



© Laura Horelli

Jokinen

Laura Horelli

2016, color, 45 min., English, Finnish, Russian. **Production company** Laura Horelli (Berlin, Germany). **Director of photography** Anne Misselwitz. **Editor** Janina Herhoffer. **Sound** Benjamin Kalisch, Lukas Lücke. **Sound design** Jochen Jezussek. **With** Olad Aden, Artur Andreasjan, Peter Gilbert Cotton, Katri Kuusimäki, Leslie Malton, Pertti Rönkkö.

Contact: <http://www.laurahorelli.com>

In 1931, the so-called Jokinen Trial, organized by the Communist Party of the USA in Harlem, New York, brought the Finnish immigrant August Jokinen to public attention. Jokinen, a janitor at the Finnish Worker's Club, was accused of not defending three African-American communists who had been mistreated at one of the club's dances. Following his admittance of guilt, Jokinen became an outspoken civil rights advocate until he was arrested for membership in the Communist Party and subsequently deported to Finland.

Laura Horelli tells Jokinen's migration tale as a mixture between historical research, detective story, and arts and crafts club. Arranging her archival findings – ranging from newspaper articles to books and historical photographs – on a physical desktop, she constructs a narrative by positioning, highlighting, cutting out, masking, and coloring. Her "analogue desktop-documentary" follows August Jokinen's public story all the way to the present,

Who Knows August Jokinen?

Laura Horelli is gathering information about Jokinen and his family. The investigative story will be shown at Muu gallery, Helsinki in February 2016.

The Berlin artist Laura Horelli has recently been researching the story of the Finnish-American August Jokinen and his family. Until now little information has been found about the communist, who later went to the Soviet Union.

"My last piece was about my mother's childhood in New York in the 1950s. While researching for the film, I came across an event called 'The Yokinen Trial,' which took place in Harlem, New York in 1931. It was the first trial against racism in the USA, in which the American Communist Party tried August Jokinen. I started wondering who this August Jokinen was and what his experience of migration was," says Laura Horelli.

August Jokinen was born in Tampere in 1894. He moved to the USA, where he worked at the workers' club "The Labor Temple" as a janitor. In 1931 he was at the center of a show trial against racism organized by the American Communist Party. In the trial he regretted his earlier opinions and promised to fight for the rights of African-Americans.

"Unfortunately, because of the trial, the authorities arrested him and eventually deported him from the United States," the researcher continues.

August's brother Paavo Jokinen and his relatives the Mäkivirtas moved to Petrozavodsk during the large immigration movement of Finnish-Americans in 1931, August followed them in 1932, and his wife Lydia (Lyyli) and daughter Toini arrived in 1933.

"August, Lyyli, Paavo, and Hilja Jokinen are mentioned with photographs in Mayme Sevander's book *The Wonderers*. Several American historians write about the trial, as it touches on African-American history. Jokinen lived in the United States for 13 years, but he did not have American citizenship. I have not been able to find out about the later stages of the families in the Soviet Union, except that August Jokinen was still in Petrozavodsk in June 1938 and his brother Paavo and the Mäkivirtas fled to the Russian far east. August Jokinen lived in at least three countries and it looks like he did not find a home anywhere."

The artist-researcher also knows that August Jokinen worked in construction and as a janitor in Petrozavodsk until 1937, when he was fired. He stayed, however, in Petrozavodsk.

Crumbs of information from different writings

Some information about August Jokinen could be found in libraries and archives in the USA and Finland.

"In the USA I found information in history books and newspapers like *The New York Times*, but also in many newspapers linked to the Communist Party, like *The Forward*, *The Daily Worker*, and *The Liberator*. There is some information, but it is ideologically colored. It is difficult to say what 'the truth' behind the story is. It has been especially difficult to learn about the life of August

Jokinen and his family in the Soviet Union. A few crumbs of information were detected at the Finnish National Archives and a 1935 publication called *Soviet-Karelia's 15-Year Journey*," Horelli adds.

August Jokinen's name has not been found in any lists of the victims of Stalin's purges. The researcher has, however, found five photographs of the man.

"I am interested in whether anything can be found in the newspapers of Petrozavodsk about Jokinen or his family – Lyyli and Toini Jokinen or of his brothers Paavo, Hilja, and Antti Jokinen, or of their relatives Emil and Julia Mäkivirta. Jokinen is a common surname, but maybe in Petrozavodsk or in the Karelian Republic there are people who are related to him or could help me to find out about his story in Petrozavodsk."

The aim of Laura Horelli's research is to make a video and a series of photographs.

"The work will be shown in Muu gallery, Helsinki in February 2016. The Kone Foundation in Finland has given me a grant for the project. I believe that the piece will also be translated into English and German."

*Ilona Veikkolainen: "Who Knows August Jokinen?"
(Kuka tuntee August Jokisen?),
in: Karjalan Sanomat, Petrozavodsk, 27 May 2015*

to a mailbox message on a Russian mobile phone.

Laura Horelli, born in 1976 in Helsinki, Finland, lives and works in Berlin. She attended the Academy of Fine Arts, Helsinki, Department of Time and Space (MA, 2001) and the Staatliche Hochschule für Bildende Künste – Städelschule, Frankfurt am Main as masters student of Thomas Bayrle (2002). In 2011 she received the Hannah Höch Prize for Young Artists from the City of Berlin. She was awarded a 5-year working grant by the Arts Promotion Centre Finland in 2012. Her work has been shown at numerous international exhibitions and festivals.

Films

1999: *Mobile Phone Use/Advertising* (video installation, 3 min.). 2003: *Helsinki Shipyard/Port San Juan* (video installation, 17 min.), *You Go Where You're Sent* (19 min.). 2004: *Wolfen-Nord, Teil 1 und 2* (with Kathrin Wildner, video installation, 13 min.). 2005: *712 Interviews?* (video installation, 19 min.), *Incomplete Picture – "Discover Japan"* (video installation, 18 min.). 2007: *I Have Been Considering Making a Video about a Ski Resort in Northern Finland and Showing it in a Gallery in Berlin* (video installation, 16 min.). 2009: *Shedding Details* (with Gerhard Friedl, 24 min.), *Haukka-pala (A-Bit-to-Bite)* (video installation, 28 min.). 2010: *Trading Places* (with Ann Kaneko, installation, 27 min.). 2011: *The Terrace* (24 min.). 2013: *A Letter to Mother* (27 min.). 2016: *Jokinen*.