



Margaret and Christine Wertheim and the Institute For Figuring, *Coral Forest* at Lehigh University Arts Galleries (PA). Their new commission, *The Helsinki Satellite Reef*, will be presented at Helsinki Biennial 2020. Photo courtesy LUAG by Stephanie Veto.

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Helsinki Biennial 2020 Brings 40 Artists and Groups to the Finnish Archipelago for Inaugural Edition

Taking place in the summer of 2020, Helsinki Biennial is thrilled to announce the 40 artists and groups of artists participating in the inaugural edition, *The Same Sea*. Located on Vallisaari, an island in the Baltic Sea, the biennial presents over 75% new commissions and site-specific works, sensitively positioned across this remarkable maritime setting. Responding to, whilst safeguarding, Vallisaari's natural environment, *The Same Sea* reflects upon the ever-pressing notion of interdependence.

Curators **Pirkko Siitari** and **Taru Tappola**, head curators of Helsinki Art Museum (HAM), invite a dialogue between artists and collectives from Finland and Australia, Cambodia, Germany, India, Japan, Kenya, Latvia, Poland, South Korea, Thailand, Turkey, the UK and the USA.

Welcoming both locals and visitors, this major moment in Helsinki's cultural trajectory affirms its position as a city of arts and culture; "Art and culture form an essential part of Helsinki's story. We recognise how investment in the arts positively adds to the development of the city, but also directly to the wellbeing of our citizens. Helsinki Biennial will both provoke and inspire audiences

by confronting significant global issues. Its location on an island creates a truly unique setting where the art is in continuous dialogue with the surrounding nature, and importantly it is open, free of charge, to everyone,” says the mayor of Helsinki, **Jan Vapaavuori**.

The Helsinki Biennial 2020 participants include:

Paweł Althamer*, PL (b. 1967)	Khvay Samnang, KH (b. 1982)
ATTAKWAD*	Jussi Kivi*, FI (b. 1959)
Pasi Autio*, FI (b. 1974)	Alicja Kwade*, PL/DE (b. 1979)
Samir Bhowmik*, IN/FI (b. 1975)	Hayoun Kwon, KR/FR (b. 1981)
BIOS Research Unit*, FI (founded 2015)	Laura Könönen*, FI (b. 1980)
Baran Caginli*, TR/FI (b. 1990)	Tuomas A. Laitinen*, FI (b. 1976)
Janet Cardiff and George Bures Miller, CA (b. 1957 and 1960)	Teemu Lehmusrusu*, FI (b. 1981)
Kyungwoo Chun*, KR (b. 1969)	Dafna Maimon*, FI/DE (b. 1982)
Janet Echelman, US (b. 1966)	Antti Majava*, FI (b. 1977)
EGS*, FI (b. 1974)	Inga Meldere* LV/FI (b. 1979)
Katharina Grosse*, DE (b. 1961)	Jaakko Niemelä*, FI (b. 1959)
Gustafsson&Haapoja*, FI (founded 2012)	Meiju Niskala*, FI (b. 1978)
Hanna Tuulikki*, UK (b. 1982)	Niskanen & Salo*, FI/US (founded 2015)
Honkasalo-Niemi-Virtanen*, FI (founded 2015)	Sari Palosaari*, FI (b. 1974)
IC-98, FI (founded 1998)	Outi Pieski, Birit and Katja Haarla*, FI/BE (b. 1973, 2000 and 2000)
Uwa Iduozee, FI/US (b. 1987)	Mario Rizzi, IT/DE (b. 1962)
Wanuri Kahiu, KE (b. 1980)	Rirkrit Tiravanija & Antto Melasniemi*, AR & FI (b.1961 and 1975)
Marja Kanervo*, FI (b. 1958)	Christine and Margaret Wertheim*, AU/US (b. 1958 and 1958)
Topi Kautonen, FI (1921–2011)	Maaria Wirkkala*, FI (b. 1954)
Tadashi Kawamata*, JP/FR (b. 1953)	Zodiak presents: Joni Kärkkäinen & Jukka Tarvainen*, FI (b. 1988 and 1979)

*An asterisk denotes a new commission.

New commissions embrace diverse themes ranging from relations to nature, borders, identities, human traces, time and empathy. As a physical manifestation of interconnectedness, **Jaakko Niemelä**'s large-scale wooden construction *Quay 6* greets visitors as they disembark at the northern quay of Vallisaari. Referencing the melting of Greenland's northern ice sheet, the construction reaches six metres high – mirroring the rise in sea level should the glacier vanish completely.

Christine and Margaret Wertheim bring their Crochet Coral Reef project to Helsinki, *The Helsinki Satellite Reef*, one of the world's largest participatory science and art projects. Made of recycled plastic, including disused plastic bags, the handmade reef is created with residents of Helsinki, calling attention to the extensive plastic waste threatening the world's oceans.

Other commissions have also involved local Helsinki communities, such as **Paweł Althamer**'s collaboration with the nearby Suomenlinna Open Prison for *Seven Prisoners*; a two-part documentary and VR film which invites viewers to join seven inmates (including Althamer himself) on an escape from prison, via open waters and changing, seasonal landscapes.

Utilising recycled materials, **Tadashi Kawamata**'s *Vallisaari Lighthouse* is a temporary landmark comprised of found material from Vallisaari. Sitting atop a bunker-like elevator shaft, jutting skywards to a height of several metres, the lighthouse can be seen from various viewpoints out at sea, the neighbouring island of Suomenlinna and the Helsinki waterfront.

Marja Kanervo's work similarly draws from the island's existing infrastructure. Working on-site across three floors of Block A of the Pilot House, Kanervo's site-specific interventions – forms and marks imprinted across the space – merge with the traces of former residents, straddling the space between real life and fiction.

Positioned outside of the Alexander Battery – one of the main biennial venues – **Laura Könönen**'s large-scale sculpture depicts an explosion of broken shards of rock. Appearing as though the structures were at one point a complete solid, the work forces us to revisit our ideas of stability and permanence. The sculpture forms part of the larger work *No Heaven up in the Sky*, which will be placed on permanent display in Helsinki's Hyväntoivonpuisto Park after 2020.

Katharina Grosse's large-scale, in-situ painting masks the exterior walls of Vallisaari's former school building, converging with the surrounding landscape. Rather than a conventional painting, the result of Grosse's painting process is more like a sculpture that emerges from a geographical location.

Echoing Helsinki Biennial's commitment to inspiring public debate around the relationship between humanity and nature, the **BIOS Research Unit** will establish the *Vallisaari Research Station* within the island's former fire-fighting depot. Hosting seminars and lectures from visiting scientists throughout the biennial, BIOS' project specifically focuses on the lost, severed connection between the environment and the economy.

Uniting the maritime island with the city, Helsinki Biennial also extends its presence to the mainland; works by EGS, Janet Echelman, Rirkrit Tiravanija & Antto Melasniemi and Zodiak, as well as a solo exhibition from Gustafsson&Haapoja at HAM (3 April–16 August 2020), will be complemented by a special collaboration with the Facebook Art Department.

Moreover, throughout the summer a programme of exhibitions, events, workshops and educational activities take the form of *Helsinki Biennial Inspired*.

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Helsinki Biennial

Helsinki Biennial is an international contemporary art event which takes place on Vallisaari island. 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 the City of Helsinki and Helsinki Art Museum (HAM), 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 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.

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*, 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.