

## **IC-98 (Visa Suonpää and Patrik Söderlund)**

*Finland*

### **House of Khronos**

2016–

*site-specific intervention (abandoned farm, fence, time, application and decision-making processes)*

Pöytyä, Finland

commissioned by Lönnström Art Museum

*House of Khronos* is a long-duration project based on the disused Päivölä farm in Pöytyä, Finland. The property, consisting of 2,000 m<sup>2</sup> of land and five buildings enclosed by a gateless fence, has been left to be claimed by nature. The project sets out to make visible the passage of time, seeks to offer protection to nature and culture as a mutually inclusive pair and investigates issues of ownership and environmental exploitation.

The property was bought in 2016, donated to the municipality of Pöytyä and thoroughly documented before being gated. Geological, archaeological, ornithological, vegetation, building and historic landscape surveys were carried out to collect material evidence to back the main argument of the project – that any given stretch of land has enough biodiversity and thus inherent value to be removed from excessive human use and ownership and to be returned to the planet itself.

After the material first phase of the project, the second part commenced. The municipality of Pöytyä was now contractually bound by the terms set in the contract to both prohibit humans from accessing and interacting with the property and the processes taking place within it, and to seek further protections and safeguards under local and national legislation to fulfil this objective.

The first step was to start a process to preserve the property under the Act on the Protection of Buildings, which involves working with a number of public authorities, including the Centre for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment and the Finnish Heritage Agency.

The purpose of the *House of Khronos* is to reposition the project, which initially began as an artistic endeavour, into the realm of bureaucracy and political decision-making. This would allow the questions posed through the project to be placed in the context of official applications, statements and licensing and permit processes.

In the coming years, *House of Khronos* will have a life not only in Pöytyä but across myriad official documents.

**IC-98 et. al.**

## **Raa'anhaava Park of Wounded Earth**

2020–

landscape park (hiking trail, architectural interventions, phytoremediation)  
Kemijärvi, Finland

*Raa'anhaava was once Misi-Raaka,<sup>9</sup> untouched by name, then Raajärvi mine of raw materials. It was always full of life, even when things died and gave birth to something new. The same humans worked the land, dug deeper, extracted some value. It was never really abandoned, not even after the time of the mine. Birch, pine with the symbiotic fungi, reindeer, foragers, offroad-drivers, divers, generations of hares, swallows, swans and mosquitos, those who stayed or had always been or found their way there. They found themselves – founded – a sanctuary, not through conquest but through shared if not coordinated interest.*

*This new community thriving in and on the wounded earth was already there when we had the idea of re-founding it as a temple. More of an incantation than a place, actually, a temenos but without borders demarcating the clean and the unclean. Carefully, we planted ideas, thoughts, gestures, seeds of possible future institutions in the seams of this multiplicity, this patchwork of vibrant life. Never replacing or covering but adding, grafting our well-meaning things into this constant growth, ages old and always new.*

We have worked on a plan for *Raa'anhaava Park of Wounded Earth* in the abandoned Raajärvi iron mine in Kemijärvi, Finland since 2020. If implemented, the park would become a place for witnessing the wound, which we have inflicted on Earth. It is simultaneously a critique of extractive capitalism, a mode of convivial nature conservation, community building and above all a place where complex, politically polarizing questions could be treated on the basis of embodied and situated experience. It is a glimpse beyond the false promises of the green leap.

The Park is fashioned as a trail running through the disturbed landscape of the former mining area. The journey is based on the liminal logic of separation, transition and integration. Entering the park, the visitor faces the scars mining leaves on the environment. Then comes the move towards the new ecosystem thriving in the environment altered by humans, composed of a multitude of lifeforms. The scale changes, we learn to listen to complex life worlds around and inside us. We admit our responsibility for the wound, find concrete methods of repair and, having seen the horror

---

<sup>9</sup> Finnish 'raaka' means raw and untouched; raw material is 'raaka-aine'; Raa'anhaava is a play of words with local geographical name 'Raa'anvaara', replacing 'vaara' (hill) with 'haava' (wound). Thus, Raa'anvaara ('untouched hill') and Raajärvi ('untouched lake') are renamed 'wounded, untouched, raw Earth'.

and beauty of a new world, return from the Park as members of a strengthened more-than-human community.

Not only an attempt at re-enchantment, the park is at the heart of currently negotiated futures as Global North has opted for a techno-scientific fix to climate crisis by replacing fossil fuels with green electricity to power the current system. To power green technologies, we need increasing amounts of Rare Earth Elements at a time when recent geopolitical shifts force EU to guarantee self-sufficiency on critical minerals. Extraction moves to our own backyard, but not due to global justice. In the critical Arctic context, *Raa'anhaava* asserts itself as the mirror of e.g., Kiruna and Sokli mines, which carry high hopes of extracting REE minerals.

Our project critiques this continued extractivism without seeking to completely abolish it. The park aims to be something of a space of arbitration. If we as a society essentially plan to go on as we have for the past 500 years, it is necessary at the very least to build a new spiritual understanding of debt, responsibility and mutual care.

As the amount of mines in Finland and the Northern Periphery will increase, there will be an urgent need for an act of crystallization and reflection. A need for a 'mining community church', a temple, a ting. It is irrelevant to ask about the Gods worshipped. In the temple, the community worships itself, here and now. *Raa'anhaava* is the temple for the new mines.

\* \* \*

In relation to the *House of Khronos*, *Raa'anhaava* is a step forward – or perhaps a different perspective – on the issue of human use of land and resources. *House of Khronos* can be seen as an example of a sort of rewilding or now mainstream conservation logic, where human activity will be minimized. *Raa'anhaava*, on the other hand, operates on the convivial conservation and new ecosystems thinking, emphasizing the continuous entanglement of agents over time and space.



*House of Khronos, 2016–*



*Raa'anhaava Park of Wounded Earth*, 2020–, illustration for a forthcoming publication

Photos (c) IC-98