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Marianne Huotari: Voyage
September 9 – October 31, 2026
Opening Reception: Wednesday, September 9, 6–8pm
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HB381 is pleased to announce *Voyage*, a solo exhibition of new works by Marianne Huotari (Finnish, b. 1986). Huotari's meticulously beaded sculptures and wall tapestries reimagine traditional Finnish *rya* long-pile textiles. Although primarily a ceramicist in practice, textile design is Huotari's métier; through a care-intensive process of craftsmanship the artist sculpts hundreds of oblong ceramic beads, rounded medallions, and crimped petals by hand before affixing them to a metal armature with wire. Each sculptural work begins as though in the workshop of a couturier with Huotari's vast array of beads carefully sorted by shape, size, and tonality. These are arranged into elaborate compositional patterns and sculpted bas-reliefs. Much like a dressmaker's mannequin, steel armatures stand at the ready as Huotari fastens each ceramic bead into the matrix of her work. The resulting tessellated and layered surfaces are at times reminiscent of the colorful paisleys and hypnotic patterning of the 1970s, at others hewing closer to the decorative arts of the rococo or art nouveau periods.

For her first solo exhibition with HB381, Huotari has gathered a broad range of references from the botanical to the sartorial and the carnivalesque, reading allegories of the natural world through the lens of oneiric and at times retro, psychedelia-infused imagery. Her expansive wall works, *Night in the Arboretum* and *By the Waterfall* (her largest to date), offer shifting visions of lush gardens fluctuating amid fields of pattern and color. Their enveloping and tightly-packed compositions nod to the DIY aesthetics of the 1970s counterculture while applying an haute couture level of handwork. These densely-packed terrains of unmediated color relay a joyful allegory of abundance and expansiveness. The emotional tenor of her works is unceasingly euphoric, oracular, and full of wonder.

As Huotari's monumental wall hangings and coruscating sculptural constructions are delicately lifted and installed along walls and atop pedestals, they rustle softly, chiming mellifluously in a susurrous of soft percussive sounds. Composed of hundreds and at times thousands of individually-sculpted ceramic beads and tiles, Huotari's works emit a panoply of sensory impressions — sonic, tactile, vibrantly optic — which insist on the immersive and altogether transportative properties of visual experience: art as a portal and a conduit to the psyche. As Elizabeth Essner writes in her essay for the exhibition, "Huotari's dream-like works nearly envelop the viewer — a strange and delightful refuge from today's harsh realities."

That many of her works find roots in nature, the garden, and landscape speaks of necessity to the satiating and nourishing capacity of Huotari's endeavor. Thanks in part to the artist's background in textile design (she studied at Aalto University, where her master's degree focused on textiles and surface design, and built her professional career as the former creative director at Finarte, one of Finland's leading lights in contemporary textile design), her work displays a distinct affinity for the lineage of natural patterning in the decorative arts. In *Voyage*,

Huotari tugs on the threads of textile traditions through vegetable and vine, foliage, harvest, and myth. A number of her works echo artists of the Pattern and Decoration movement, nodding to Howardena Pindell's practice of confetti-like accretion, Joyce Kozloff's patchwork canvases of painted textile patterns, and the floral extravagance of Robert Kushner's layered botanicals. Other works like *Verdant Daydreamer* and *Tree of Tales* resonate deeply with Finnish folklore and its fantastical descriptions of woodlands, lakes, and tundra. As Essner writes, "While the artist's primary medium is ceramics, her practice could easily be described as world-building. The works in *Voyage* seem plucked from a place far more fantastic than our own—a realm in which you are invited to wander."

For some time, Huotari's practice has found its structural logic in one of the early art forms of the Finnish and Scandinavian people, a long-pile hand-knotted woven textile technique known as *rya* weaving. Ryas first emerged in the 15th century when they were used as functional maritime blankets to provide warmth and protection against the elements in the harsh conditions of the Baltic and North seas. Over centuries, coarse pile coverings gave way to elaborate tapestries, which were picked up by and became a stylistic hallmark of radical midcentury Nordic designers. Artists and artisans including Loja Saarinen, Lillian Holm, Maja Andersson Wirde, and Ruth Ingvarsson brought new visual approaches to the technique, with Saarinen becoming one of the great teachers and proponents of Nordic textiles during her tenure at Cranbrook. Artists including Toshiko Takaezu learned the rya method there, bringing their own personal sensibilities and material preferences to the enduring tradition. Huotari extends this distinctive heritage through her material transformation of the rya technique into ceramics, with fiber piles becoming stoneware beads and thread traded for metallic wire. In doing so, she imbues her work with a deep sense of permanence and age-old myth, while enlivening the natural fixity of ceramics — blending two distinct craft disciplines in a poetic synthesis.

Huotari lives and works in Helsinki where she is a member of the Arabia Art Department Society. Her work has been shown widely in Finland, as well as throughout Europe, Asia, and the United States. Her collection *Väre* was made in collaboration with the Finnish National Museum. Huotari served as the creative director for the Helsinki-based design and rug company Finarte until 2025. In 2022, she was shortlisted for the Loewe Craft Prize and her work was exhibited at the Seoul Museum of Craft Arts. She is the recipient of the 2024 Taito-Finlandia Prize and the NYCxDesign Award. Today, Huotari's works are included in the collections of the Espoo Museum of Modern Art, the Finnish State Art Collection, and Palazzo Fendi.