



Kirby Wright

Strolling Helsinki

Neoclassic bones crumble. The 18th Century is propped by scaffolding along South Harbour yet visible under sheets of plastic. I'm struck by the stench of feces outside Hotel Kämp. Cracked pipes? I squint my vulture eyes: tourists swarm the Esplanadi for another free concert. A Finnish band sings "Black Magic Woman" to a Cuban couple doing the Salsa. I smell fish frying at the wharf. The Estonians are magicians with spatulas, flipping filets with crusty edges. I vow to purchase juniper coasters and peruse the postcards. Stamps too expensive. One day I will cross paths with Lasse Virén and ask about the Olympics. I imagine that Viking face tightening while contemplating his answer. I reach booths with red and orange canvas tops—the fish girl from Turku beckons from behind a greasy apron. I must dine before these vendors close at dusk, before the water trucks arrive to squirt apples and trash into Market Square gutters.

I feel good incognito. Is this the aftermath of lust? Perhaps there was too much heat between us to make what we did count. I struggle remembering your face and recalling the pitch of your cry. Steam rises off the blackened salmon stuck to the end of my fork.

Kirby Wright's second play, Asylum Uncle, was performed at the Secret Theatre's 2016 LIC Festival in New York. He was the 2016 Artist in Residence at the Eckerö Mail and Customs House in the Åland Islands, Finland.