

## CURATOR COMMENT

Committed to recuperating the consumer ideologue of progress and technology, Mika Taanila is the celluloid-wielding soothsayer of Nordic moving image; a key proponent and unparalleled forebear of 'post-cinema'. With the wonder of a healthy child and the world-worn knowing of a healthy adult, Taanila's domain is of binary collisions: man and machine (mastering/mal-functioning); implacable scientific and technological advance (mastering/mal-functioning); nuclear power (!); failed—and possible—utopias... an art of the future-past, which visits London at a critical juncture in the culture, and the times, in what will be the most complete international survey of his practice to date.

Stanley Shtinter is an independent curator, liberated filmmaker and CE, MD and RD of [purge.xxx](http://purge.xxx)

## MIKA TAANILA BY OLAF MÖLLER

Mika Taanila (\*1965) is an artistic polymath by inclination, like all the genuinely curious-cum-circumspect. He was already world-famous in his native Helsinki at the ripe age

appreciated in good parts due to Taanila's commitment and work.

The Future Is Not What It Used To Be became a turning point in Taanila's trajectory. As the film got screened so often in museums and galleries, new (a)venues of expression and exhibition opened up, resulting in pieces existing often in multiple forms, e.g. A Physical Ring (**Whitechapel Gallery, 21/10**). SSEENNS-SEESS. Works like science noir masterpiece Twilight, which exists only as installation for two moving video projectors, are rare. Taanila's revisiting a piece is most delightfully evidenced by his video installation My Silence (**Leman Locke, 16/10–22/10**) and its eponymous 2015 paper double, both of which "have a go" at the dialogue of Louis Malle's talk-fest, My Dinner With André (1981). That said: all of this has some precedents in Taanila's earlier work—he constructed double and triple screen image-scapes for Swissair (Hermaphrodites—**Cafe Oto, 22/10**) as well as Circle.

Something truly new happened in 2013 with his photogram series, Black And White Movies, which is film-based but not a moving image work itself. His most recent creation: a series of re-sculpted film books made for Venice Biennale's Nordic Pavilion, follows in a similar vein. The techniques used for Black And White Movies led the way to Taanila's arguably



Tectonic Plate (2016)

of fifteen, due to being a founder member of a band called Swissair, legendary for almost never rehearsing and only rarely playing live gigs. Their world was the audio cassette. Swissair described its artistic approach as "scientific music"—which to a certain degree could be used to describe Taanila's work in general. Taanila loves science; especially the melancholia exuded by achievements that once felt like the future, and now look merely like remnants of eras past, ranging from the UFO-shaped Futuro house (*Futuro—A New Stance for Tomorrow—Close-Up Film Centre, 22/10*) to nuclear energy (*Return Of The Atom—ICA, 19/10*). Taanila went on to study ethnography, then learn filmmaking, a craft he honed throughout the 1990s, with music videos for bands like Circle (Circle founder member, Jussi Lehtisalo, debuts new collaboration with Taanila—**Cafe Oto, 20/10**) and 22-Pisterpirkko. These were opportunities to try out technical stuff: stocks, techniques, etc, and to exorcise some cinephile obsessions.

The move towards bigger, always playful and essayistic documentary forms was achieved with Thank You for The Music—A Film about Muzak (reconfigured for online installation—**NTS 16/10–22/10**), followed by RoboCup99 (**Whitechapel Gallery, 21/10**), and his international breakthrough piece, The Future Is Not What It Used To Be (**Close-Up Film Centre, 22/10**), a documentary on another polymath, the late Erkki Kurenniemi, whose mind-boggling universe of electronic music, nuclear science, happenings, computer graphics, political pamphleteering, diaries written and filmed was internationally rediscovered and

most astonishing creation, Tectonic Plate (**Whitechapel Gallery, 21/10**), a camera-less Lettrist fiction feature, made in collaboration with poet, Harry Salmenniemi, a cinema that is modern art and completely unique.

Olaf Möller writes about cinema; shows movies; tries to teach film history. He appears in conversation with Mika Taanila and filmmaker and novelist, Chris Petit, at **Whitechapel Gallery, 21/10**.

## VENUE INFORMATION

**Institute of Contemporary Arts**  
[ica.org.uk](http://ica.org.uk)  
The Mall, St. James's, London SW1Y 5AH

**Whitechapel Gallery**  
[whitechapelgallery.org](http://whitechapelgallery.org)  
77–82 Whitechapel High St, London E1 7QX

**Cafe Oto**  
[cafeoto.co.uk](http://cafeoto.co.uk)  
18–22 Ashwin St, London E8 3DL

**Close-Up Film Centre**  
[closeupfilmcentre.com](http://closeupfilmcentre.com)  
97 Selater St, London E1 6HR

**NTS**  
[nts.live](http://nts.live)  
Online/Gillet Square, London N16 8JN

**Leman Locke**  
[lockeliving.com](http://lockeliving.com)  
15 Leman St, London E1 8EN

## TICKET INFORMATION

Tickets available direct from each venue. Visit their sites/call/write. For a digital copy of this programme, and to make other enquiries: [purge.xxx/mika](http://purge.xxx/mika)

## CORE PROGRAMME

THU  
OCTOBER 19

20:00 Institute of Contemporary Arts

**NUCLEAR RENAISSANCE ...** on the first nuclear power plant built in the western world since the Chernobyl disaster, and the resurgence of the nuclear threat in 2017. Taanila present and in discussion with **Ele Carpenter**, expert on Nuclear Aesthetics. U.K. premieres.

**RETURN OF THE ATOM** (dir. Mika Taanila & Jussi Eerola)

**SUPPORTING PROGRAMME:**  
• Man And Science  
• The Zone of Total Eclipse

Presented in 16mm + DCP

FRI  
OCTOBER 20

19:00 Cafe Oto

**RUTON MUSIC ...** debut performance of **Pakasteet**, a new collaboration between Circle's **Jussi Lehtisalo** and Mika Taanila, featuring **Charles Hayward** (This Heat). With a solo performance from **Bruce Gilbert** (Wire), **Patchfinder** DJ, and supporting programme of films.

• I Like This Silence  
• Swissair: Hermaphrodites  
• Circle: Back to Pori  
• Circle: Surrounding  
• Circle: Kyberia

Digital presentation

SAT  
OCTOBER 21

12:00 Whitechapel Gallery

**FILM AFTER FILM (CEASELESS MOTION IS FOLLOWED BY INEXORABLE DARKNESS) ...** the bulk of Taanila's moving image work shown together for the first time, in a showcase featuring novelist and filmmaker **Chris Petit** in a conversation moderated by **Olaf Möller**. Introduction by **Gareth Evans**, curator of the moving image at Whitechapel Gallery.

• Sad Song of The Hard-Edge Transition  
• Wipe Markers  
• Delay of Game  
• Branches  
• The World  
• Verbranntes Land  
• RoboCup99  
• Six Day Run  
• Optical Sound  
• A Physical Ring  
• Tectonic Plate

Presented in 16mm + digital

SUN  
OCTOBER 22

Close-Up Film Centre

**ELECTRIC FOREST + MUSEUM PLANET** Taanila in conversation with **Maria Palacios Cruz**, presenting three films by Taanila and a programme of Finnish experimental film curated by him.

18:00 ELECTRIC FOREST

• Eino Ruutsalo: Kineettisiä kuvia / Kinetic Pictures (1962, 7')  
• Eino Ruutsalo: Kaksi kanaa / Two Chickens (1963, 4')  
• Erkki Kurenniemi: Electronics in the World of Tomorrow (1964, 5')  
• Erkki Kurenniemi: Flora & fauna (1965, 6')  
• Jan Bark & Erkki Kurenniemi: Spindrift (1966/2013, 13')  
• Pasi "Sleeping" Myllymäki: 3000 autoa / 3000 Cars (1980, 3')  
• Pasi "Sleeping" Myllymäki: Horizontal (1979, 3')  
• Eino Ruutsalo: Kinescope (1960–1991, 11')

20:00 MUSEUM PLANET

• Futuro—A New Stance for Tomorrow  
• The Future Is Not What It Used To Be  
• Sommerreise

Presented in 16mm, 35 mm + digital

## IN PARALLEL

**Central Saint Martins**  
• **RENDER GHOSTS ...** teaser event: from the kommunalka of 1917 (via Jonathan Meades) to the utopian pre-fab of the Futuro House (Futuro—A New Stance for Tomorrow, 1998) to the bastardised archive of London City fire brigade. Featuring filmmaker **Louis Benassi**, curator **Stanley Shtinter**, architect and writer **Douglas Murphy** and **Assemble** in conversation ... **06/10 at 17:00**

**NTS • THANK YOU FOR THE MUZAK ...** online installation **16/10–22/10** (Taanila DJ set on 18/10) visit: [nts.live](http://nts.live)

**Leman Locke**  
• **MY SILENCE ...** reductionist video / sound piece removing all dialogue from Louis Malle's My Dinner With André (1981). The silence of conversation (is very, very funny) ... foyer installation open **16/10–22/10** (and beamed on each room's TV set)

**Close-Up Film Centre**  
• **LISTENING SCREEN ...** pitch-black auditorium playback at Close-Up Film Centre, including unheard film music by **Mika Vainio** of **Pan Sonic** (regular collaborator of Taanila until his untimely death in April this year); collage of unheard music and cassette diaries by inventor and filmmaker, **Erkki Kurenniemi**. Selected and mixed by Taanila ... **12:00–18:00 on 20/10**; Mika Vainio **22/10**; Erkki Kurenniemi



The Future Is Not What It Used To Be (2002)

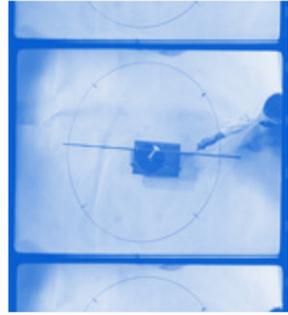
# A SURVEY OF WORK BY MIKA TAANILA

16–22 OCTOBER 2017

Curated by Stanley Shtinter • Produced by Stanley Shtinter and Anastasia Perahia  
• Programme designed by Tom Backström • Presented by [purge.xxx](http://purge.xxx) in association with The Wire magazine and LUX • Special thanks to Mika Taanila and all participating artists; Jaakko Nousiainen, Tytti Rantanen, Lasse Saarinen, Ben Cook. Kindly supported by balzer projects, Frame Finland, TelePART, Kinotar, AVEK Foundation, Av-Arkki, The Finnish Film Foundation and The Finnish Institute In London.

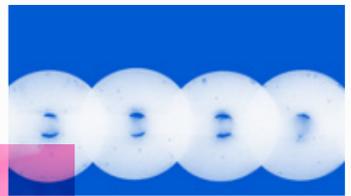


Delay of Game (2017)



• **A PHYSICAL RING (2002, 5')**

Taanila found a reel of film abandoned at the Finnish Film Archive, depicting a physics experiment from the 1940s. The nature of the experiment is still unknown, but appears to be an amalgamation of fire, magnets, heat and metal in what Taanila describes as 'kinetic magic'.



• **TECTONIC PLATE (2016, 74')**

Camera-less film about the fear of flying, security checks and time zones. Taanila photocopies travel documents directly onto clear 35mm film and photographs, to narrate the story of a nameless protagonist inexplicably stuck at a hotel (near Helsinki airport).



• **RETURN OF THE ATOM (2015, 110')**

Mika Taanila & Jussi Eerola

After the Chernobyl disaster, Finland was the first country to grant permission for a new nuclear power plant to be built. *Return of the Atom* traces the development of the nuclear project and its impact on the inhabitants of the town of Eurajoki (a literal dumping ground for big power).



**CIRCLE**

- **BACK TO PORI (1999, 5')**
- **SURROUNDING (1995, 6')**
- **KYBERIA (1989, 4')**

Three music videos directed by Taanila for Finnish experimental rock band and longterm collaborators, Circle.



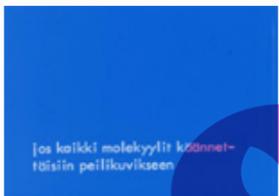
• **THE WORLD (2017, 7')**

Taanila uses the reductionist approach, re-editing Nicolas Roeg's *The Man Who Fell to Earth* (1976), starring David Bowie. Devoid of human presence and turned upside down, leaving abandoned landscapes, animals, furniture and empty vehicles. Earth falling down on mankind. A sensitive encounter with the apocalypse.



• **THE FUTURE IS NOT WHAT IT USED TO BE (2002, 52')**

Biographical portrait of Finnish inventor and pioneer of electronic music and multimedia art, Erkki Kurenniemi, spanning his early experimentations in music, film and electronic art (including his early experimental films on nature, sex and technology).



• **MAN AND SCIENCE (2011, 3 x 27 sec)**

Inspired by a discarded 16mm film reel Taanila found in a dust bin. The original footage is television subtitles from 1978, and features Nobel Prize winners Pjotr Kapitsa, Arno Penzias, Hamilton O. Smith and Peter D. Mitchell discussing nuclear plants, genetics, fossil fuels and the nature of time.



• **HERMAPHRODITES (1979-84, 22')**

Collaborative double-screen work by Taanila's former band.



• **VERBRANNTES LAND (2002, 6')**

Based on a Scotch instructional video tape, *Verbranntes Land* is Taanila's no-budget music promo clip for Finnish band Kiila. The film is both a physical example of image deterioration and a metaphor for the inexorable decay of human memory.



• **A SUMMER TRIP (2006, 3')**

Documents the visit Mika Taanila made to Erkki Kurenniemi some years after the completion of *The Future Is Not What It Used To Be*, and a stroke which condemned Kurenniemi to silence.



• **THE ZONE OF TOTAL ECLIPSE (2006, 6')**

Recuperated scientific film footage from the first attempt to capture the solar eclipse cinematographically. Without a beginning and/or an end, the footage is projected from two separate reels representing a positive—the sun—and a negative—the moon—both of which are superimposed simultaneously onto a wall. The duration of the film is exactly the same as that of the actual eclipse in 1945.



• **STIMULUS PROGRESSION (THANK YOU FOR THE MUSIC - A FILM ABOUT MUZAK) (1997/2017)**

20 years after its inception, Taanila's film on muzak is reassessed for CCTV monitors as an online installation. Muzak: anonymous (scientifically researched) background music. The stuff that plays but you don't hear.



• **ROBOCUP99 (2000, 25')**

Coverage of the annual RoboCup tournament. Autonomous robots confront each other in a game of football with the ambition of finally being able to take on man.



• **FUTURO—A NEW STANCE FOR TOMORROW (1998, 29')**

The rise and fall of the Futuro: a transportable spaceship of a house, designed in the 1960s by Finnish architect Matti Suuronen. A product to reflect the optimism of a post-war Finland.



• **I LIKE THIS SILENCE (1989, 2')**

One of Taanila's earliest and widely unseen works, this experimental and hyper-personal film is a parable of Finnish welfare, the will to create, and the underscore of a Northern Europe, cold; coming out.



• **SAD SONG OF THE HARD-EDGE TRANSITION WIPE MARKERS (2017, 3')**

Collaged from the archive, a holy trinity of new experimental works by Taanila, commissioned for the "Oi maamme!" project as part of Finland's celebration of 100 years of independence (in 2017). Presented in 3-d.



• **SIX DAY RUN (2013, 14')**

Based loosely on Gen 1:1-2:3, *Six Day Run* follows 35 competitors of The 6 Day Race—the world's most extreme individual endurance sport event... running in a circle.



• **MY SILENCE (2002, 13')**

*My Silence* is a reductionist video and sound piece displayed as a single-channel installation. Taanila removes all the dialogue from Louis Malle's cult classic, *My Dinner with André* (1981).



• **OPTICAL SOUND (2005, 6')**

Office printers of the 1990s are reborn as low-tech instruments in a hypnotic rendition of future-past music by [The User].

# MIKA TAANILA

15-22 OCTOBER 2017