Outi Martikainen is a textile artist with a classical education. Her works contain influences both from craftwork traditions and the observation which is so central to art. A distinctive feature of the works is the recording of small perceptions and memories in a concrete form. They may be individual works composed of minor details or larger installations made up of big panels. But they all have in common a certain intense clarity that allows viewers to make their own interpretations.
Whilst the technique used may come from traditional craftwork methods, in their essence they are often closer to conceptual art. In this way, facecloths or crocheted spirals, when viewed from far enough way, can appear to form a portrait of a woman on a wall. It is like a memory in that it has to be surmised rather than being clearly perceptible and therefore also symbolizes the passage of time.

As well as her own exhibitions, Martikainen frequently works together with architects. Then the idea is to design permanent elements directly for an architectonic space. She experiments boldly with new combinations of material. One example of what this can lead to is the acoustic panels she designed for the Faculty of Medicine of the University of Oulu. These make up an entire wall of heat-molded polyester felt with machine-pressed recesses. These recesses form geometric breaks in the ascetic gray surface which serve to lighten the harsh precision of the environment.

Surprising combinations can also come together in Martikainen’s work. The interplay of light and shadow is often the theme in the large-scale images she has used to design the facades of buildings together with architects. These alter their appearance depending on the season and the amount and direction of the light.

text by Leena Kuumola