

## Annette Arlander

### The Steaming Earth

28.9. – 17.10.2012

MUU gallery

As earthlings we are not only related to all beings living here, but connected to the earth itself as well. To try to consider us as citizens of planet earth — as the poet Velimir Khlebnikov, self-appointed president of planet earth and king of time, suggested back in 1916 — is challenging enough. Can we really have a relation to the earth itself, the planet as a living whole? I am not referring to the Gaia hypothesis, the idea of the extended systemic capacities of the combined ecosystems of the planet, but to the way the earth is alive in earthquakes, volcanic eruptions and seismic activity, such as the recent eruptions at Eyjafjallajökull in Iceland or near Fukushima in Japan. In Finland, the visible bedrock is among the oldest on the planet and relatively stable, so speaking of the living earth brings to mind the myriad life forms that cohabit the surface of the planet, not the semifluid mantle with its spots of boiling magma slowly moving below the crust of the earth, which in proportion to the rest of the planet is as thin as the skin of an apple. We are actually living within the skin of a feverish planet that is slowly cooling from the inside while warming from the outside.

The steaming, stinking soil in those places I chose to perform in for the video camera, made me realize how the planet is constantly in action, alive and volatile. In *Furnas* on the Azores, I encountered clouds of steam in the middle of a village. White steam billowed up from bubbling holes in the ground full of boiling sulphurous water. Small smokes, like emerging forest fires, although of moist steam, appeared here and there in the ground. I decided to explore other volcanic areas, such as *Krýsuvík* in Iceland and *Vulcano*, one of the Lipari Islands north of Sicily. There the entire landscape was giving off vapours; ceaseless flows of steam reveal the condensed and compressed activity within the earth, and create an experience of suppressed chaos.

ANNETTE ARLANDER (**born 1956**) is an artist, researcher and a pedagogue. She is one of the pioneers of Finnish performance art and a trailblazer of artistic research. Arlander holds an MA in directing, another in philosophy, and a PhD in theatre and drama. She is professor in performance art and theory at the Theatre Academy in Helsinki. Arlander's artwork is focused on performing landscape by means of video or recorded voice.

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