

was positively surprised by the internationality of Finnish artists and their interest in Brazil.”

Helmut Batista has chosen Sanna Kannisto's video for this autumn's Rio de Janeiro Film Festival – he is assembling a showing of art films for the Festival's supplementary programme. Kannisto's recent hummingbird series can be seen in Finland in October-November at the Helsinki Photography Festival 2005.

“In my view, the most important part of residency work is to switch from one's home environment to completely new surroundings. You can concentrate fully on your own work without mundane things getting in the way. It is worth preparing thoroughly for the trip and finding things out beforehand to avoid major surprises. It is useful to draw up some kind of a work plan, even if it might change later on.”

Sanna Kannisto and Juha Nenonen were able to get away from everyday life in the Finnish winter with a bang, as their trip took place during the Rio carnival. “The rehearsal period took place first, and the actual carnival began at the beginning of February lasting a couple of weeks. The first normal weekday in Brazil isn't until after the carnival, so work and normal routine begin in mid-February!”

“We were amazed for the whole of the first month, which I think is common for most people until they get accustomed to the surroundings. But that was one of the rewards of the trip – absorbing something into oneself and into one's subconscious which may later achieve a visible form.”

www.sannakannisto.com

PAULA HAIKARAINEN

Breaking the habits

Keijo Sundvall in Africa

Artist and photographer Keijo Sundvall is an old hand when it comes to visiting Africa. He first went there for a workshop in Zambia in 1998 on a scholarship from the Artists' Association of Finland, and since then he has visited different parts of the continent almost every year.

“After the first workshop I worked voluntarily, teaching budding young Zambian artists for a couple of weeks. I also got to know many artists from southern Africa. Thanks to the Internet and e-mail we have continued to keep in touch. And as time has gone by, new acquaintances, new workshops and new residency places have always been coming.”

For example, Keijo Sundvall has close ties with Rockston, a community of Zambian artists' that maintains a residency and gallery in Lusaka.

“Their aim is to create operating potential for themselves and train the rising generation of artists. They have also started extending invitations to guest artists.”

Sundvall's visits have lasted from 3-4 weeks to a few months and taken in countries such as Namibia, Zimbabwe, South Africa, Uganda, Benin, Senegal, Kenya. “It's an enormous continent, where everything is always different from the previous country and previous experiences.”

And time always seems to run out, according to Sundvall, who might spend days wondering about everything new. This was particularly so on the first trip.

“Suddenly all around were animals that I'd seen only on television. In a river there were enormous hippopotamuses and in a tree beautiful birds hanging like bats upside down and singing hypnotically.”

A trip from Lusaka eastwards to the highlands also remains imprinted in his mind. “Suddenly it felt just like home there. The surrounding countryside looked the same as Lapland; small, gnarled trees and hills.

The earth was a different colour, more reddish but the same clear air. I joked with my students that they would be able to paint Lapland landscapes. They wondered what on earth Lapland was!”

“On the same trip we travelled from one village and clay hut to the next and drew portraits of the locals. I got a wonderful opportunity to become acquainted with the life of small village communities. It would hardly have been possible if I had been travelling on my own.”

Internet makes it happen

In addition to the artistic work and “all the other hustle and bustle”, Keijo Sundvall puts together and maintains a website with Africa themes. His ambitious intention is to create a databank of African workshops, artists' organizations and other parties that will arrange artist exchanges, for example. The English language pages have already led to interesting contacts.

“Somebody, for example, found the name of a lost acquaintance via the website and asked me how to get in touch with the person in question. ‘The world is a village’ also in that sense.”

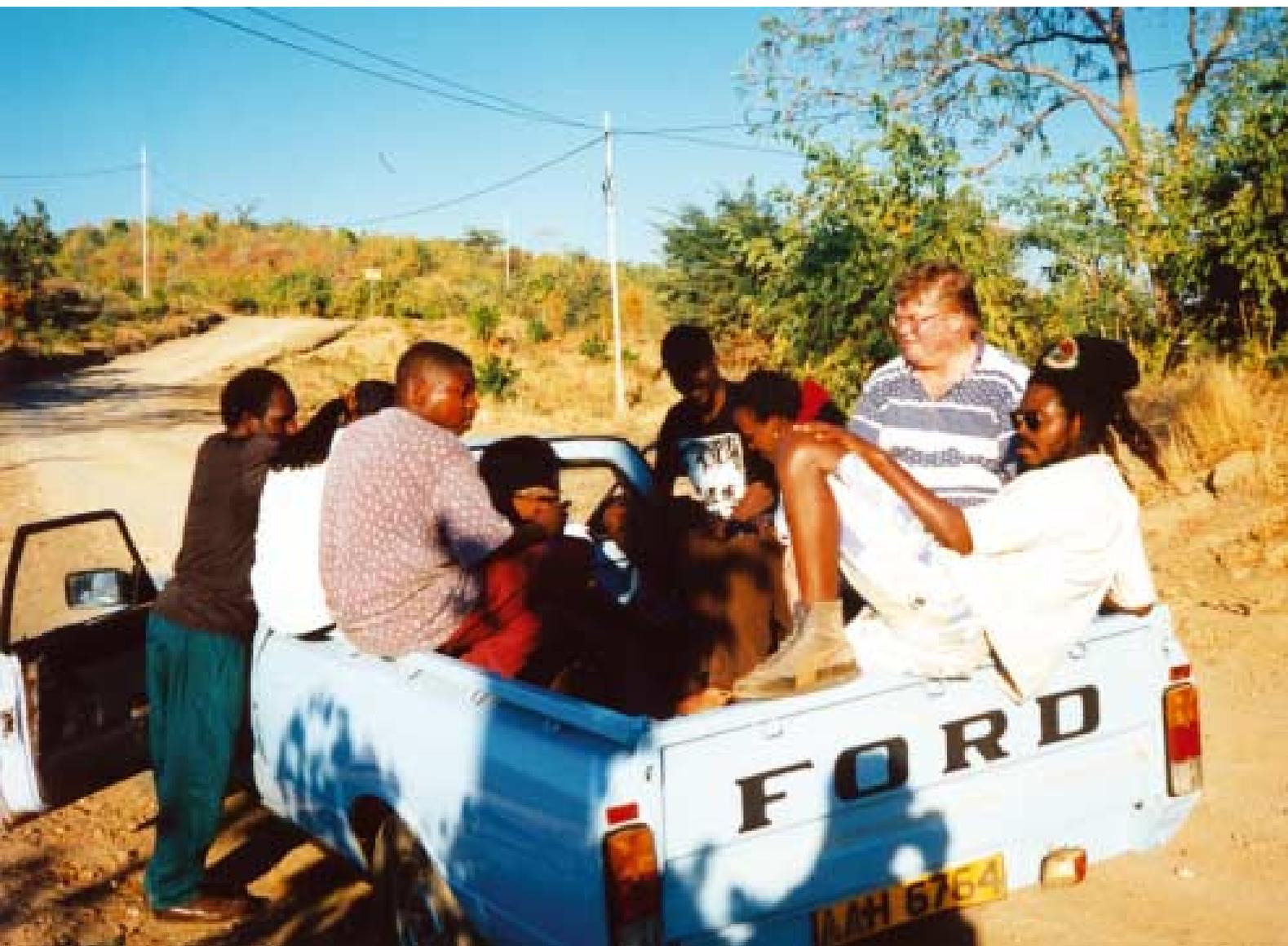
Sundvall also runs a small art agency at his online gallery.

“What's good should be shared. The online gallery isn't an actual business, but I'm only too pleased to help if works can be sold through it. Recently, for example, I was arranging a fine sewing machine from central Europe following the sale of a work of art for the wife of an artist in Uganda. Now the whole village there is really taken with it.”

Sundvall does not like assessing the impact of Africa on his own artistic work.

“I've photographed and done a lot of personal studies in which Africa can be seen concretely through its models. But otherwise it is very difficult to specify.”

“However I decided on my first visit that I'd always do something



quite different from what I'd do at home. I try to avoid my own mannerisms."

Down the years community singing presentations and performances have been created in Africa. "One good thing about them is that there are no packaging problems when they leave," Sundvall says with a laugh.

"If you produce a concrete work, you generally have to look for someone to whom you can give it without causing offence."

Keijo Sundvall's advice for artists with their eyes set on Africa stresses self-initiative. "If you succeed in advance in making contact with the local artist community or a private artist, you set off on your

journey from a quite different position compared with trying to survive on your own. I myself am grateful that everything was well organized when I started."

He praises the continent's generally extremely well equipped workshops.

"Conditions are better than at home; upkeep and materials are on the house and the company is also extremely good!"

"Most of the residency activity in Africa is funded by European or American foundations or sponsors such as the British Council or Alliance Française. Finnish organizations and the government have commendably been involved in creating opportunities for we Finnish

Keijo Sundvall and a bunch of other artists taking 'a cab' during the Mbile98 workshop in Zambia.

artists to be included in invitations. Their influence has been significant for artist and cultural exchange."

Sundvall hopes that additional support will be found in one way or another for residency and workshop activity. There are very few opportunities in Finland for artists from different parts of the world to work together on an exhibition, for example.

www.sundvall.org
www.rockstonart.org