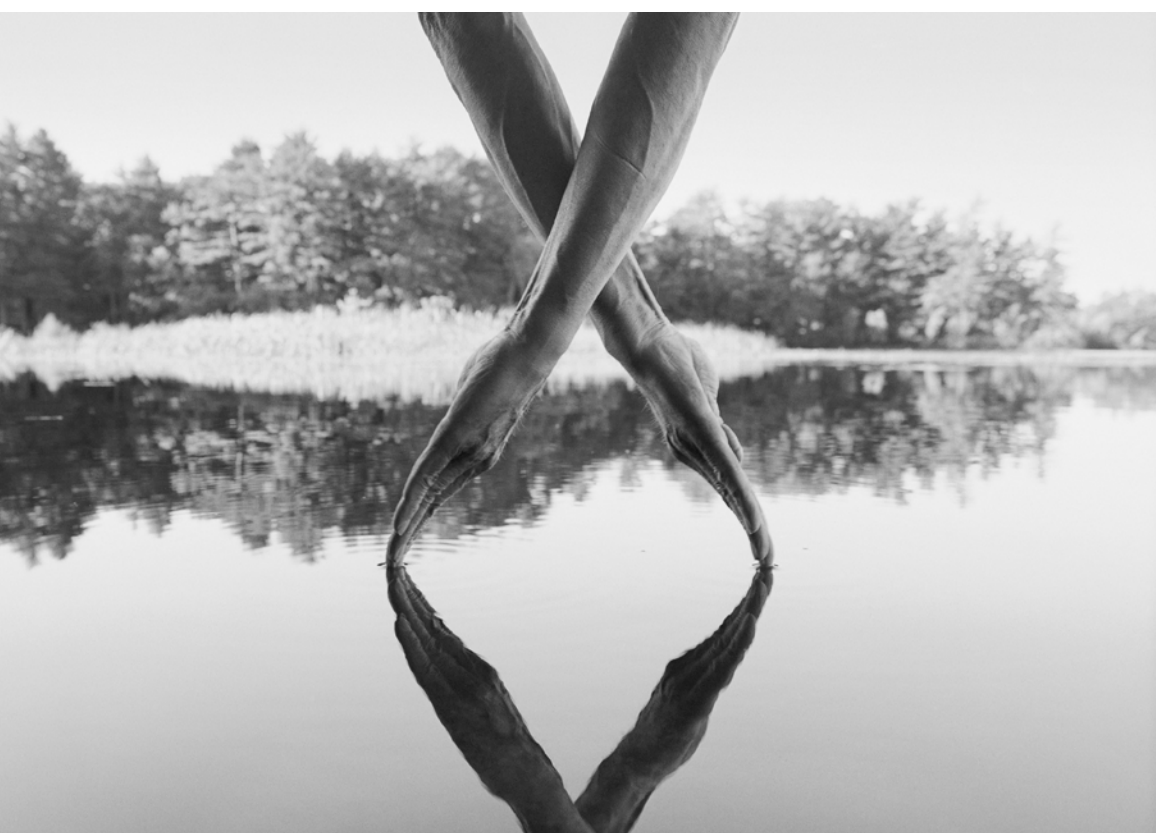
Tiina Itkonen, Isortoq, 2017
From the series Piniartoq
Archival pigment print
80 x 120 cm
© the artist, courtesy: Persons Projects |
Helsinki School



Santeri Tuori, Water Lilies
#14, 2020
Pigment print
160,5 x 219 cm
© the artist, courtesy:
Persons Projects | Helsinki
School



Ville Lenkkeri, The Sacrifice Of A Sacred Tree, 2013
From the series The Petrified Forest
Pigment print 42 x 52,5 cm
© the artist, courtesy: Persons Projects | Helsinki School



(1) Hohmeyer, Boris. "Aufbruch in hohen Norden". Art. Das Kunstmagazin. 09/03.
(2) Chilvers, Ian & Graves-Smith, John eds., Dictionary of Modern and Contemporary Art. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2009.
(3) "About. Persons Projects". 21 July 2020.
(4) Alistair Hicks. The Helsinki School Vol.5 p 22.

Our thanks to Elina Brotherus, Leonie Willmann of Persons Projects, and Mikko Rikala for all their help.

Left Page: Arno Rafael Minkinen, 10.10.10 Fosters Pond, 2010
Archival inkjet print
50 x 60 cm
© the artist, courtesy: Persons Projects | Helsinki School



Left: Eeva Karhu, En plein air, Summer 3, 2021
Archival pigment print
120 x 180 cm
© the artist, courtesy: Persons Projects | Helsinki School



Sandra Kantanen, Untitled
(Forest 17, 18 and 14), 2019
Pigment print
117 x 97 cm
© the artist, courtesy: Persons
Projects | Helsinki School



Jorma Puranen, Icy Prospects
#69, 2018
Pigment print
160 x 201 cm
© the artist, courtesy: Persons
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MEB3 Absorbing Art

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“ I have attended most major art and antiques shows in the United States and Europe including The New York Winter Show at the Armory, The Chelsea Show in London, Le Biennale de Paris, The European Fine Art Fair (TEFAF) in Maastricht and antiques shows in Zurich, Vienna, Munich, Prague, Milan, Geneva and Basel. I frequently participate in auctions in London, Amsterdam, Vienna, Copenhagen, New York, San Francisco, Paris, Munich, Berlin and Milan and have published academic articles and contributed research to The Orders & Medals Research Society of Great Britain, The Vatican Secret Archives, The Chancellery of the Order of the Thistle in Scotland, Sotheby's Orders and Medals, The Chancellery of the Orders of Knighthood of the Kingdom of the Netherlands and many others. My experience providing research, acquisition and sales of important Italian and Spanish eighteen century antiques to galleries in the United States has given me the opportunity to develop direct contact experience with collectors, interior designers, architects, fine art galleries and museums. I bring my international business experience to the Fine Art world.



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