

Robert Wilson/  
**TAPIO WIRKKALA PARK**



Park opening 22.10.2012

photo: Tarja Trygg

When Robert Wilson drew his plans for the park, he changed the location from an uninspired rectangle into a dynamic one dominated by a square. The park itself is a flat grass lawn where an oak tree and three rowan trees appear to be talking to each other across the park. The square-shaped park is divided into nine rooms surrounded by hawthorn shrubs. Each room has its individual variety of surface textures and feature artistic elements typical of homes.



Path

photo: Päivi Kiuru

In time, the hawthorn hedges will grow up to 160 cm high as the designer has planned. Pier-like paths lit from below lead across the lawn to the artwork's entrance from two opposite directions. Tall black U-shaped steel elements form the entrance gates. In front of each gate, there is a small open door. The Bible quotation shared by the artist related to these doors, *'Behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it'*, seems to imply that the park offers privacy in a public space: the park may be used by the residents for various events but it is also suitable for more formal exhibitions and performances.



Red granite stones

photo: Päivi Kiuru

The rooms at the corners of the square-shaped park are lit from below and may be interpreted as representing the thousands of lakes in Finland. The tall granite stones in two of the corner rooms are made of the hardest Finnish rock and balance the whole appearance of the park. They may be interpreted as representing the forests. In one of the rooms lit from below you can find a marble fireplace encircled by spinning stone seats, and you can book yourself a fire in the fireplace for a few hours. In another room, you can find a stack of firewood, to be replaced later on by another one made of bronze. These rooms invite the visitors to participate and perform.

Within two wood-decorated rooms you can find stick-like horse sculptures made of bronze, one big and the other smaller in size, as well as long black steel beams serving as seats.



Black granite stones



Fireplace

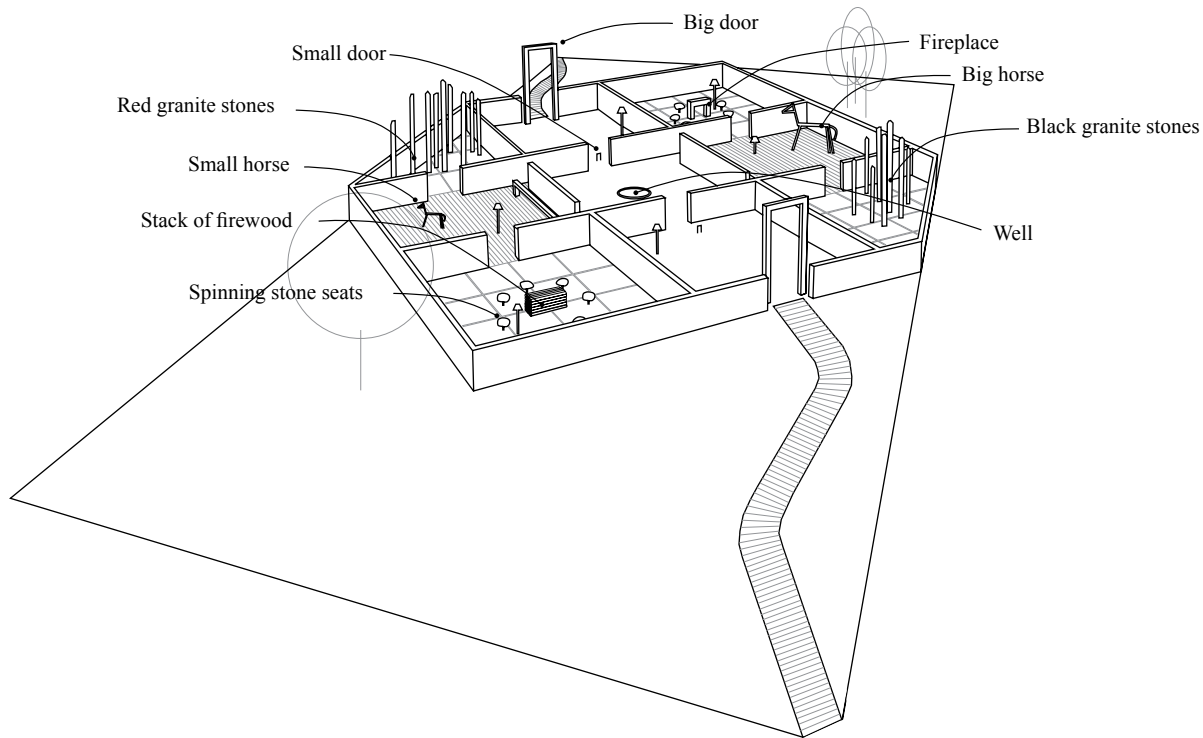


Big horse

photo: Tarja Trygg

photo: Tarja Trygg

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The square shape of the park creates a strong sense of independence between the apartment buildings. Its diagonal movement seems to blast away daily life and boredom. The well, situated in the middle of the park descends downwards like an endless cylinder and its diameter resembles that of the Arabia Factory chimney. The well also tells of the thousands of porcelain shards thrown to the ground through decades and also of the fact that the City of Helsinki has now cleaned the soil for the new residents. In the well, there is a blue circle of light and you can hear a child's voice speaking in Finnish, Swedish and English about a dream that Tapio Wirkkala had and recorded in his diary on 17 March 1977:

*'I was asleep; I had a strange dream. Squares with divided areas. They were white squares. It's a shame I don't remember. It felt like they held the answer for being, for existence. Their regional value was defined. They all had a small spot marking the location of the value. That value was happiness. Strange dreams.'*

The Tapio Wirkkala Park offers festive moments and a place with a unique atmosphere for the local residents and everyone in Helsinki. The perspective shifts from the artwork to the user, to the person experiencing the park.

The park is located at Arabiankatu 13, and you can get there from the Helsinki city centre by trams 6 and 8, or buses 68, 71 and 71V, or bus 74 from Hakaniemi.

[www.arabiahelsinki.fi](http://www.arabiahelsinki.fi)

[www.hel.fi/hki/Taimu/En/Home](http://www.hel.fi/hki/Taimu/En/Home)

<http://arts.aalto.fi/en/services/arabianranta/>

Text: Tuula Isohanni, TaT, Aalto University

Tranlation: Vilja Pitkänan, Richard Strohm

Layout: Päivi Kiuru, Aalto University

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photo: Tarja Trygg

Small horse



photo: Päivi Kiuru

Stacked firewood



photo: RakastCam

The park under snow





The apartment entrances located in the Arabianranta residential area can be distinguished from each other through art, and artworks are also located in shared courtyards used by residents as well as in public spaces. This is a result of the City of Helsinki's principle of percentage-financing art, meaning that a certain ratio of artwork should be incorporated into the design of the buildings at the moment of their construction. The residential area together with the Arabia/Fiskars factory, as well as many art schools located nearby make Arabianranta a unique design district in Helsinki.

The streets and squares in the Arabianranta residential area have been named after designers who have worked at the factory. The main park in the area is the Arabianranta Waterfront Park, which is connected to the Viikki nature reserve and has cycle ways and walkways leading to the city centre and eastern parts of the city. To provide a counterpoint to this natural space, Robert Wilson designed the Tapio Wirkkala Park, a unique art park, in itself a comprehensive artwork, where light plays the leading role.

The idea of Robert Wilson as the designer of the park first came from artist Maaria Wirkkala. While Wilson is known as one of the greatest directors of our time, he is also recognized as a visual artist and architect. He designed the park as an intensive space to serve as a meeting place for the residents and a venue for art exhibitions and events. The park was implemented by the Helsinki Art Museum and the city's Public Works Department. The work belongs to the collection of the Helsinki Art Museum (2012).