



Vallisaari. Courtesy Helsinki Biennial. Photo Matti Pyykkö.

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The Inaugural Helsinki Biennial 2020 Announces Preview List of Artists and Title: *The Same Sea*

Entitled *The Same Sea*, the inaugural edition of the Helsinki Biennial 2020 will reflect on the notion of interdependence: every action and thing is connected, and supports the whole. Curated by Pirkko Siitari and Taru Tappola, head curators of Helsinki Art Museum (HAM), the biennial will bring together around 35 leading Finnish and international artists and groups of artists. The first names to be announced include:

Paweł Althamer, PL (b.1967)

BIOS Research Unit, FI (founded 2015)

Katharina Grosse, DE (b.1961)

Gustafsson&Haapoja, FI (founded 2012)

Hanna Tuulikki, UK (b.1982)

IC-98, FI (founded 1998)

Marja Kanervo, FI (b.1958)

Tadashi Kawamata, JP/FR (b.1953)

Alicja Kwade, PL (b.1979)

Laura Könönen, FI (b.1980)

Tuomas A. Laitinen, FI (b.1976)

Jaakko Niemelä, FI (b.1959)

Mario Rizzi, IT/DE (b.1962)

Maaria Wirkkala, FI (b.1954)

Located on the city's Vallisaari island, a former military base, Helsinki Biennial 2020 will be comprised of 80% new commissions and site-specific works. Using the setting of Vallisaari to form the tangible and conceptual starting point for the curation of the 2020 biennial, *The Same Sea* places emphasis on the biosphere as one interconnected entity. The curators explain:

'The seas, continents and islands are intertwined ecosystems that form actual and symbolic networks. Islands offer shelter, places to live and strongholds. The sea separates and connects. [...] We often talk about the seas but in reality there is only one sea, a continuous layer of saltwater that surrounds the continents.[...] The biota and physical conditions of the sea, such as temperature, currents and surface level, all impact our shared future, all over the world.'

A number of artists are working on subjects that originate from the daily life of Vallisaari's former residents and the island's military history. Some of the artworks deal not only with the local and global consequences of human activity, but also with alternative visions of the future. Located outside along cobbled paths and inside historical buildings, gunpowder cellars and empty residential buildings, the works highlight unknown and abandoned places whilst bestowing new meanings.

'Making and presenting art on Vallisaari requires complex cooperation to take the unique environment into account,' Siitari and Tappola comment. *'The idea and site of each artwork has been evaluated from the point of view of nature conservation and historic preservation.'*

The diverse environment of Vallisaari sets a strict framework for the biennial. In accordance with the Helsinki City Strategy – aiming to be carbon neutral by 2035 and reduce emissions by 60% by 2030 – the Helsinki Biennial 2020 emphasises the importance of responsible values. Using a bespoke programme from the Finnish environmental management system EcoCompass, to direct production and infrastructure, the biennial prompts us to rethink current and entrenched modes of behaviour. As a city, Helsinki is committed to promoting a more sustainable way of life. The *Think Sustainably* service, launched earlier this year, invites visitors to make informed choices whilst at the biennial, and in all of Helsinki. Moreover, the biennial will also create its own Virtual Reality experience, allowing participants to be transported to Vallisaari without actually travelling to Helsinki.

Offering alternative ways of experiencing a biennial, Helsinki Biennial champions art's role in creating channels for discourse, radical empathy and ecological ethics.

'Helsinki's bold and uncompromising investments in art also have a broader impact on the development of our home city, including the well-being of residents. Helsinki Biennial will further raise Helsinki's status as an interesting city of culture and art,' says Mari Männistö, Culture Director of the City of Helsinki.

The final list of artists and details on the new commissions will be announced in spring 2020.

To download the full curatorial text and artist bios go to: www.helsinkibiennial.fi

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Helsinki Biennial

Helsinki Biennial is an international contemporary art event which takes place on Vallisaari island. Creating a platform to communicate the diverse and dynamic nature of the contemporary Finnish art scene, the event extends beyond this context to establish links and collaborations with the wider global artistic landscape. Informed by Vallisaari - a former military island fusing wild nature and urban heritage - sustainable and responsible values lie at the core of Helsinki Biennial. Free to the public, each edition will primarily comprise of major new, site-specific commissions by leading international artists. Helsinki Biennial embodies the city's ambitious, cultural vision, committed to developing Helsinki's art scene both on a grassroots and institutional level. A major initiative of Helsinki Art Museum (HAM) and the City of Helsinki, the biennial is directed by HAM's director Maija Tanninen-Mattila. The biennial is further supported by an international advisory committee made up of curators and academics.

Maija Tanninen-Mattila, director of Helsinki Biennial

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, curator of Helsinki Biennial 2020

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, Pawel Althamer, *I (am)*, HAM (2019), *Nature as a Playground*, Museum of Photography, Seoul (2018), 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, curator of Helsinki Biennial 2020

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.