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Lecture: On Solid Ground

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ABSTRACT

At Aalto University and its predecessors, ceramics has now been a study subject for more than a century. What purpose does studying ceramics at university level serve in 2021? Firing ceramics is, after all, a prehistoric insight! Ceramics is often depicted as a timeless material. Today, this gives a particular responsibility to the environment conscious maker, for an object can actually last forever. Being simultaneously fragile and strong, I claim that this material keeps fascinating young designers as much as ever.

An exhibition presenting an extensive selection of ceramics by Aalto alumni, staff and students will take place in October at the Otaniemi campus. More than a hundred objects, artworks and material samples will be showcased. The themes of the exhibition will vary from tableware to material studies and contemporary ceramic arts. Projects using new technology and experimental design will offer a sneak peek into the future of the field.

The book *Solid Ground* (2020) intertwines essays and photographs of the works. The writers represent a variety of fields, mostly outside ceramics. They present matter as a fascinating, versatile, and inexhaustible frontier that needs to be explored further.

The title of the book and exhibition, *Solid Ground*, refers to the stony ground we walk on. Ceramics keeps us in contact with past generations and cultures in all corners of the world. This is, at least, what a ceramist likes to think in this unstable world of ours: solid ground is what we need now. The connection to materiality is what grounds us.

Lautenbacher N. (edit.), Enqvist, K., Kalha, H., Laamanen T-K., Mattelmäki, T., Jalas, M., Mäkelä, M., Pallasmaa, J., Saarikivi, J., Väisänen, H., 2020. *Solid Ground*. Espoo, Aalto Arts Books