

**THE DAVIS MUSEUM AT WELLESLEY COLLEGE
PRESENTS
*EIJA-LIISA AHTILA: OLENTOJA (CREATURES)***

***First major U.S. museum exhibition
of internationally acclaimed Finnish film and video artist opens September 18***

WELLESLEY, Mass. – The Davis presents **Eija-Liisa Ahtila: Olentoja (Creatures)**, the first multi-installation presentation at a U.S. museum by the internationally renowned Finnish artist Eija-Liisa Ahtila, opening September 18, 2013 in the Chandler, Bronfman and Freedman galleries. On view through January 5, 2014, the exhibition is free and open to the general public. An opening reception with the artist will be held on September 18 from 5:30-8 p.m.

“Eija-Liisa Ahtila is best known for her lushly beautiful and psychologically intense videos, and for the precise calibration (of image, sound, and environment) of her installations,” said **Lisa Fischman**, Ruth Gordon Shapiro '37 Director of the Davis and curator of the exhibition. “Vivid and mesmerizing, her videos are mysterious and open-ended, often imbued by notions of the sacred and miraculous in everyday experience. The work’s distinctive narrative complexity is further enhanced by multi-screen projection, designed to question both the nature of the ‘moving image’ and the possibility of seeing from many perspectives at once.”

Culled from over a decade of production, the five works featured— *Horizontal* (2011), *Anthropomorphic Exercises on Film* (2011), *Companions* (2011), *The Annunciation* (2010), and *The House* (2002)— demonstrate the depth and range of the artist’s practice. Most recently, Ahtila has been inspired by German biologist/philosopher Jacob von Uexküll’s notion of *umwelt*, (from the German word for environment), which emphasizes that every living creature perceives the world in its own way. The projects selected for this exhibition are filled with beings—human, animal, magical, and botanical—poised in uncertain relationships.

Ahtila is a storyteller, describing her works as ‘human dramas,’ focusing on relationships, often among women, and with the natural world. Deftly navigating the gap between reality and imagination her work explores the interaction between the realms of the human, the animal and the divine.

For the exhibition title, Ahtila chose the Finnish word *Olentoja (Creatures)* which captures this scope and adds “a bit more soul.”

[For pronunciation, visit <http://translate.google.com/#auto/fi/creatures>].

Born in 1959, Ahtila studied filmmaking at the London College of Printing, UCLA, and at the American Film Institute in Los Angeles. In 1990 she received the Young Artist of the Year Award, Tampere, Finland. Since then, she has received numerous grants and awards, including an AVEK-award for important achievements in the field of audio-visual culture (1997), the Edstrand Art Price (1998), a DAAD fellowship (1999), honorary mention at the 48th Venice Biennale (1999), the Vincent Van Gogh Bi-annual Award for Contemporary Art in Europe (2000), and a five-year grant from the Central Committee for the Arts (2001), as well as the Artes Mundi Prize (2006). She also exhibited in Documenta XI (2002) and the 50th Venice Biennale (2005). *Parallel Worlds*, a major mid-career survey of her work, traveled between the Moderna Museet in Stockholm and the Museum of Contemporary Art Kiasma in Helsinki.

International cultural theorist, critic and artist **Mieke Bal** will be participating in several events held in conjunction with *Eija-Liisa Ahtila: Olentoja (Creatures)*. On September 21, Bal will join Ahtila in a discussion on 'The Politics of Art,' which celebrates the global launch of Bal's newest publication, *Thinking in Film: The Politics of Video Installation According to Eija-Liisa Ahtila*. On September 23, Bal screens her latest film, *Madame B.*, based on Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*, and on September 25, she will give a mid-day gallery talk on the exhibition.

For full event details, visit davismuseum.wellesley.edu.

Curated by Lisa Fischman, Ruth Gordon Shapiro '37 Director of the Davis, the exhibition and related programs are presented with major support from the Kathryn Wasserman Davis '28 Fund for World Cultures and Leadership, special funding provided by Wellesley College Friends of Art at the Davis, and additional support from FRAME, Visual Art Finland.

EXHIBITION EVENTS

Opening Celebration!

Wednesday, September 18 | 5:30 – 8:00 p.m. | Davis Galleries and Lobby | Free

Join us to celebrate the opening of our exciting fall exhibitions, and to welcome world-renowned artist Eija-Liisa Ahtila to Wellesley!

Book Launch

The Politics of Art: An Evening with author MIEKE BAL and artist EIJA-LIISA AHTILA

Saturday, September 21 | 5:00 p.m. | Collins Cinema, Reception follows in the Davis Lobby | Free

A conversation and book signing to celebrate the global launch of Dutch critic, theorist, and filmmaker Mieke Bal's newest publication, *Thinking in Film: The Politics of Video Installation According to Eija-Liisa Ahtila*, the second volume in her trilogy on the questions of political art.

Bal writes that she "chose Ahtila... because of the restraint with which she manages to move us deeply on a political level without ever falling into propaganda. Her *oeuvre* demonstrates

that the political impact of art is not dependent on political statements, but, on the contrary, must stay away from the rhetoric of politics. To put it bluntly: political art must stay aloof of politics in order to be effective. Although Ahtila's work invariably touches us with issues that have political ramifications—such as colonialism, gender politics, and the streamlining of the imagination—even in the face of the most blatantly political issues, she will not pronounce.”

Co-sponsored by the Davis Museum and the Susan and Donald Newhouse Center for the Humanities, this event is supported by the Kathryn Wasserman Davis '28 Fund for World Cultures and Leadership and the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

Screening: Mieke Bal and *Madame B.*

Monday, September 23 | 7:30 p.m. | Collins Cinema | Free

International cultural theorist, critic, and artist, Mieke Bal will present her latest film project, *Madame B.* (directed by Mieke Bal and Michelle Williams Garnaker), an ambitious, feature-length film adapted from the legendary 1856 novel, *Madame Bovary*, by Gustave Flaubert. *Madame B.* draws upon this classic work of literature as an allegory for contemporary mores, and the film offers a radically new interpretation of the text. Visually, *Madame B.* questions the role of women in a society driven by masculine impulses while, at the narrative level, the film explores ways in which cinematic writing can be turned into visual story-telling.

Co-sponsored by the Davis Museum, the Susan and Donald Newhouse Center for the Humanities, and the Cinema and Media Studies Program, with funding generously provided by the Kathryn Wasserman Davis '28 Fund for World Cultures and Leadership and the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

Gallery Talk with MIEKE BAL

Monday, September 25 | 12:30 – 2:00 p.m. | Davis Galleries and Lobby | Free

This special Wellesley Wednesday event at the Davis offers a community opportunity to experience the exhibition **Eija-Liisa Ahtila: Olentoja (Creatures)** through the eyes of visiting cultural theorist, critic, and artist, Mieke Bal.

Wellesley Wednesday with Mieke Bal at the Davis is generously funded by the Kathryn Wasserman Davis '28 Fund for World Cultures and Leadership, the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, the Wilson Fund, and the Art Department.

Family Day at the Davis: Wind in the Trees

Saturday, October 26 | 11:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. | Davis Galleries and Lobby | Free

Inspired by the work of Finnish artist Eija-Liisa Ahtila, our fall Family Day invites visitors of all ages to think about the many different ways that artists represent nature. Fun activities, staged in the Davis galleries and lobby, include a scavenger hunt, crafts, and light refreshments.

Family Day is generously supported by The Palley Endowment Fund for Davis Museum Outreach Programs.

DAVIS MUSEUM GENERAL INFORMATION

Location: Wellesley College, 106 Central St., Wellesley, Mass.

Museum Hours: Tuesday–Saturday, 11:00 am–5:00 pm, Wednesday until 8:00 pm, and Sunday, noon–4:00 pm. Closed Mondays, holidays, and Wellesley College recesses.

Admission is free and open to the public.

Telephone: 781-283-2051

Website: www.davismuseum.wellesley.edu

Parking: Free and available in the lot behind the museum. Additional parking is available in the Davis Parking Facility.

Tours: Led by student tour guides and curators. Free. Call 781-283-3382

Accessible: The Davis, Collins Café and Collins Cinema are wheelchair accessible and wheelchairs are available for use in the Museum without charge. Special needs may be accommodated by contacting Director of Disability Services Jim Wice at 781-283-2434 or jwice@wellesley.edu.

ABOUT THE DAVIS MUSEUM

One of the oldest and most acclaimed academic fine arts museums in the United States, the Davis Museum is a vital force in the intellectual, pedagogical and social life of Wellesley College. It seeks to create an environment that encourages visual literacy, inspires new ideas, and fosters involvement with the arts both within the College and the larger community.

ABOUT WELLESLEY COLLEGE & THE ARTS

The Wellesley College arts curriculum and the highly acclaimed Davis Museum are integral components of the College's liberal arts education. Departments and programs from across the campus enliven the community with world-class programming— classical and popular music, visual arts, theatre, dance, author readings, symposia, and lectures by some of today's leading artists and creative thinkers—most of which are free and open to the public.

Since 1875, Wellesley College has been the preeminent liberal arts college for women. Known for its intellectual rigor and its remarkable track record for the cultivation of women leaders in every arena, Wellesley—only 12 miles from Boston—is home to some 2300 undergraduates from every state and 75 countries.



Massachusetts Cultural Council

