




September 7 – December 1, 2024
Finnish Pavilion at the 15th Gwangju Biennale

- Title *Acts of Care*
- Period Feb 22nd (Saturday), 2025 - April 26th (Saturday), 2025
- Artists Maija Tammi, Hertta Kiiski, Nayab Noor Ikram, Sampsa Virkajärvi
- Curated by Kati Kivinen (Chief Curator, HAM Helsinki Art Museum)
Pirkko Siitari (Independent Curator / Former Chief Curator, HAM Helsinki Art Museum / Former Director and Chief Curator for Collections, Museum of Contemporary Art Helsinki)
- Venues KANA KAWANISHI GALLERY 4-7-6 Shirakawa, Koto-ku, Tokyo
KANA KAWANISHI PHOTOGRAPHY 2-7-5-5F, Nishiazabu, Minato-ku, Tokyo
- Organizer Kana Kawanishi Art Office LLC.
- Support  Finnish Institute in Japan
フィンランドセンター
- Grant Support  Funded by the European Union
NextGenerationEU

Special Thanks: Anna-Maria Wiljanen

 *Creating a Cultural Roadmap
Towards Responsible
International Mobility*



KANA KAWANISHI ART OFFICE LLC. is pleased to present the exhibition *Acts of Care*, which will take place in three phases from February 22 (Saturday) to April 26 (Saturday), 2025, at KANA KAWANISHI PHOTOGRAPHY in Nishi-Azabu and KANA KAWANISHI GALLERY in Kiyosumi-Shirakawa.

This exhibition is based on the show curated by Kati Kivinen (Head of Exhibitions, HAM Helsinki Art Museum) and Pirkko Siitari (Independent Curator, former Head of Exhibitions, HAM Helsinki Art Museum, former Director and Chief Curator for Collections, Museum of Contemporary Art Kiasma) for the Finnish Pavilion at the 15th Gwangju Biennale. The Japan edition will feature new site-specific installations by selected artists.

The curators, Kivinen and Siitari, pointed out how “Caring also involves the ability to feel affection” and quoted the Polish author Olga Tokarczuk at the 2018 Nobel Prize in Literature ceremony on the role of the writer as a tender narrator in the following way:

“Tenderness is the most modest form of love. It is the kind of love that does not appear in the scriptures or the gospels, no one swears by it, and no one cites it. It has no special emblems or symbols, nor does it lead to crime or prompt envy. It appears wherever we take a close and careful look at another being, at something that is not our ‘self.’”

Tenderness is spontaneous and disinterested; it goes far beyond empathetic fellow feeling. Instead, it is the conscious, though perhaps slightly melancholy, common sharing of fate.

Tenderness is deep emotional concern about another being, its fragility, its unique nature, and its lack of immunity to suffering and the effects of time.

Tenderness perceives the bonds that connect us, the similarities and sameness between us. It is a way of looking that shows the world as being alive, living, interconnected, cooperating with, and codependent on itself.

■ Please contact below for any image enquiries ■

Similarly, the artists of *Acts of Care* take on the role of creators of tender narratives connected to care. Through their stories, they invite us to join them in empathy and the conditions emerging from it that shape the emotional landscape of our lives. Underlying it all are acts and gestures of care, often quite imperceptible, but of paramount importance: touch, eye contact, tone of voice, and support.”

(Excerpt from the [release text](#) of “Acts of Care” at the 15th Gwangju Biennale Finnish Pavilion)

Finland has the oldest population among Nordic nations and holds the sixth-highest aging rate globally at 23.58% in 2023. Despite this, it has topped the United Nations World Happiness Report for seven straight years since 2018. Conversely, Japan has the second-highest aging rate worldwide at 29.3% in 2024 and typically ranks near the bottom in happiness, landing 51st in the UN report for 2024. This illustrates a significant difference in how aging societies pursue happiness.

The mutual care between children and parents, where they fulfill their roles within their community and share their lives, is a universal phenomenon among all living beings. In our current society, where the demand for care is rising due to severe climate challenges and political unrest, how will the realities we face connect with artistic endeavors that inspire our imagination?

Through this exhibition, which has evolved from its presentation in Gwangju to Tokyo, we invite you to experience the diverse expressions of Finland-based artists—tender narrators—as they reweave their narratives in a new cultural context.

The event is supported by The Finnish Institute in Japan as part of the pARTir initiative funded by the European Union - NextGenerationEU.

■Please contact below for any image enquiries■

Exhibition 1: Maija Tammi “Octomom”

- Period Feb 22nd (Saturday), 2025 - March 29th (Saturday), 2025
- Venue KANA KAWANISHI PHOTOGRAPHY
2-7-5-5F, Nishiazabu, Minato-ku, Tokyo 106-0031 / Tel: +81 3 5843 9128
- Hours Wed-Sat 13:00-18:00 (closed on Sun, Mon, Tue, and National Holidays)
March 14 and March 15: Open until 20:00 due to participation in GAIEN-NISHI ART WEEKEND 2025
- Production cooperation (Japanese Narration): Yo Harding



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The event is supported by The Finnish Institute in Japan as part of the pARTir initiative funded by the European Union - NextGenerationEU.

Opening Reception: February 22 (Saturday), 2025 17:00-18:00
Performance by: [Charles Quevillon](#) (Special Guest: [Yo Harding](#))



Octomom (detail)
2021–2023

© Maija Tammi, courtesy KANA KAWANISHI GALLERY

As the first *Acts of Care* exhibition, KANA KAWANISHI PHOTOGRAPHY will present Maija Tammi’s solo exhibition “Octomom” starting February 22, 2025.

Maija Tammi (b. 1985) is a Finnish artist and Doctor of Arts, whose practice is characterized by the desire to find the underlying cause of things. She often collaborates with scientists and other artists to create artworks that confront, surprise and provoke feelings. This is Tammi’s second solo exhibition at our gallery, the first one was “White Rabbit Fever” in 2017.

“Octomom” is an installation that consists of three elements: an audio story, a video projected onto sand, and a portrait of a mother with her new-born. The work revolves around a deep-sea octopus whom the scientists named “Octomom”. Octomom brooded her eggs in the depth of 1397 meters for 53 months (4 years and 7 months), which is the world record for the longest brooding period.

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“The last common ancestor of octopuses and humans was probably a wormlike creature with eye spots that lived 750 million years ago. Since then, both have evolved into intelligent species, but very differently. The octopus is the only creature to have three-quarters of its brain in its eight arms. It is like something from another planet, while still very similar to us.

In *Octomom*, octopus, human, and time intertwine. The installation combines video footage of *Octomom*, an audio story about the octopus’s brooding period, and a self-portrait of the artist with her newborn child. The octopus (*Graneledone boreopacifica*), which researchers named *Octomom*, brooded her eggs for 53 months in the Monterey Canyon in the Pacific Ocean, which is the longest known brooding period in the world. A robot submarine from the Monterey Bay Aquarium Research Institute visited *Octomom* a total of 18 times. The work includes footage filmed by the robot, edited by the artist.

In her recent works, Maija Tammi has explored how we learn to feel and how we understand the meanings of emotions. Although we can never truly know what it would be like to be an octopus, we can still toy with the idea. We can try to understand and at the same time possibly develop our feelings towards other species. *Octomom* proposes sharing the experience of motherhood with an individual from another species, and asks us what empathy really is.”

(Excerpt from the [release text](#) of “*Octomom*,” a solo exhibition by Maija Tammi, Turku Art Museum)

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First shown in a solo exhibition at the Finnish Museum of Photography (2023), followed by a solo exhibition at the Turku Art Museum (2024) and presentation in the Finnish Pavilion at the Gwangju Biennale (2024), we cordially invite all to Maija Tammi’s installation *Octomom* now being presented in Japan for the first time.

Maija Tammi

Maija Tammi (b. 1985) is a Finnish artist and Doctor of Arts, whose photographs and videos examine the liminal areas of mortality and immortality, science and art. She regularly collaborates with scientists and musicians.

Tammi is known for her radical storytelling through the medium of video, photography, and installations. She uses stories in different modalities to highlight some of the central themes and concerns of society – engaging a playful approach which could be called speculative poetics.

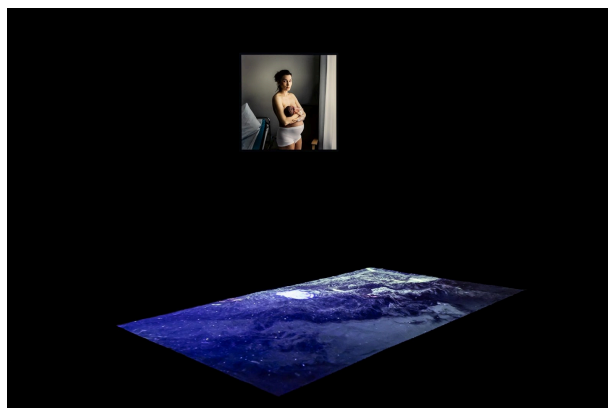
Tammi’s work has been exhibited internationally, among others in Paris, Berlin, Rome, London, New York, and Tokyo, and she has five published books. Tammi’s artworks are for example in the collections of the Museum of Contemporary Photography in Chicago, USA, Contemporary Art Museum Kiasma in Helsinki, Finland, and the National Portrait Gallery in London, UK. Her next solo exhibition is scheduled at Photo Museum Ireland in the fall of 2025.

■Please contact below for any image enquiries■



Octomom (installation view)
2021–2023

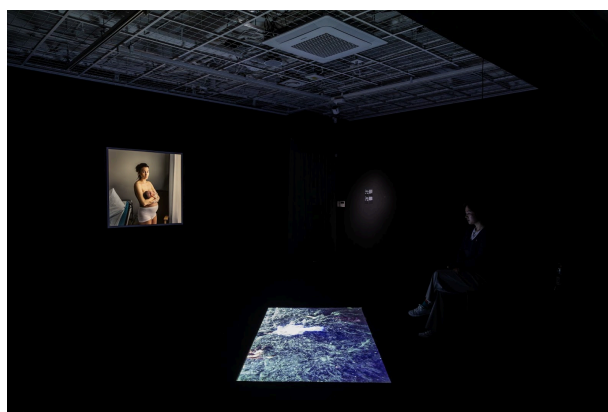
© Maija Tammi courtesy KANA KAWANISHI GALLERY, photo by Janne Riikonen



Octomom (installation view)
2021–2023

© Maija Tammi

courtesy Gwangju Biennale Foundation/KANA KAWANISHI GALLERY
photo by Studio Possible Zone



Octomom (installation view)
2021–2023

© Maija Tammi

courtesy Gwangju Biennale Foundation/KANA KAWANISHI GALLERY
photo by Studio Possible Zone

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Exhibition 2: Hertta Kiiski “Plasticenta”

- Period Mar 22nd (Saturday), 2025 - April 26th (Saturday), 2025
- Venue KANA KAWANISHI GALLERY
4-7-6 Shirakawa, Koto-ku, Tokyo 135-0021 JAPAN / Tel: +81 3 5843 9128
- Hours Wed-Sat 13:00-18:00 (closed on Suns, Mon, Tue, and National Holidays)

*March 28 (Friday): The gallery will participate in “Seeing Sound, Hearing Time Day,” a community-associated event of the exhibition “Seeing Sound, Hearing Time: Ryuichi Sakamoto” by the Museum of Contemporary Art Tokyo [MOT]. [>>Details](#)



The event is supported by The Finnish Institute in Japan as part of the pARTir initiative funded by the European Union - NextGenerationEU.

Opening Reception: March 22 (Saturday), 2025 17:00-18:00



Hydra (video still)

2022 | video | 7'40" HD, 16:9, edition of 3

©Hertta Kiiski, courtesy KANA KAWANISHI GALLERY

In the second phase of *Acts of Care*, KANA KAWANISHI GALLERY will present Hertta Kiiski’s solo exhibition “Plasticenta” starting March 22, 2025.

The exhibition, titled “Plasticenta,” merges the words “plastic” and “placenta,” drawing inspiration from a [recent study](#) that discovered microplastic particles in human placenta. Kiiski, renowned for her immersive mixed-media installations that incorporate photography, examines our intricate relationship with the earth and our coexistence with other species and the environment.

■Please contact below for any image enquiries■

“Plasticenta imagines an alternative future, in which all life forms on the planet mingle with each other in harmony, with dreams of new alliances between species, transforming existing hierarchies. The work depicts a new kinship between the human and the inhuman, the organic and the inorganic, the animate and inanimate.”

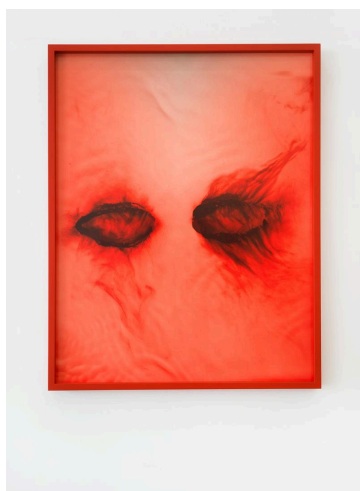
(Excerpt from the exhibition release text for “[Plasticenta](#),” NOON Projects, Los Angeles, USA)

Kiiski has collaborated with her two daughters on various projects for over a decade, including the series *Plasticenta* and the video work *Hydra*, both of which will be showcased in this exhibition. The work *Hydra* explores the bond of love and friendship between two girls and the immortal polyp known as ‘Hydra,’ discovered on a remote island. It stimulates viewers’ imagination, bridging the abstract and the figurative, with a score created by [Lau Nau](#). Additionally, the exhibition will feature a site-specific installation made from textiles that Kiiski found during her stay in Tokyo.

Combining photography, video, textiles, and installations centered around youth and love, enriched with magical, mythical, and esoteric elements, we cordially invite everyone to the inaugural exhibit of Herta Kiiski’s artwork in Japan.



Roots and feet
2022 | archival pigment print
on Hahnemühle Fine Art Baryta Satin 300gsm
©Herta Kiiski
courtesy KANA KAWANISHI GALLERY



Watery Eyes
2022 | archival pigment print
on Hahnemühle Fine Art Baryta Satin 300gsm
©Herta Kiiski
courtesy KANA KAWANISHI GALLERY



Friends forever
2022 | archival pigment print
on Hahnemühle Fine Art Baryta Satin 300gsm
©Herta Kiiski
courtesy KANA KAWANISHI GALLERY

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*Family*

2022 | archival pigment print
on Hahnemühle Fine Art Baryta Satin 300gsm
©Hertta Kiiski
courtesy KANA KAWANISHI GALLERY

*Cloud*

2022 | archival pigment print
on Hahnemühle Fine Art Baryta Satin 300gsm
©Hertta Kiiski
courtesy KANA KAWANISHI GALLERY

*Tomato daughters*

2022 | archival pigment print
on Hahnemühle Fine Art Baryta Satin 300gsm
©Hertta Kiiski
courtesy KANA KAWANISHI GALLERY

*Plasticenta Altar*

[From left to right. Drape Psyche, Drape Entropy, Altarpiece Void, Altarpiece Intimacy, Altarpiece Love]
2022 | mixed media | dimensions variable
©Hertta Kiiski, courtesy NOON Projects

Hertta Kiiski

Hertta Kiiski's works dream of a new affinity between the human and the inhuman, the organic and the inorganic, transforming existing hierarchies. Her photographs, videos, textiles, and installations exist in a framework of youth and love with aspects of the magical, the mythical, and the esoteric. Like youth itself, Kiiski's work inhabits a precarious state between daydreaming and unrest. While she weaves fabulous realities, many of her works are made in collaboration with her dogs and her daughters.

Hertta Kiiski works and lives in Turku, Finland. She earned an M.F.A from the Finnish Academy of Fine Arts (2015) and a B.A in Photography from the Turku Arts Academy (2012). Her work is presented in galleries and museums internationally and in Finland. Three works have been published by Kehrer Verlag (Germany).

■Please contact below for any image enquiries■

Exhibition 3: Nayab Noor Ikram, Sampsa Virkajärvi “Families”

- Period Apr 5th (Saturday), 2025 - Apr 26th (Saturday), 2025
- Venue KANA KAWANISHI PHOTOGRAPHY
2-7-5-5F, Nishiazabu, Minato-ku, Tokyo 106-0031 / Tel: +81 3 5843 9128
- Hours Wed-Sat 13:00-18:00 (closed on Suns, Mon, Tue, and National Holidays)



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The event is supported by The Finnish Institute in Japan as part of the pARTir initiative funded by the European Union - NextGenerationEU.

Opening Reception: April 5th (Saturday), 2025 17:00-18:00 [tentative]



The Family
(16mm film still from performance)
2022
©Nayab Noor Ikram

For the final phase of *Acts of Care*, KANA KAWANISHI PHOTOGRAPHY will present an exhibition by two artists, Nayab Noor Ikram, and Sampsa Virkajärvi, titled “Families” starting April 5, 2025.

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Nayab Noor Ikram is a Finland-based visual artist and photographer of the Pakistani diaspora from the Åland Islands. In her artistic practice, Ikram engages with moving images, photography, performances, and installations, exploring concepts related to the feeling of in-betweenness, cultural identity, and memory through rituals and symbolism.

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The Family, a two-channel video installation featured in this exhibition, captures the performance of the artist and her family. Set against the backdrop of a stunning sunset, the mother ritualistically begins to wash the artist's hair. While their elongated voices evoke nostalgia reminiscent of a childhood call and seem to resonate with each viewer's roots, this improvisation fosters communication that elicits the tensions, emotions, and memories within each family member, prompting us to reflect on the creation and inheritance of traditions and rituals.

* * *

The other artist, **Sampsa Virkajärvi**, is a visual artist and documentary filmmaker interested in time and change and society, as well as in individual choices and the impossibilities of making them. This exhibition will feature two video works by Virkajärvi.

In *What Remains?*, the artist portrays the final years of his mother, who suffers from dementia, in her home, illustrating how time and place shift as the disease advances. How many homes does she inhabit at once? The work also seeks to depict some of the challenges that aging individuals and their caregivers face when she does not remember, see, or understand.

The other work, *With You*, is a nonfiction piece about his father, documented by the artist until the father took his last breath. His father, who was once the pillar of the family as a pilot, spends almost all day in bed during his final years. Although his father was quite different from the artist in many ways—including the societies they grew up in, their careers, and even their personalities—the artist expresses deep respect for his father while revealing quiet, mixed feelings, concluding with the following words: “Of your 80 years, we spent 18 together. (...) We may not have spent enough time together.”



What Remains? (video still)

2018 | video | 22'32"

©Sampsa Virkajärvi

■Please contact below for any image enquiries■



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Every person, creature, and life has a parent who passed down its genes. In our fast-paced lives, we often turn away from our childhood past and the inevitable separation that lies ahead. The works of these two Finland-based artists remind us of the importance of the family unit and the past and future we often overlook, highlighting the preciousness of what we currently hold in our hands.

Nayab Noor Ikram

Born in 1992 on The Åland Islands, Finland. She received her Bachelor of Culture and Arts degree, majoring in photography in 2015, from Novia University of Applied Sciences in Jakobstad, Finland.

Nayab Noor Ikram is a Finland-based visual artist and photographer of the Pakistani diaspora from the Åland Island, an autonomous, demilitarised, Swedish-speaking region of Finland. In her artistic practice, Ikram works with moving image, photography, performances, and installations exploring concepts dealing with the feeling of in-betweenship, cultural identity, and memory through rituals and symbolism.

Ikram has exhibited in Finland and internationally at Botkyrka Konsthall (2024, Sweden) Helsinki Kunsthalle (2023, Finland) Gerðarsafn (2022, Iceland) Mänttä Art Festival (2021, Finland), Västerås Art Museum (2020-2021, Sweden) and the European Parliament (2020, Belgium). Her work can be found in public and private collections of the City of Helsinki managed by the Helsinki Art Museum and The Åland Art Museum.

She was the recipient of a Culture Award from the Swedish Cultural Foundation in Finland in 2019 and the Anna-Lena Dreijer Art Fund on The Åland Islands in 2022. She received the 2024 Finnish Institute in the UK & Ireland X Acme London Residency and the Stina Krook Foundation portfolio residency program 'PortRe' held in Copenhagen for one week in collaboration with the Finnish Cultural Institute in Denmark in 2024.

A new body of work will be exhibited at The Finnish Museum of Photography in Helsinki from the fall of 2025 to the spring of 2026.

Sampsa Virkajärvi

Born in 1970, Virkajärvi is a visual artist and documentary filmmaker whose interests lie in time, change, society, and the complexities of individual choice. His work explores the experiences that arise from the pressures of economic power and technological innovation, addressing cultural and historical issues.

Exhibitions include the Helsinki International Film Festival (2022, Finland), Seoul Museum of Art (SeMA, 2019, Korea), Serlachius Museum Gösta (2018-19, Finland), Museum of Contemporary Art Kiasma (2008, Finland), and Kunsthalle Helsinki (2001, Finland).

■Please contact below for any image enquiries■