

Call for Participants (2024–25)

Gifts from the Sentient Forest

*Communication &
Trees & People in*



*Collaboration Between
Northern Finland*

Applicants from Finland are invited to take part in a two-year project *Gifts from the Sentient Forest*, co-facilitated by Francis Joy of the University of Lapland Arctic Centre and John C. Ryan of Southern Cross University, Australia, with support from the Kone Foundation's 'In the Woods' funding program.

Gifts from the Sentient Forest develops creative approaches to Northern Finland's forests. The project fosters new perspectives on the region's plants and the cultural heritage surrounding them through insights from the natural and social sciences, humanities, and arts.

The idea of 'forest sentience' points to the capacity of plants for communication, memory, and other intelligent qualities. What are the creative, educational, social, and health-related implications of recognising plants as sentient?

Our project endeavours to understand how recognising the botanical world in contexts other than exploitation can illuminate ways in which plant life and forests rejuvenate human-nature relationships and sustain the Earth.

Participants will take part in **2 residential creative retreats per year in 2024 and 2025** in the forests near Äkäslompolo and elsewhere. The theme of the retreats will be ***The Sentient Forest***. The guiding question: how can we access forest intelligence and sentience through creative practices?

Applicants should have **a creative practice** such as painting, drawing, sketching, illustration, photography, digital media, writing (all genres), performance, theatre, experimental art, craft, artisanry, and others. The project will culminate in exhibitions in Oulu and Rovaniemi as well as an anthology of creative work. Applicants should be at least 18 years old. Participants will also be asked to join occasional Zoom meetings of the project cohort.

All project-related expenses will be included (accommodation at residential retreats, meals, travel to and from retreats, and a biannual stipend). Although applicants from Northern Finland (Oulu, Rovaniemi, and all other areas) will be given priority, we invite participants from anywhere in Finland.

To apply, please send a one-page letter of interest and CV (both in English) by **28 March 2024** to Francis Joy and John C. Ryan: sentientforestproject@gmail.com. In your letter of interest, please explain your reason for applying, your creative practice, and whether you can commit to the entire two-year program, including **4 residential retreats** (Friday evenings to Sunday afternoons) in Northern Finland in spring and autumn of each year.