

Mikkel Aaland



"It's All an Adventure"

Nude or Not Nude?

It depends on where you are coming from.

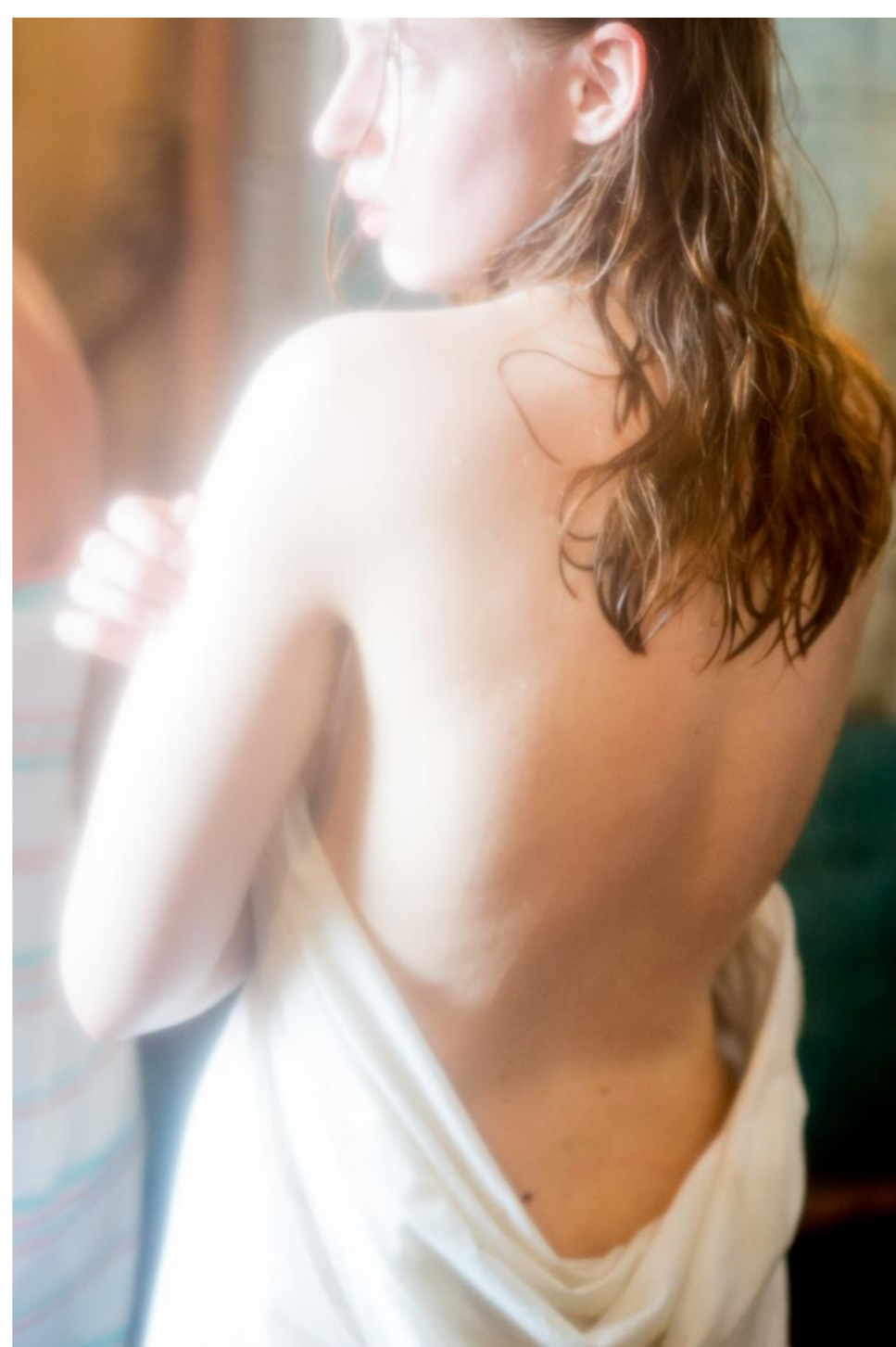
At the International Sauna Congress in Haparanda, Sweden in 2018, I showed a clip from Perfect Sweat. The footage was shot in Finland, at an island off the coast of Helsinki, and it featured young men and women bathing together, naked. Oh my!



Sompa public sauna, located near the center of Helsinki where men and women sweat together naked, oh yes!

After my presentation, an older Finnish woman in the audience raised her hand and asked why I was showing men and woman naked together in the sauna when that just didn't happen in Finland. What could I say? Obviously, as the footage showed, men and women sometimes bathed naked together in Finland.

Still, she had a point. The fact is, in most cultures around the world, especially in public places, naked co-ed bathing is the exception not the rule. Russia, Turkey, Japan, southern Italy, and England, are a few countries I've visited that offer separate bathing areas for men and women. Rarely do I find co-ed nudity as a norm.



In Russia, for the most part, men and women bathe separately. This photo was taken at the Banya Nega in St. Petersburg. Rasputin, the Russian mystic, used to frequent this banya.

The exception, in my experience, is German-speaking countries, where nudity between men and women is not only socially accepted but actually encouraged. Go to just about any public locker room in Germany and you will see men and women disrobing casually together. In public saunas, which are mostly co-ed, if you enter wearing a bathing suit, odds are some bather will make a disparaging comment. At the International Sauna Aufguss Championship this fall at a resort near Berlin, we filmed at least 200 naked men and women of all ages and shapes pour out from a single coed sauna. It's a sight you had to see to fully appreciate.



Over 200 bathers are waiting to disrobe and enter the sauna for a performance at Satama Spa, outside of Berlin, Germany. Satama was the site of the 2018 International Sauna Aufguss Championships.

(For those of you wondering how we handled the privacy issue-a very real concern considering the proliferation of cell phones and stealth cameras-we asked all the bathers to sign waivers before we filmed them.)

What are my thoughts on co-ed nudity? Personally, I am more comfortable bathing naked, regardless of who I am with. I equate nudity with sensuality but not with sexuality. I always bring a clean towel to sit on, but that's all. I also respect local customs and sensitivities and when necessary cover myself appropriately with a loose-fitting towel or sheet. (I avoid wearing synthetic bathing suits. They become uncomfortable in the heat, and the synthetic fabric doesn't breathe.)

It's just a fact that, for a variety of reasons, people in many cultures are more modest than others and I am not on a crusade to change that. I'd rather do everything I can to simply encourage people to sweat together. On the other hand, over and over I've seen how the soothing heat of the sweat has a way of melting inhibitions. I've witnessed people who were initially body shy, relax in the womb-like environment, drop their modesty, and reveal their natural, glowing selves. The transformation is inspiring.

Find Out More

We have shot episodes of Perfect Sweat in Finland, Russia, Italy, and Germany and we are planning on shooting in Japan and Turkey in the next few months, followed by Norway, Mexico, and North America. We will finish the shooting next fall, and it will be available as a series on one of the streaming outlets early 2020.

To see the trailer for Perfect Sweat and learn more about the series go [here](#).

To see more of my bathing photos go [here](#).

For a copy of the Perfect Sweat Production Stills book for each country go [here](#).

To see an online version of my original book Sweat, go [here](#).

To follow my favorite "nude" blog, writing by our Perfect Sweat Russia episode co-host Anna Artemieva go [here](#).

Follow Perfect Sweat on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#).

Coming Up

Happy New Year! In the coming year I will continue to offer my thoughts on photography, health benefits of sweat bathing, and the consequences of ghost genes. I will introduce Fish Stories, and tell you about another new project I am working on; a moving stills homage to the legendary French filmmaker, Chris Marker, who would be 100 in the year 2021. And more... Hope you stick around.

Why Are You Receiving This?

As humans, we share 99.9 % of the same DNA but you and I are also connected in other ways. Maybe we met at a photography workshop or festival or perhaps we share a passion for saunas and open cold-water swimming. Maybe we sat together at a café somewhere and discussed the myth of Sisyphus or the purpose of life or perhaps we met on a wilderness trail or a river where I likely carried a fishing pole.

It could be we share the same commitment to family, community, and the pursuit of wellness or we are connected through my world-savvy wife, Rebecca or one of my world-trotting daughters Miranda and Ana Mikaela. Some of you may have received this because you were recipients of one of my previous mailings called World of Light.

If it is ok with you, I would like to use this medium from time to time to stay connected. My interests are wide ranging and so will be my posts. If that doesn't appeal to you, no worries. I totally understand. Just click on the Unsubscribe link below.

