

Shelter - A Stratified Meeting Place (2002)

Throughout the ages, women have decorated, built and created the spirit of the home. Yet, eighty percent of world's refugees are women and girls without a home, a tent their only shelter. This situation moved Kaija Kiuru to reflect on the meaning of forced and voluntary homelessness, and, on the other hand, the freedom to move and feel at home in any place. The artist moves because of the nature of her work and always builds a "home" in the new exhibition space, the work of art.

Kammio (Chamber 2002) is built from hand-knitted lace and is an extremely feminine and private shelter. In many cultures, a woman's value is judged by her skills in handcraft, and it is only after a girl has learnt these skills that she enters the world of cultural meanings. The thousands of hours of work that were needed to make *Kammio* show the whole range of women's everyday yet concealed world: pains from growing up, love, the joy of motherhood, quarrels, violence, shame, escape, giving up what is important, and the empty arms of an old woman. Even though it is as fragile and light as a breath, this breast-shaped shelter can be taken on a journey for protection.

The starting point for *Majakka* (Lighthouse 2002) is its shape, which refers to home and stopping as well as waiting and longing. The lighthouse guides travelers with its light and provides them with shelter. The work is as beautiful as an ornament. The light from inside flows through the names of ships that have been cut into its walls, as if the lived lives they stand for would seep through. The memory and memories become interwoven with visual tensions. They give meaning and sense to life. It is a symbolic space which has a relationship to the history and world of experiences of the community and individual.

The meaning of space is physical; it includes smell, touch and sound. The Kaija Kiuru's shelters are empty and silent mental spaces which bring longing and nostalgia. The shelters are only suggestive and that is why they are without cultural meanings. Lived lives are reflected in the shelters' recycled materials such as army surplus blankets and old lace tablecloths, as well as in the artist's craft that has gone into connecting the parts. With its many dimensions and remoteness, the open and transparent space creates a closeness.

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