

Raija Malka &
Kaija Saariaho

EN

Blick

AMOS
Rex

Amos Rex
Mannerheimintie 22–24
Helsinki

OPEN
Monday 11–18
Tuesday closed
Wednesday 11–18
Thursday 11–18
Friday 11–18
Saturday 11–17
Sunday 11–17



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Amos Rex is a
discrimination-free zone.

Blick

Raija Malka &
Kaija Saariaho

On entering *Blick*, viewers leave the outside world behind and step into a space free from definitions. Here viewers face not only an artwork but also themselves as they gaze inwards into the world of emotions and thoughts.

Blick is a joint exhibition by visual artist Raija Malka and composer Kaija Saariaho. It is a multisensory artwork, which is simultaneously painterly, spatial and musical. The title of the exhibition, *Blick* (gaze), refers to visual artist Wassily Kandinsky's poem published in 1912, which is included in Kaija Saariaho's music at the exhibition. Looking and seeing are actions. A gaze, on the other hand, is a more passive state or attitude, a riddle to be interpreted in many ways.

The cornerstones of *Blick* are space, light and time. The solutions around space are based on the architecture and different lighting circumstances of the exhibition hall. The constantly evolving daylight flowing down from the skylight plays a significant part. The exhibition is like a path the viewer uses to advance from one section and artwork to another. At the same time, it is reminiscent of a theatre performance where the audience takes part in creating through movement, observation and immersion, or the construction of their own arrangements.



The exhibition is part of the Helsinki Festival programme.

The starting point for *Blick* is an earlier work by Kaija Saariaho titled *Stilleben* (1988), which developed into *Blick sound environment* (2019–2021), a composition that underscores the dramaturgy of the exhibition. The structure of the music is multi-layered and exists in the space in constant flux. In addition to instruments and song, the work consists of multilingual texts, communication between people as well as sounds from travel-related vehicles, stations and answering machines. The themes of the music are distances and nostalgic longing.

In *Blick*, Raija Malka approaches different subjects from her oeuvre and creates a new entity, a large spatial work. Its most central element is colour. In her structures, she uses pure single-colour and even colour surfaces, where fixed points for the gaze are taken over by light. This makes the works lose their physicality while the material moves towards the immaterial.

Raija Malka's art is largely abstract, non-figurative, whereas Kaija Saariaho's fresco-like music is narrational in many ways. Both combine different temporal experiences and play with space, manipulating them physically and acoustically as they create new spatial

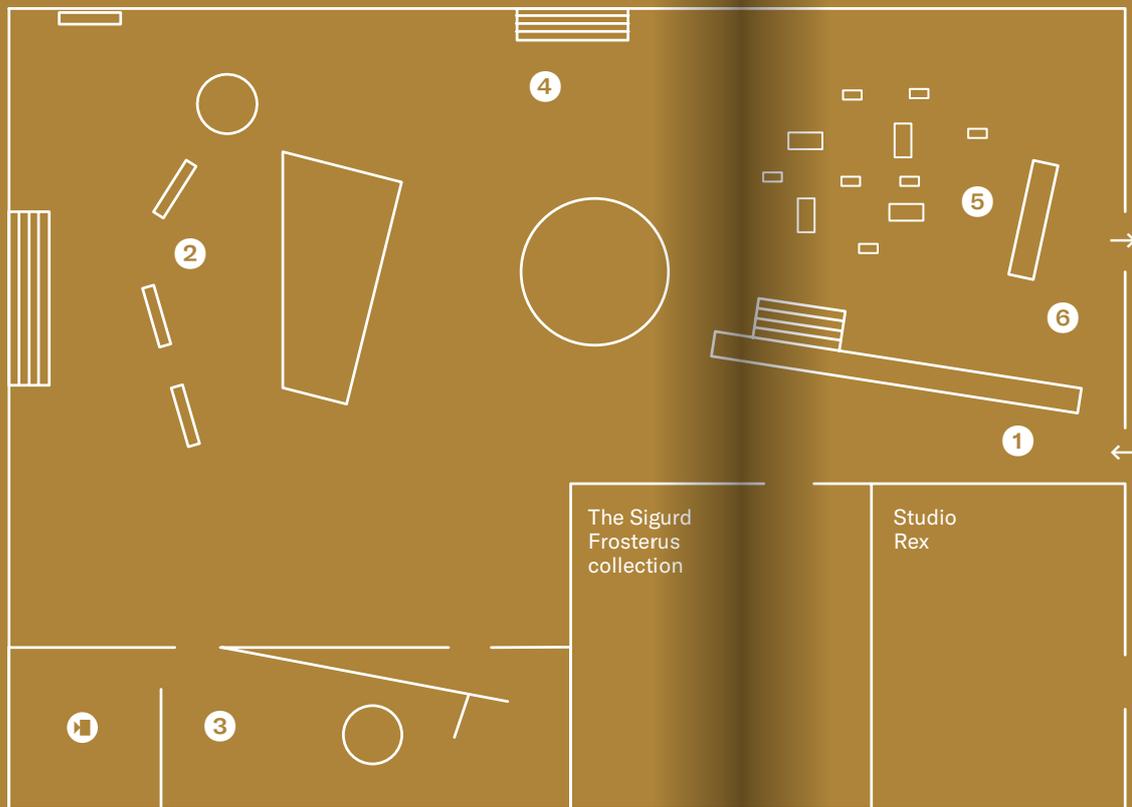


Raija Malka studied textile art and painting at the University of Art and Design Helsinki from 1980 to 1985. During this time, she took part in several exhibitions with her paintings and installations and assumed the identity of a visual artist without material limits. Three-dimensional space and large volumes have been central areas of interest for her throughout the years. Malka has also carried out different stage design projects and interdisciplinary spatial artworks. Colours form an important tool for her to understand and process the world through her art. Raija Malka is based in Lisbon and Helsinki.

Kaija Saariaho is one of the most notable international composers of our time. Her extensive production encompasses operas and large-scale compositions for orchestras, along with smaller-scaled vocal and chamber music pieces. Saariaho's music often combines traditional acoustic instruments with electronics and sounds captured from the environment. In 1982 she became acquainted with her future husband, composer-artist Jean-Baptiste Barrière, who would also become an important work partner for her. They have created pieces together, and the soundscape of *Blick* is an example of their collaboration. Kaija Saariaho has lived in Paris since 1984.

Raija Malka and Kaija Saariaho first became acquainted with each other in the early 1980s. Their friendship grew gradually and deepened as both lived in Paris for many years. 1993 marked the beginning of their first joint exhibition, *Lady and the Unicorn*. Since then, they have collaborated on nine projects, exhibitions, and different stage adaptations. Their roles are clear: the visual space is created by Raija, the sound by Kaija.

A crucial project for *Blick* was the Njord Festival combining imagery and music that took place in Copenhagen in 2016. Kaija Saariaho, who had been invited to take part in the event, asked Raija Malka to be her work partner. Saariaho's *Stilleben* was selected as the music, while Malka provided a large-scale structure and smaller boxes, providing the visitors with a setting to create their own compositions. This set the scene for elements that would later be expanded into *Blick*, the exhibition at Amos Rex.



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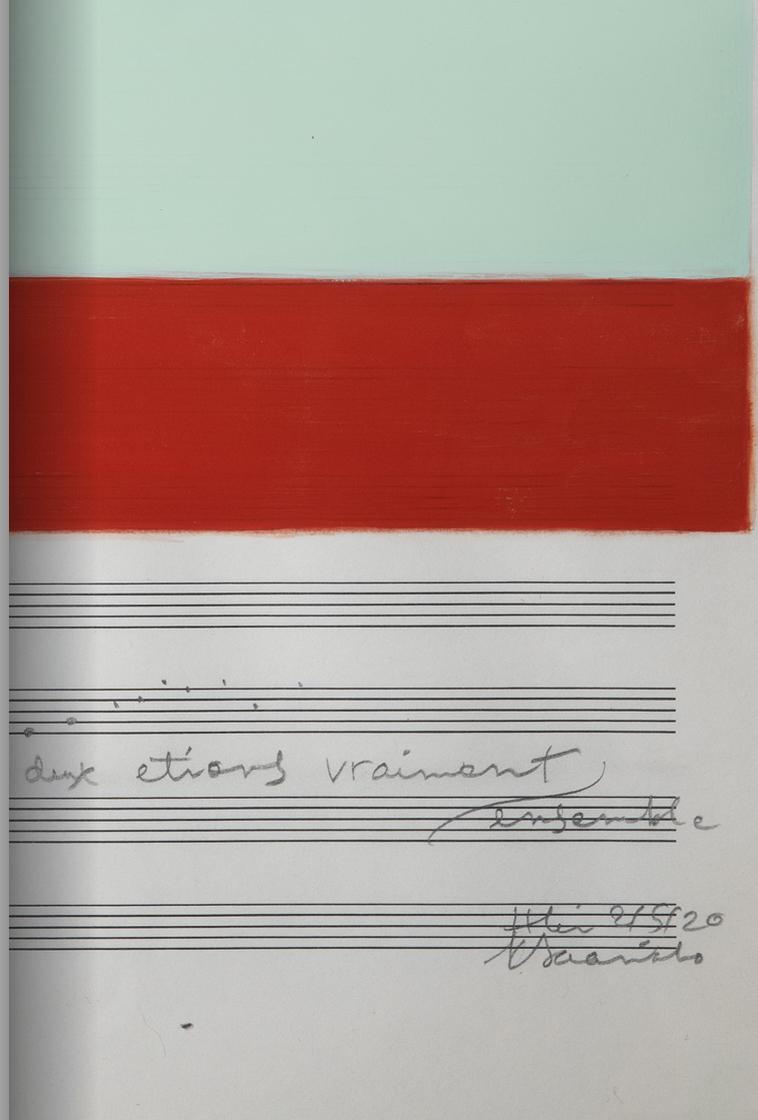
 The audio work extends throughout the exhibition hall.

 Video:
Behind the Gaze (2020)

The film explores the thoughts and ideas behind *Blick*
Duration: 15 minutes

Utopie

Utopie evokes the experience of an opera overture, leading into the world of the exhibition together with the sounds of a train. One of the starting points for *Blick* is the architecture of Amos Rex's exhibition space. The proportions of the halls are crucial for the size and essence of the works, and vice versa. One method of influencing the spatial experience is to include elements that are either too small or too large for the space. The first thing the viewer encounters in *Blick* is the massive slanting wall, along with its painted horizontal lines. It provides a view of the main exhibition hall and its musical dimensions at a single glance. *Utopie* is German and means utopia, i.e. a space or time that does not exist. The names of the works in the exhibition are in German, and some of them are derived from the German-language texts heard in Saariaho's *Stilleben* piece.



Blick



Stilleben
N 11.30''

mp a f > || Augen ||
mp a f > || Augen ||

Hilfsingissa V/1/2020
Saanicho

Blick, which carries the name of the exhibition and means gaze, is the work placed in the largest part of the exhibition hall. Its central structure is unmistakably reminiscent of a certain type of pavilion that has no practical function. The yellow colour of the construction refers to the changing landscape viewed from a train window. It is much like an image etched onto the viewer's mind, immaterial light. The construction was originally based on a painting depicting the pavilion, which resulted in a miniature by Raija Malka. This process led to the idea of creating the pavilion on a large scale. The musical world of *Blick* is layered and varied, and it increases the expansive and diverse impression reverberating in the space. We are at the musical heart of the work. The chairs and stairs surrounding the construction can be used for sitting and contemplating the world of the work.

Menschen



From *Blick*, the wandering gaze leads the visitor towards a space similar to a tiled room. Its narrow hall forms a pathway to what lies behind the exhibition. Where all illusion collapses: it is but a constructed reality. The intimate space behind changes the proportions. This is a cramped and meditative place dominated by an oversized ball. The music contains a fragile human voice, close, almost touching the listener. The visual starting point for the Menschen section is Raija Malka's painting *Anatomy of Le Corbusier*. The work has been inspired by a corner at Maison La Roche, a building by the Swiss-French architect Le Corbusier. *Menschen* is German and denotes people.

Between the exhibition's large main hall and final space lies *Warten*, meaning wait. It is similar to a terminal, used for entering or exiting. It is a place where one sits, unrushed, on stairs and observes the environment. It is not the first time Raija Malka's art refers to Irish playwright Samuel Beckett's work *Waiting for Godot*. The play is about waiting. Malka experiences life as a constant state of waiting – it is an inherent state of existence. The *Blick* exhibition is much like a theatre performance, where the person who waits watches other people in the exhibition space. The viewer can be an active participant and part of the work, but also an outsider. *Warten's* soundscape is more filtered and minimalist, compared to the sound architecture in the large exhibition hall. Visitors may climb on the steps and sit on them.



Warten

Kiosk

Stilleben
20

Handwritten musical notation on a staff, including notes, rests, and dynamic markings like *f* and *ritard.*. The notes are sparse and often replaced by wavy lines representing sound textures.

breathing
whispers
rustle of leaves

f arrive

une ondée
détourne les fleurs

obscur (étourd)



Handwritten text, possibly a signature or date, written vertically along the right edge of the page.

The lingering state of *Warten* provides a direct passage to *Kiosk*. The *Kiosk* work provides a channel for everyone to create a composition of their own and thus participate in the visual offering of the exhibition. The colourful, different-sized boxes, kiosks, create new worlds through discs of different nuances and shapes. In *Kiosk*, each creation is an active part of the work. *Kiosk's* soundscape leaves space for reflection: the music, composed of sounds of water, whispers and the wind, is intimate and targeted.

Epilog

Originally the *Blick* exhibition was set to take place in summer 2020. When the coronavirus pandemic hit, a new schedule was set, and the exhibition was postponed by a year. In spring 2020, Raija Malka who had left her home in Lisbon for Helsinki and the construction of the exhibition, remained in Finland to await the next flight back. Kaija Saariaho, a resident of Paris, had also travelled to Helsinki in March. Time passed and nothing happened. The artists started a dialogue: Saariaho sent sheet music to Malka, who then responded with visual comments. This resulted in ten diptychs, two-part works, around the themes of the exhibition. Their shapes and colours, recognisable from Malka's art, co-exist side-by-side with Saariaho's musical notes referring to Saariaho's *Stilleben*. The collages form the final part of the exhibition, an epilogue of sorts for *Blick* as a whole.

The Night of the
Arts at Amos Rex

Thursday 19 August
at 9 p.m. Bio Rex

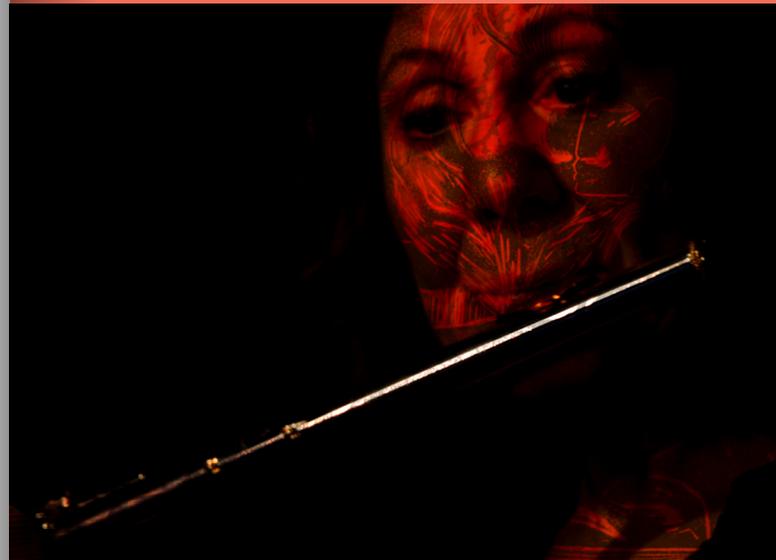
Kaija Saariaho and Jean-Baptiste Barrière: *Ekstasis*

The visual concert *Ekstasis* presents a constellation of six works for vocals, instruments, electronics and video. In three of the works the music is by Kaija Saariaho and in three by Jean-Baptiste Barrière. The videos are the work of Jean-Baptiste Barrière. Soloists include Aliisa Neige Barrière, violin; Camilla Hoitenga, flute, and the soprano Raphaële Kennedy.

The concert is free of charge.
Further information and bookings:
www.amosrex.fi/events



The event is part of
the Helsinki Festival
programme.



Blick 12.5.–
22.8.2021

Raija Malka
Kaija Saariaho

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Music

Kaija Saariaho
Blick sound environment, 2019–21
REALISATION Kaija Saariaho &
Jean-Baptiste Barrère

Stilleben, 1988

*Nature morte avec paysage en
movement, à travers la fenêtre*

REALISATION Kaija Saariaho &
Juhani Liimatainen
Avanti! Chamber Orchestra
CONDUCTOR Esa-Pekka Salonen
Finnish Chamber Choir
CONDUCTOR Eric-Olof Söderström
©Edition Wilhelm Hansen AS,
Copenhagen/Chester Music.

Film Behind the Gaze

Pablo Films

Ball

6T Solutions

Exhibition graphics

Tsto

Graphic design

Tsto

Print

Grano