

ITE Artist of the Year, Markku Sarastamo

A solo exhibition in Rauma, Finland

Markku Sarastamo: *Karbujo – a land that does not exist*

3–25 October 2025, open Tue–Thu 13:00–18:00 and Fri–Sat 11:00–14:00

Art House RaumArs, Alfredinkatu 3, Rauma, Finland

Free entry



[The 2025 ITE Artist of the year, Markku Sarastamo](#), explores the mysterious world of Karbujo in his colourful and imaginative exhibition in Rauma, Finland.

The colourful drawings in the exhibition *Karbujo – a land that does not exist* depict an imaginary country located in a jungle-like region by the sea, where explorer Sampo Sarastar embarks on adventures to discover a hidden civilisation and its world views and mechanical inventions. The exhibition also covers an extensive selection of Sarastamo's sculptures that he has created over the years.

Markku Sarastamo will be working as part of his RaumArs residency during the exhibition and will also be available to meet visitors. There will be work demonstrations, magic tricks and a lecture on obstacles to creativity.

Children are also invited to explore the exhibition. The artist will set up a small-scale puppet theatre and a space workshop in the gallery, where children can stage a play or create arrangements using the wonders of the space. Participants can – and are asked to – touch the objects, and they can take photos of their creations as a souvenir.

Markku Sarastamo is a versatile talent and an embodiment of the ‘self-made life’

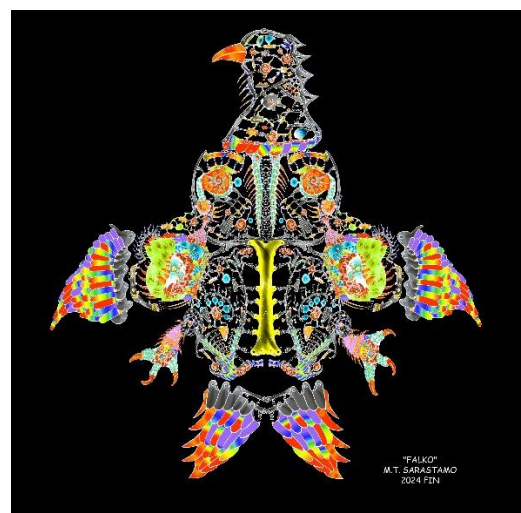
Markku Sarastamo (1948, Hämeenlinna) epitomises the ‘self-made life’. He has been guided by curiosity, desire to experiment and imagination since he was a little boy. Sarastamo is known as an ITE artist, but he is also a magician, inventor, yogi, judoka, Esperantist, writer of children’s stories, storyteller and performance artist who portrays a variety of characters, among many other things.

Sarastamo is the 2025 ITE Artist of the Year, a title awarded by the Association for Rural Culture and Education (MSL).

“The selection of Markku Sarastamo as the flag-bearer of ITE art is a recognition of the wide range of manifestations of creativity,” says **Raija Kallioinen**, Coordinator for Cultural Affairs at the Association for Rural Culture and Education. “It’s also our way to show our appreciation for Sarastamo’s artistic career, which spans several decades, and his life’s work.”

Markku Sarastamo’s works were displayed in an ITE art exhibition for the first time in 2001 at the Helsinki Art Museum’s exhibition in Meilahti. He has been described as a creator of extraordinary mechanical works, imaginative sculptures and skilfully executed drawings that depict the fairy-tale world of Karbujo.

Karbujo – a world of fantasy and adventure



Markku Sarastamo has combined several areas of his artistic pursuits under the concept of Karbujo-Hiilimaa in recent years. The wonderful fairy-tale world of Karbujo comprises a trilogy of stories and an ever-expanding visual world that continues to grow through the addition of sculptures and detailed digital illustrations.

“I’ve been writing, drawing and dreaming about this story for some 25 years. It was probably inspired by the adventure books of my boyhood and my enthusiasm for mechanics and electronics,” says Markku Sarastamo, explaining how Karbujo, his imaginary land, came into being.

Its name comes from the Esperanto words ‘karbo’, meaning carbon, and ‘ujo’, meaning a container or country. This ‘Carbonland’ is volcanic, featuring volcanic escape caves and canals that could be home to a novel humankind.

The exhibition *Karbujo – a land that does not exist* is co-produced by Art House RaumArs and the Association for Rural Culture and Education. The Association’s ITE Artist of the Year programme has been supported by the Keskitie Foundation.

Ancillary programme

The artist will offer ancillary events alongside the exhibition from 7 to 14 October as part of the Rauma Senior Weeks organised by the City of Rauma. The events will be able to accommodate 20–30 participants and the admission will be free.

- Tuesday, 7 October between 11:00 and 12:00. [The magic trick of the week](#). Participants are asked to bring a euro coin, a deck of cards and an inquisitive mind.
- Friday, 10 October between 13:00 and 14:00. [Creativity and loneliness](#), a public lecture to mark World Mental Health Day, with time for comments and questions from the public.
- Tuesday, 14 October between 11:00 and 12:00. [Work demonstration](#): how to make a silver bird.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE EXHIBITION, PLEASE CONTACT

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WHAT IS ITE ART?

- ITE art is Finnish visual contemporary folk art.
- The acronym ITE comes from the Finnish *itse tehty elämä* (self-made life). ITE is art that is dependent on its maker's environment and experience. It is a way to live a good life that emphasises aesthetic values.
- ITE art is mainly made and displayed outside the art world, in its creator's everyday environment.
- ITE art is part of the international outsider art scene.
- The Association for Rural Culture and Education has been surveying ITE art across Finland for almost 30 years and has discovered hundreds of self-taught artists. To the Association's knowledge, a survey of contemporary visual folk art of this scale has never been carried out anywhere else in the world. The Association for Rural Culture and Education will continue to encourage individuals and communities to be creative and to make choices that reflect who they are, in the spirit of a 'self-made life'. While the Association will not organise any more extensive survey projects to discover artists, individual artists and their works will continue to be documented.
- More information: <https://msl.fi/itetaide/en/front-page/>

ITE ARTIST OF THE YEAR

The purpose of the award is to introduce the public to the voices and views of self-taught artists who have produced a significant body of work. Aside from recognition and publicity for the artist, it is hoped that the award will provide inspiration to others to find their own sources of creativity. More information: <https://msl.fi/itetaide/en/ite-artist-of-the-year/>

Books by Markku Sarastamo

Markku Sarastamo wrote a memoir of his colourful life, *Elämänlanka – Markku Sarastamon elämää ja tekoja 1960–2021*. Unfortunately the self-published book is no longer in print but, with the permission of the artist, the text, which is in Finnish, has been made available on [the Association for Rural Culture and Education website](#).

Kreivitär ja hänen huikea elämänsä, Sarastamo's fantasy book about a duchess and her amazing life, is aimed at both children and adults and is available in Finnish and Esperanto on his website www.markkusarastamo.fi.