

TECTONIC PLATE



Original title: Mannerlaatta
English title: Tectonic Plate
director: Mika Taanila
text: Harry Salmenniemi
English translation: Lola Rogers
music: Mika Vainio
graphic design: Markus Pyörälä
sound design: Olli Huhtanen
producer: Jussi Eerola
production company: Elokuva-yhtiö Testifilmi Oy

74 minutes
DCP, 1:1,85, b&w
country of production: Finland

WORLD PREMIERE at Berlinale Forum Expanded, February 2016

A camera-less lettrist film about fear of flying, security checks and time zones.

Short synopsis:

A camera-less lettrist film about fear of flying, security checks and time zones. After returning from a trip to Tokyo, the nameless protagonist is inexplicably stuck at a hotel nearby the Helsinki airport. With multi-tasking the attention and activity of the individual are divided into several directions at once. The use of various technical devices, slivers the time-management and modifies the jet-lagged consciousness.

Long synopsis:

Tectonic Plate is a camera-less lettrist film about fear of flying, security checks and time zones.

After returning from a lengthy business trip to Tokyo, the protagonist is inexplicably stuck at a hotel nearby the Helsinki airport. The events are fixed to the character's multi-tasking, in which the attention and activity of the individual are divided into several directions at once. The use of various technical devices, such as phones, computers and heart rate monitors, slivers his time-management and modifies the consciousness.

The episodes of text and of moving image alternate in the narration of this dualistic work. Text, which will be seen on the screen as such, depicts the observations and the inner reality of the protagonist and his nervous system amidst the life-style of constant jet lag.

The techniques used for the moving images are photocopying documents related to air travel directly onto clear 35mm film and darkroom exposure of objects placed on 35mm reversal film (photograms).

About the techniques used

Tectonic Plate is a lettrist film that is based on a specifically compiled text, written by poet Harry Salmenniemi. Traditionally the reader is in control of at what pace they choose to read. This time the pace is pre-set by someone else. Text "happens" to the reader.

Episodes of text and of moving image alternate in the narration of this dualistic work. Texts will be seen on the screen as such, not with images. Our protagonist's observations are constantly changing; the mind wanders from one subject and content to another. *Tectonic Plate* moves back and forth between the coherent subject of first-person poetry and the poetry shifting towards the materiality of experimental language. The work includes both extremely beautiful, lyrical moments as well as monotonous masses of text. The style of imposition is always ascetically austere and minimalistic.

The techniques we use for the moving images are photocopying directly onto clear 35mm film and darkroom exposure of 35mm film negative without a camera (photogram). Each frame is independent and different and there is no absolute "frame line". Once the movie is projected at 24 frames per second, the viewer won't necessarily be able to absorb all information from the quickly flashing images, but most of it, yes. The photochemical film includes haphazard organic elements like dust and impurities. The material is intensely present in textures.

The outer, objectively perceivable reality is represented on the film surface by, for example, boarding passes, Minigrip bags (for liquids under 100ml), paperclips, dust, after-shave, perfume, broken glass, fine wool yarn (a knit unravelled), ash, a mobile charger, bullets, customer cards, leftover sushi, muesli, cholesterol medication, jewellery, loose pencil lead 0,7 HB and a ruler.

Director's word

Machines of public and private control determine the international lifestyle of permanent jet-laggers. The time spent daily with screens of various kinds is greater than direct human contact. Lonesome monitoring of bodily functions has become a respectful past-time norm.

Tectonic Plate uses minimalistic means to a maximum effect. Texts revolving around air-travel alternate with stream-of-consciousness avalanches of objects flickering on-screen. The wave motion between accelerating speed and stillness is also central on the audio track: from massive layers of sound to more discreet sonic textures to absolute silence.

Rhythm is central and resembles music. At times the rhythm is stuttering and banging, at times softly lingering. Since there are no figurative images captured with a camera, a whole and intact world is formed by the flat black/white silhouettes of photocopies and photograms, by the letters, words, fonts and the setting: the parallel shadow world.

The method of composing *Tectonic Plate* is filled with restricted randomness, chance operations within limits. The film desires to take cinematic means down to its basic elements, towards ancient shadowplays and camera obscuras of the cave people. The objective: encourage the viewer to be the active protagonist. The notions of memories, mistaken memories and haphazard emptiness play a significant role here in these reflective scenarios.

Since in *Tectonic Plate* everything is created without a camera, this project also touches the tradition of anti-illusionist, materialist film-making of the early 1970s, now bringing it to the 2020s mind-set. *Tectonic Plate* proposes a set-up for a possible "unseen movie".

– Mika Taanila

Writer's word

Paranoia is at the core of flying. At the airport, everyone is suspected, everything is controlled, and a baggage left alone is enough to produce chaos.

While constant security checks are humiliating, they are, of course, necessary for the system. To enjoy the freedom of air traveling, one has to accept standing in the line and being body checked. Ever increasing security is making flying more and more difficult, but at the same time safer.

As airports tend to be uninteresting and expensive places, and sitting in the plane is pretty much the opposite of comfort, the flying companies face a difficult task in promoting flying as a pleasant experience. For a writer, the language used in this marketing is of a great interest.

When writing *Tectonic Plate*, I was following up twitter accounts of different flying companies and airports. I've seldom seen so desperate communication. After all, it's not easy to convince that a sandwich in a plastic box is simply a delicious meal and that sitting still for ten hours represents the utmost freedom. However, there is some beauty in this marketing language, and I must confess I fell in love with the complexity of different bonus systems.

I knew the text would be essential in creating a story for the film. But I didn't want a traditional story, I wanted a futurist one: rather many contradicting stories and possibilities than one story line. A lot of paranoia, honesty about the fear of death, some moments of

beauty, some confusing jokes, and big plates of ready made text - and all this wrapped in the pseudo-rational context created by prologue and epilogue.

– Harry Salmenniemi

Director bio:

Mika Taanila (b. 22 May 1965 in Helsinki) is a film director / visual artist based in Helsinki. His projects address the notion of human engineering and the progress of technological evolution in modern age.

Taanila's films have been screened at several international film festivals and special events. Festival screenings include Toronto International Film Festival, IFFR Rotterdam, CPH:DOX, International Short Film Festival Clermont-Ferrand, Karlovy-Vary Film Festival, Midnight Sun Film Festival, IDFA Amsterdam and Oberhausen Kurzfilmtage.

Taanila's moving image installations have been shown at major international group shows, such as Aichi Triennale (2013), Documenta (2012), Shanghai Biennale (2006), Berlin Biennale (2004), Manifesta (2002) and Istanbul Biennial (2001). Solo shows include Hämeenlinna Art Museum (2015), Kiasma Museum of Contemporary Art in Helsinki (2013–14), Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis (2013), TENT, Rotterdam (2013), Galleria Heino, Helsinki (2010), Badischer Kunstverein, Karlsruhe (2008), Dazibao, Montréal (2007) and Migrosmuseum, Zurich (2005).

In May 2015 he was presented The Ars Fennica Award.

mikataanila.com
arsfennica15.fi

Mika Taanila's selected filmography:

Return of The Atom (2015, 110 min., co-dir. with Jussi Eerola)
SSEENNSSEESS (2013, 55 min, with live music by Circle)
My Silence (2013, 15 min)
Six Day Run (2013, 15 min)
The Zone of Total Eclipse (2006, 6 min)
Optical Sound (2005, 6 min)
Future Is Not What It Used To Be (2002, 52 min)
A Physical Ring (2002, 4 min)
RoboCup99 (2000, 25 min)
Futuro – A New Stance for Tomorrow (1998, 28 min)

Harry Salmenniemi (b.1983) is one of the most prominent young Finnish contemporary poets. He has published five poetry books, *Virrata että* (2008), *Teksas, sakset* (2010), *Runojä* (2011), *Kivirivit* (2013) and *Pimeän lehdet* (2015), as well as edited the *Vastakaanon*, an anthology of experimental poetry together with Juri Joensuu and Marko Niemi. Salmenniemi has received several awards in Finland, e.g. Kalevi Jäntti Award in 2010. Salmenniemi wrote the text for the circus act *Nopeussokeus / Speed Blindness* by Kalle Nio, which has, to date, been performed in over 20 countries. Several of Salmenniemi's poems have been composed for choir, and his first opera *Autuus* (comp. Antti Auvinen) premiered 2015. *Mannerlaatta* will be the first time Salmenniemi's texts are widely presented in an international context. He is based in Jyväskylä, Finland.

Mika Vainio (b. 1963) is one of the pioneers of minimalist techno. He has been making critically acclaimed solo recordings since 1993 and during 1993–2013 he was the second half of highly influential duo Pan sonic, together with Ilpo Väisänen. Vainio has collaborated for example with Alan Vega, Stephen O'Malley, Keiji Haino and Bruce Gilbert. His albums have recently been exploring the polarities of delicate, intimate compositions and physical noise. Vainio and Taanila have collaborated earlier for the short film A Physical Ring (2002), and the feature doc Return of the Atom (2015).

Olli Huhtanen (b. 1966) has 25 years experience in film sound as a sound designer and supervising sound editor. Huhtanen's curriculum consists of a wide repertoire of projects from mainstream fiction features to composing soundscapes for contemporary artists. Collaborators include also internationally renowned documentary film directors Virpi Suutari and Susanna Helke. Olli Huhtanen and Mika Taanila have worked together on several films and installations since 1997. In 2002 Huhtanen was a nominee for the annual Jussi Awards in Finland in Best Sound Design category with the film Cyclomania (dir. Simo Halinen). In 2012 Huhtanen was awarded with Jussi Prize for the Best Sound Design with the feature Hiljaisuus ("Silence", dir. Sakari Kirjavainen).

Lola Rogers is a Finnish to English literary translator living in Seattle. Lola has contributed translations of fiction, non-fiction and poetry to a variety of journals and anthologies and has translated numerous novels, including True by Riikka Pulkkinen, which was a Shelf Unbound best book of 2012, and Purge by Sofi Oksanen, chosen as a best book of 2010 by The California Literary Review, The Sunday Times and others. Other translations include works by Pasi Jääskeläinen, Johanna Sinisalo and Rosa Liksom.

Markus Pyörälä (b. 1983) is a book design oriented graphic designer and illustrator living in Helsinki. During the years his works have received gold and silver awards in annual Best of The Year -competition, and have been awarded eleven times in the The Most Beautiful Book of The Year Awards – two of the cases having been the Main Prize: Runojä (Harry Salmenniemi 2011) and the novel Neuromaani (Jaakko Yli-Juonikas, 2012). In 2012 Pyörälä collaborated with Finnish poet Vesa Haapala in his avant-garde poetry book Who shot Ötzi?.

Jussi Eerola (b.1969) has 23 years experience as a cinematographer. He has shot many internationally awarded short-, documentary- and animation films and TV-series & -features. He has worked with directors like Kari Juusonen (Pizza Passionata, Prix de Jury, Cannes 2001) and Auli Mantila (Silver Arrows, Best TV-draama Prix Europa 2007) and he is the DOP of all Mika Taanila's films. Eerola's directional debut was a documentary of electrosensitive people (Refugees of Technocracy, 2009). Return of the Atom, co-written and directed together with Mika Taanila, premiered in Toronto TIFF 2015 and was given the NORDIC:DOX AWARD at CPH:DOX 2015. Eerola is the founder of Testifilmi company together with Mika Taanila and IC-98 (Patrik Söderlund and Visa Suonpää). Tectonic Plate is his first feature as a producer.



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