

Helsinki Biennial attracted 145,000 visitors to Vallisaari

The contemporary art event Helsinki Biennial took place for the first time from 12 June to 26 September 2021. A total of 145,000 people visited Vallisaari. In addition, the biennial provided art experiences around Helsinki.

The works were placed on Vallisaari and around Helsinki in locations such as the Senate Square, HAM Helsinki Art Museum, Vuosaari, Helsinki Central Library Oodi, and Töölönlahti Bay. The *Helsinki Biennial Inspired* programme's events and exhibitions also attracted visitors. The programme featured art and culture events inspired by the biennial, organised by the Helsinki cultural, youth, and senior centres as well as companies and art institutions. A total of almost 90,000 visitors attended the *Inspired* events.

"Helsinki Biennial was a great success. We are very happy with the number of visitors, especially considering the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and travel restrictions. I believe the biennial has had a revitalising effect on Helsinki as a city. Encountering contemporary art in nature and near the sea surely was an exceptional and unique experience for many people", says **Maija Tanninen-Mattila**, the director of the biennial and HAM.

The biennial got plenty of attention from the international media: Dagens Nyheter, El País, Financial Times, Forbes, Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, Monocle, The Telegraph, and many other newspapers as well as various design and art media outlets wrote about it. In addition, the biennial was mentioned on TIME's list of The World's 100 Greatest Places of 2021.

Metsähallitus, responsible for taking care of Vallisaari, was also happy with the Helsinki Biennial summer.

"The combination of nature and art worked well. The biennial showed Vallisaari in a new light and attracted plenty of new visitors", says **Aino von Boehm**, senior planning officer from Metsähallitus. "The biennial inspired many first-timers to visit Vallisaari, where they also found amazing nature. Lush nature, the historical batteries and gunpowder cellars, and the sea views created a unique setting for an art experience. Even though the art attracted a record number of visitors to the island, they stayed on the marked trails and kept away from the sensitive environment."

Three Helsinki Biennial artworks will remain on permanent display in city space

Helsinki Biennial presented 41 artists or collectives from Finland and around the world. HAM Helsinki Art Museum is responsible for the biennial's production and curation, and

the head curators of the inaugural biennial were **Pirkko Siitari**, Head of Exhibitions at HAM and **Taru Tappola**, HAM's Head of Public Art.

Three of the biennial's works will become permanent parts of the city's public art collection. **Alicja Kwade's** works *Big Be-Hide* and *Pars pro Toto* will be placed in the Helsinki neighbourhood of Kalasatama, and **Laura Könönen's** *No Heaven Up in the Sky* will be placed in Hyväntoivonpuisto Park in the Helsinki district of Jätkäsaari. A number of artworks will also be re-presented after the biennial at HAM Helsinki Art Museum.

Some of the artworks will be returned to the artists, and surplus materials will be recycled or reused. The dismantling and recycling plan was created together with the biennial's environmental coordinator.

Helsinki Biennial was granted an EcoCompass certificate

Helsinki Biennial was granted an EcoCompass certificate for taking care of and developing environmental issues in accordance with the EcoCompass environmental management system.

EcoCompass, which was developed by the Finnish Association for Nature Conservation, is a system based on international standards on environmental management. It includes 10 environmental criteria that an organisation committed to the system must comply with. The EcoCompass certificate is granted to an operator for three years at a time and an auditor monitors the achievement of the objectives.

“Helsinki Biennial's strength in environmental issues is its strong commitment to responsibility, extensive and active cooperation with partners, and a desire to promote attitude change and to be a pioneer in environmental issues. Vallisaari's nature and the Baltic Sea are an essential part of Helsinki Biennial, both as a location and an inspiration to artists.”

– excerpt from an audit report

An extensive impact assessment is being carried out; the biennial's impact will be examined from the viewpoints of art and culture, environment and sustainable development as well as the economy and maritime factors. Information about the impact assessment will be published at the end of the year.

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 the inaugural Helsinki Biennial included Metsähallitus and the Jane and Aatos Erkkö Foundation. It was also supported by the Jenny and Antti Wihuri Foundation and Svenska Kulturfonden.

The main corporate partner of Helsinki Biennial was Clear Channel. Other partners included Artek, Facebook Open Arts and Helen.

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