

Joel Karppanen: Beyond Pitkäsilta (Metropolis)**Artist Statement**

Beyond Pitkäsilta (Metropolis) (2021–2023) concludes my Finland trilogy that has previously included *Finnish Pastoral* (2016–2017) and *Common people songs* (2017–2020). The new body of work enfolds together my central themes: work, class and structural change.

I have photographed a transforming Helsinki that is no longer divided by Pitkäsilta but where class divides still exist. The proletarians of our time, food couriers, deliver artisan pizza to brand new skyscrapers. For a year, I documented a Czech food courier Kryštof who is my age and a visual artist by his real profession. As part of the process, I worked as Kryštof's substitutor: I delivered food orders for a month and donated my earnings to him so he could in turn focus on his own art. Nowadays, we are friends.

I photograph to understand myself and others. *Finnish Pastoral* was born from a need to redefine my relationship to the countryside when my life as an urban vegetarian then newly began to include a beef cattle raising stepfather. In *Common People Songs*, I reflected on my relationships to leftism and the working class movement. I'm fascinated by the idea of reflective nostalgia: one cannot rebuild the past but an analysis of the passage of time and a certain comfort derived from the memories can foster a sense of potential.

As I worked on the *Beyond Pitkäsilta (Metropolis)* series, I realized I was depicting my grandparents through the food couriers. They moved to Sweden during the postwar mass migration and found temporary employment as cleaners of Stockholm's subways among other things. After returning to Finland, they cleaned stairways in Rovaniemi. That is where I also got my first introduction into a working life when I swept the floors as a 12-year-old with my grandma and -pa. Even though I loved my grandparents, I was ashamed of the fact that they were "merely cleaners". Food couriers are often met with the same type of condescending attitude. Now I will no longer feel shame or condescend.

Joel Karppanen (b. 1993) is an award-winning photographer, visual artist, filmmaker, and writer living in Helsinki. Beyond Pitkäsilta (Metropolis) is Karppanen's second solo exhibition in Galleria Halmetoja. Karppanen's works have also been exhibited in Kiasma Museum of Contemporary Art, Mänttä Art Festival, and KunstHausWien among others, and his works can be found in the collections of The Finnish Museum of Photography, The Finnish State Art Commission and Jenny and Wihuri Foundation. The artist's work has been funded by Kone Foundation and The Arts Promotion Centre Finland. This exhibition has also been made possible by The Finnish Cultural Foundation.

