

Contemporary art event Helsinki Biennial will be held in summer 2021

The inaugural Helsinki Biennial will be held this summer from 12 June to 26 September 2021 on Vallisaari island and in mainland Helsinki. It will be available to audiences as allowed by the COVID-19 restrictions. All announced artists and artist groups, as well as one new arts collective, will take part in the biennial.

“Implementing an international biennial with considerable special arrangements during a time like this takes a great effort from Helsinki. The commitment, given before the COVID-19 crisis, to make Helsinki a maritime centre of international art, major events, and unforgettable experiences has not diminished. On the contrary, we believe that the biennial will promote the renewal of Helsinki’s attraction and vitality and indicate that Helsinki is a city you can trust and a city worth investing in,” says Mayor of Helsinki **Jan Vapaavuori**.

Aiming for a safe and inspiring exhibition experience

“We want to provide our visitors a safe and inspiring exhibition experience”, says **Maija Tanninen-Mattila**, the director of the biennial and HAM Helsinki Art Museum. “I believe that in these challenging times, people long for art and cultural experiences even more than before. I hope that the biennial will bring city residents and all visitors hope, light, and joy.”

Helsinki Biennial will be constructed and the artworks installed as planned during the spring, in accordance with the current COVID-19 restrictions. Approximately one third of the works to be placed on Vallisaari will be located outdoors along the trails, and the rest will be indoors in gunpowder cellars and old residential buildings. Some of the biennial’s works will be placed on the mainland in HAM and in different parts of Helsinki.

“The possibility of opening gradually is considered in the planning of the biennial”, says Head of Helsinki Biennial **Jonna Hurskainen**. “We hope that as many people as possible will be able to experience the uniqueness of the biennial and view interesting contemporary art in the beautiful Helsinki archipelago. However, we have paid special attention to digital content that will bring the biennial to audiences if visiting Vallisaari is not possible.”

All announced artists will take part in the biennial

All 40 previously announced artists and artist groups from Finland and around the world will take part in Helsinki Biennial. The list of artists was supplemented at the end of 2020, when the Helsinki-based multidisciplinary arts collective WAUHAUS joined the biennial.

“We want to thank the artists, curator team, and all people who have participated in the biennial’s implementation and construction for their dedication and flexibility amidst changes”, say **Pirkko Siitari** and **Taru Tappola**, the head curators of the inaugural Helsinki Biennial.

“Vallisaari has inspired us curators and the artists who have worked on site. The themes arising from the island offer various perspectives on interconnectedness and mutual dependence. These themes include relationship with nature, time and change, boundaries and identities, and connection and empathy. The name of the biennial, *The Same Sea*, is a reminder that everything is interconnected and therefore mutually dependent. This has become increasingly evident during the current ecological crisis and coronavirus pandemic.”

Implementing an art event responsibly

Responsibility and ecological sustainability are Helsinki Biennial’s key values. From the beginning of the event’s planning, questions regarding the value of an art event today and how it can be implemented in accordance with sustainable development have been considered. Helsinki Biennial is committed to transparent environmental action now and in the future.

Helsinki Biennial complies with the EcoCompass environmental management system – developed by the Finnish Association for Nature Conservation – which has guided the art event from planning to implementation and ensures that everything is as environmentally friendly as possible. The event’s environmental coordinator started the EcoCompass work in autumn 2019. The environmental programme was created in cooperation with Metsähallitus and the entrepreneurs of Vallisaari.

The island’s natural environment has provided Helsinki Biennial strict boundaries within which the event will be implemented. The idea and placement for each artwork has been assessed with Metsähallitus and the Finnish Heritage Agency with a focus on the conservation of both nature and historical buildings.

In addition to protecting Vallisaari’s ecological sustainability, the objectives of the environmental programme are to produce the event in an energy efficient way, to make responsible purchases, and to achieve material efficiency. Helsinki Biennial also collects emissions data related to logistics and mobility. The event aims at being carbon neutral, so it will calculate its carbon footprint as accurately as possible during the first biennial in 2021.

The Helsinki Biennial programme will be published in May. The programme has been created in cooperation with the city's services, communities, and residents.

Further information:

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Helsinki Biennial is an international contemporary art event organised every other year. The first Helsinki Biennial will be held on Vallisaari island in summer 2021. The biennial is a joint project for the City of Helsinki, and it is curated and produced by HAM Helsinki Art Museum. The biennial is a part of the Helsinki City Strategy 2017–2021, whose objectives include strengthening the city's international appeal and making the most of its maritime characteristics.

The main partners of Helsinki Biennial include Metsähallitus and the Jane and Aatos Erkko Foundation. It is also supported by the Jenny and Antti Wihuri Foundation and Svenska Kulturfonden.

The main corporate partner of Helsinki Biennial is Clear Channel. Other partners include Helen and Artek.

Korkeasaari Zoo and the Helsinki Festival are Helsinki Biennial's event partners.