

Kerava Art Museum brings the internationally known crochet queen to Finland

An entire building is wrapped in pink crocheting patterns

New York-based OLEK (born. 1978 Agata Oleksiak, Poland) is known for her crocheted sculptures, trains, cars, bicycles and entire houses. Her best known piece is a false apartment in which the contents, including the residents, were wrapped in crochets. Her works possess a strong communal and social dimension. In New Delhi, she wrapped the gloomy metal surface of a homeless shelter in brightly-coloured crochet patterns. In Kerava she invited people to crochet a house in pink for a brighter future filled with hope.

The roots of *Our Pink House* in Kerava are set in an exhibition implemented in the small town of Avesta, Sweden, where Olek worked with refugee women from Syria and Ukraine. *"When I first came to Avesta to install a work of art at the Verket museum, I had originally intended to recreate a traditional home. And I did. However, when the Syrian and Ukrainian refugees who helped me install my piece started telling me the candid stories of their recent experiences and horrors of their home countries, I decided to blow up my crocheted house to illustrate the current unfortunate situation worldwide where hundreds of thousands of people are displaced."*

"After I exploded the house I wanted to create a positive ending for them as a symbol of a brighter future for all people, especially the ones who have been displaced against their own wills. Women have the ability to recreate themselves. No matter how low life might bring us, we can get back on our feet and start anew."

"Our pink house is about the journey, not just about the artwork itself. It's about us coming together as a community. It's about helping each other. We can show everybody that women can build houses, women can make homes." - OLEK

During a period of three weeks a large group of volunteers, immigrants and women from a reception centre for asylum seekers came together to crochet *Our Pink House*. Over 300 square meters has been produced by them and a professional team in Poland. The Gallery Alli building, located near Kerava railway station, is now wrapped with pink crocheting patterns, stretching from the chimney to the stone base.

The house was originally built in 1910's by carpenter Karl Jacob Svensk. During the Winter War 1939-1940, bombs fell to the yard, but family and the house survived. In 2015 over 21 million people lost their homes and had to flee abroad due to war and conflicts. *Our Pink House* is a symbol of hope and a wish for a better future.

Our Pink House is associated with Kerava Art Museum's upcoming exhibition *Yarn Visions*, which will place the spotlight on knitted, crocheted, tufted and embroidered works. The exhibition curated by DFA Minna Haveri will be shown in Art and Museum Centre Sinkka 26.11.2016-5.3.2017. If the weather permits, *Our Pink House* will be featured until the opening of the exhibition.

The project produced by Kerava Art Museum has been supported by Finland's National Board of Antiquities, Prym Consumer Finland, Red Heart (USA) and Kerava Art Museum Friends Association, Kerava Evangelical Lutheran Parish and Savio Printing House. All of them share the artist's wish: - *Everybody should have a home.*

“We live in challenging times, a changing world filled with conflict, wars and natural disasters. But I like to think that it’s also a world filled with love.” - OLEK

OLEK

Born Agata Oleksiak, in 1978, in industrial Poland, OLEK's art allowed her to leave her gritty, narrow-minded hometown of Silesia. Through colors and conceptual exploration, OLEK's art examines sexuality, feminist ideas, and the evolution of communication, all with meticulous detail and total candor. OLEK consistently pushes the boundaries of fashion, art, crafts, and public art, fluidly combining the sculptural and the fanciful. With the old-fashioned technique of crocheting, she has taken the ephemeral medium of yarn to express everyday occurrences and inspirations, thus creating a metaphor for the complexity and interconnectedness of our bodies and our psychological processes. OLEK's bursts of bright colors often mask political and cultural critiques woven into the fibers of installations, mirroring her respect for artists and writers. She highlights that which already exists in real time, in our environment.

As an active supporter of women's rights, sexual equality, and freedom of expression, OLEK has used the broad appeal of her work to display her solidarity with those stifled by oppressive laws worldwide. Through her body of work, OLEK has always sought to bring color and life, energy, and surprise to the living space. OLEK's work has been exhibited in galleries, museums, and public spaces worldwide, from Art Basel and Wynwood Walls in Miami to the Brooklyn Museum in New York and The Smithsonian in Washington DC. OLEK currently lives and works in Brooklyn.

Olek's home page: <http://oleknyc.com>

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