



HELSINKI BIENNIAL: a new international contemporary art biennial located on an island off Helsinki city center

Helsinki Biennial, a new international contemporary art biennial located on the city's archipelago island of Vallisaari, announces its inaugural edition running from 12 June – 27 September 2020.

Creating a platform to communicate the diverse and dynamic nature of the contemporary Finnish art scene, the biennial also looks to establish links and collaborations with the wider global artistic landscape. Free to the public, each edition will primarily comprise of major new, site-specific commissions by leading international artists. Fostering a sustainable approach to exhibition making, the biennial embodies Helsinki's ambitious, cultural vision.

Rooted in the significance of its maritime location, the biennial's exhibition takes place on the former military island of Vallisaari. Situated only a 15 minute ferry ride from the city centre, Vallisaari opened to the public for the first time in 2016. A landscape defined by its history and remarkable level of biodiversity, the biennial reflects on this context to address ongoing public debate around the evolving relationship between humanity and nature.

Presented by Helsinki Art Museum (HAM), the biennial is directed by HAM director Maija Tanninen-Mattila, and curated by HAM's head curators Pirkko Siitari and Taru Tappola. Responsible for Helsinki's extensive art collection, including its significant number of public artworks, the museum plays a crucial role in the city's mission to support, maintain and pioneer art in the public sphere. The biennial is further supported by an international advisory committee made up of curators and academics.

Maija Tanninen-Mattila comments: *'Helsinki is an open, welcoming city, which the Helsinki Biennial will mirror - opening up the Vallisaari island on the archipelago 24/7 to residents and visitors alike. We hope that this unique, informal setting will be a fruitful source of inspiration, bringing international art to locals, and creating more visibility for the art produced in Finland today.'*

With a reputation for world-class design and architecture, Helsinki is committed to further developing the city's art scene both on a grass-roots and institutional level. The biennial celebrates a continuation of Helsinki's thriving cultural scene, including the recent openings in 2018 of Amos Rex Art Museum and the Central Library Oodi.

'The civic approach to culture and architecture sets Helsinki apart. The city recognises the value of a vivid and forward-looking art scene that champions local contemporary art and its relationship with the global community. The biennial will illustrate the unique characteristic of Helsinki and the surrounding archipelago. It also highlights our commitment to art, architecture, design and urban culture in all its forms. The biennial will open up new worlds to anyone who visits Helsinki', says Helsinki's Mayor Jan Vapaavuori.

Helsinki Biennial will also have a presence on the mainland in HAM, and in the form of events organised in collaboration with the city's arts organisations, museums and galleries.

The curatorial concept for Helsinki Biennial 2020 will be announced in autumn 2019.

Notes to editors

Helsinki Biennial 2020 will run from 12 June - 27 September 2020.

Press preview 10 June 2020 | VIP Vernissage 11 June 2020

www.helsinkiennial.fi

Helsinki Biennial is supported by the City of Helsinki and the Jane and Aatos Erkko Foundation.

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Helsinki Art Museum, HAM

Helsinki Art Museum (HAM) is one of the leading art museums in Finland. It has an extensive international exhibition programme and a collection of 9000 artworks, including those in public spaces across the city. Acquiring both Finnish and international art, HAM is also responsible for commissioning new public artworks. Based in the Tennispalace building, an example of functionalist architecture from the 1930s, the programme includes contemporary art, design and architecture. Previous exhibitions at HAM have included solo shows from Pawel Althamer, Yayoi Kusama and Ai Weiwei. HAM is part of the Culture and Leisure Department of the City of Helsinki.

Maija Tanninen-Mattila

Maija Tanninen-Mattila has been the director of HAM since 2013, programming exhibitions by internationally renowned artists including Gilbert & George, Yayoi Kusama and Ai Weiwei. Tanninen-Mattila has led a variety of visual arts institutions, including Ateneum Art Museum (2006-2013), the Finnish National Gallery (2006-2013) and the Helsinki Kunsthalle (2001-2006). She studied Art History at the University of Helsinki, Museum Education as a Fulbright scholar at the George Washington University and Museum Leadership at the Getty Leadership Institute.

Pirkko Siitari

Pirkko Siitari is the Head of Exhibitions at HAM. She previously directed various institutions including Kiasma Museum of Contemporary Art in Helsinki (2010-2015), where she also worked as a chief curator (2008-2010), Kerava Art Museum (2004-2008) and the Northern Photographic Centre in Oulu (1990s). Siitari was also the chief curator of the Finnish Museum of Photography in Helsinki (1999-2004). Past curatorial projects include, among others, *Nature as a Playground*, Museum of Photography, Seoul (2018), *Human/Nature*, Northern Centre for Photography, Oulu (2017), Alfredo Jaar, Kiasma (2014), and *ARS11 Africa in Contemporary Art*, Kiasma (2011). She studied Art History and History at the Jyväskylä University and Art Theory at Jan van Eyck Akademi, Maastricht, Netherlands.

Taru Tappola

Since 2017, Taru Tappola has been the Head on Public Art at HAM Helsinki Art Museum, leading a team that commissions public artworks for the City of Helsinki. She formerly worked as Curator of Exhibitions at Helsinki Art Museum (2001-2003), Kunsthalle Helsinki (2004-2006) and Kiasma Museum of Contemporary Art (2006-2009), curating numerous international and Finnish contemporary art exhibitions. Tappola further developed her professional background in curating, mediating art and engaging audiences as the interim director of Kunsthalle Helsinki (2010-11) and Head of Education at HAM (2013-17). She studied Art History at the University of Helsinki.

International Advisory Committee

The international advisory committee is made up of members including: Kari Conte, Director of Programs and Exhibitions at the International Studio and Curatorial Programme (ISCP), New York; Lena From, Head of Special Projects at the Public Art Agency Sweden; and Joasia Krysa, Professor of Exhibition Research at Liverpool John Moores University and Liverpool Biennial.