

THE SILENT PEOPLE



The Silent People

The almost one thousand strong band that makes up the Silent People suddenly emerges before the passing motorist like some great stroke of magic. In the morning with the light behind them this motionless army appears morose, even menacing. However, as the day progresses their countenance brightens up and with the setting of the sun they present a distinctly jolly and colourful picture. When the wind blows their straw hair and clothes begin to flap rhythmically as if they had suddenly sprung into life.

Reijo Kela unveiled his peat-headed beings for the first time in his 1988 presentation '*Ilmari's Ploughed Field*' in Lassila's Field. They reappeared six years later in Helsinki's Senaatintori Market Place as part of the 1994 Kainuu Exhibition. Some 1200 Silent People had made the journey down to Helsinki but there was room for only 700 of them on the steps in front of the Cathedral. The presentation was erected during the night and over the proceeding two days created quite a stir in the Capital. The following night the Silent People were dismantled and sent back home to Suomussalmi.

The Silent People stood for the third time in characteristically implacable taciturnity on the shores of Jalonuoma in Ämmänsaari. The occasion was the daring 1994 presentation by Reijo Kela, Heikki Laitinen and various others of '*The Bold and Beautiful, Wretches of the Shore*'.

The Silent People moved to their present home in the autumn of 1994. The peat-heads are kept in good shape and have their clothing attended to twice a year; their heads come straight from the field, their clothes from organised collections. The Silent People are made and clothed by the Suomussalmi Youth Workshop, which also takes care of their maintenance.

People often ask what precisely is the idea behind the Silent People. A state of psychological withdrawal? The mute Kainuu soul? A forgotten people? Reijo Kela refuses to provide any answer. Each viewer is free to come to his own conclusions. It may, however, be of interest to learn that if the Silent People were to be completely undressed there would remain some one thousand wooden crosses standing in the field.

Reijo Kela

Reijo Kela was born in Suomussalmi on 8th October 1952. In 1970 he moved to Helsinki and began to study to be a laboratory assistant. An early interest in gymnastics and running inspired him to take lessons in modern dance. So the laboratory assistant became a dancer.

Kela studied modern dance not only in Finland but also in New York under the tutelage of Merce Cunningham, Viola Faber, Sara Rudner, Lar Lubovitch and Douglas Dunn.

In 1978 and again in 1980 Kela was attached to the Raatiko Dance Theatre. Since then he has followed a career as a freelance dancer and choreographer. He has taught in the Finnish Theatre High School and High School of Industrial Art.



"Reijo Kela has choreographed unique dance performances since 1977 for art galleries, fields, forests, swamps, streets and even for theatre premises. His shortest performance lasts 1.5 seconds, whereas the longest performance goes on for 164 consecutive hours. Kela has carried out his works on spots varying from 25 cm² all the way to 100 hectare fields. In addition, his audience has ranged from one person to 10,000 spectators. Since 1990, Reijo Kela has been carrying out various types of joint productions and improvisation-based performances with a number of musicians.

Some of the most significant works for the choreographer himself are *Dance for You* (1983) for one spectator, *Ilmari's Ploughed Field* (Ilmarin Kynnös, 1988) on the fields of Suomussalmi, *City Man* (1989), a 164-hour performance carried out in a little glass house in Helsinki, and *Sacrificial Flame* (Uhrikuti, 1998), made on the sand dunes of Suomussalmi." (Finnish Dance in Focus Journal, 2000)

Reijo Kela creates his unique performances according to the situation and surroundings. He has performed both in Finland and abroad. *Freezing Waterfall* (2000), for example, was made in Lillehammer, Norway, together with Nordic musicians and technical experts.





The Field Café

The visitors of the Silent People are served by the Field Café of the co-operative Kuutamokeikat. During the summer months, the crispy-edged crêpes made on open fire and camp-fire coffee offer many voyagers a reason to return here from year to year.

What could be better than taking a snooze in the fragrant hay in the haybarn after the delicious snack?

The Field Hut of the Café opens its doors for groups all year round on order. If you wish to have a lunch break at the Hut, it can be done with an advance reserva-

tion. You can have, for instance, the Haymaker's Victuals or Belly Filling for the Raking Girl.

The Hut is well suited for family festivities or for meetings, and there is also room for changing exhibitions. The Hut offers workshops and adventure services on order.

The Field Café has its own magic circle: The brushing of hay on your feet and the aroma of smoke lingering in the air stop the time from passing.

You live for this moment only.



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You will find the Silent People standing alongside National Highway 5, approximately 30 km north from Suomussalmi centre in the direction of Kuusamo, in a swampy field.



SUOMUSSALMI

Suomussalmi Tourist Office

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