A comprehensive impact study of Helsinki Biennial has been published

**A comprehensive impact study of contemporary art event Helsinki Biennial has been published. The biennial’s impact was evaluated in relation to sociocultural and image-related, as well as environmental and economic impacts. Based on the impact study, which was published by the City Executive Office, it can be concluded that the event met its objectives and the expectations regarding impact.**

Contemporary art event Helsinki Biennial took place for the first time in summer 2021 on Vallisaari Island. It presented 41 international artists or groups of artists from both Finland and around the world. A total of 148,000 people visited Vallisaari from June to September. In addition, the biennial provided art experiences around Helsinki. HAM Helsinki Art Museum is responsible for producing and curating Helsinki Biennial. The next biennials will take place in 2023 and 2025.

The purpose of the impact study was to collect comprehensive starting level data of the first biennial and to produce information about the impact of the event. The impact of Helsinki Biennial was evaluated in relation to the three main goals of the event: 1) to make Helsinki more widely recognized as a city of high-quality visual arts and culture, 2) to bring attention to maritime Helsinki and its maritime services, and 3) to organize an ecologically sustainable and responsible event.

The most important research materials were a visitor survey conducted on Vallisaari, a survey to the residents of Helsinki and the visitor count data of the event. Artists and collaboration partners as well as experts in the Helsinki visuals arts scene were interviewed. Moreover, a business survey was conducted among maritime entrepreneurs with close ties to the biennial. The material on the environmental impact of the biennial’s environmental program was collected as a part of the implementation of the EcoCompass system.

**Helsinki’s reputation as a city of visual arts and culture was strengthened**

Based on the impact study, it can be concluded that the event met its objectives and the expectations regarding impact. The biennial offered art experiences to different types of visitors and strengthened the reputation of Helsinki as a city of visual arts and culture. At the same time, the event supported the objectives of the maritime strategy of Helsinki – the visitor survey respondents felt that the visit increased their interest in Helsinki’s archipelago, and they considered the promotion of leisure activities in Helsinki’s archipelago to be a good thing. Moreover, Helsinki Biennial pledged itself to comply with the criteria in its environmental program and to organise sustainable and responsible events in the future as well.

**Visitor experiences were positive – the combination of outdoor recreation and art was highly anticipated**

The impact study shows that Helsinki Biennial was in many ways a unique event. Organising Helsinki Biennial on Vallisaari Island was considered a good thing, since the location allowed the visitors to experience both art and nature, and the visit made them look at Helsinki in a new way. The most common reason for the visit was the anticipated combination of outdoor recreation and art, which according to the visitors was excellently realised at the site. Most of those who responded to the visitor survey rated the event as good or excellent, and said that they had memorable art experiences during their visit.

As regards the event experience, the visitors criticised, for example, queues for the ferries, accessibility, and the price-quality ratio of restaurant services and their concentration on a single location.

Two out of three visitors to the biennial were women, and the visitor profile was clearly inclined to highly educated people. Approximately half of the visitors were Helsinki residents; about one-quarter of the visitors came from Finland but outside the Helsinki Metropolitan Area. About one in ten came from abroad.

**Read the impact study in its entirety** [**here**](https://www.hel.fi/hel2/tietokeskus/julkaisut/pdf/22_03_09_StudyReports_1_Taskinen_Kivisaari_Kuusi_Mustonen.pdf)**.**

**The curator for Helsinki Biennial 2023 will be announced at the end of March.**

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