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**Keynote: Soil as a material mediator: Combining environmental research with ceramic practice**

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**ABSTRACT**

For thousands of years, potters have founded their practice on local materiality through using clay soil, earth metals and other natural materials. This talk focuses on how contemporary ceramic practices can provide an embodied way to engage with the local environment to participate in the present, urgent environmental discourse. This is done through presenting three case studies that evolve around unfired earth. A ceramic practitioner possesses a deep material sensitivity and ceramic knowledge that is both aesthetic and scientific. Complex ecological issues demand the use of our domain-specific knowledge in ethical ways. Through the case studies ceramic artists explore the anthropogenic geology of the Venice Lagoon area, consider how endangered species are dependent on the wellbeing of soil and combine immersive experience and material practices to study local soils. The case studies build on ceramic material research and artistic expression that have been the foundations of the Finnish ceramic education for decades.