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A R T S

**THE HOUSE OF VISUAL ARTS – A NEW BEGINNING TOGETHER
SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

COMMISSIONED BY

Artists' Association of Finland

IN COOPERATION WITH

Artists' Association MUU

Association of Finnish Sculptors

Union of Finnish Art Associations

Association of Finnish Printmakers

Finnish Painters' Union

Association of Photographic Artists

AV-arkki, the Centre for Finnish Media Art

Frame Contemporary Art Finland

Galleria Huuto

Kuvasto

Ornamo Art and Design Finland

This summary presents the main results and conclusions of the report on the House of Visual Arts.

The report in full (in Finnish) is available at bit.ly/kuvataiteen_talo_selvitys

THE HOUSE OF VISUAL ARTS – A REPORT

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The House of Visual Arts is a project initiated by 12 art organisations that looks into founding a house dedicated to visual arts in Helsinki.

THE HOUSE OF VISUAL ARTS project is looking for new cooperation models and procedures to better serve visual arts professionals and audiences. The project explores the benefits that shared premises and/or exhibition spaces for operators in visual arts and closer collaboration would bring to the arts sector.

The House of Visual Arts – A New Beginning Together report presents alternative operating models for a house dedicated to visual arts, to be located in Helsinki. The report is based on a preliminary assessment, published January 2020, of the preconditions for founding the House of Visual Arts. According to the preliminary assessment, organisations in the field of visual arts share a willingness to develop their activities and an understanding of the changes that the sector will undergo in the future.

The report and the preliminary assessment have been commissioned by the following 12 organisations in the field of visual arts: the Artists' Association of Finland and its member associations, the Artists' Association MUU, the Association of Finnish Sculptors, the Union of Finnish Art Associations, the Association of Finnish Printmakers, the Finnish Painters' Union, the Association of Photographic Artists and AV-arkki, the Centre for Finnish Media Art, Frame Contemporary Art Finland, Mehiläispesä ry (Gallery Huuto), Kuvasto, the copyright society of visual artists, and Ornamo Art and Design Finland. The project has been supported by the Ministry of Education and Culture.

The report was drawn up by Riitta Heinämaa. The project has been managed by the Artists' Association of Finland and directed by a steering group: Teemu Mäki, Chair (AAF), Alina Mänttari (Finnish Painters' Union), Tommi Nilsson / Jaakko Rustanius (Kuvasto) and Vesa Vehviläinen (AV-arkki). Annukka Vähäsöyrinki (AAF) acted as the secretary of the steering group.

In addition to the members of the steering group, 15 experts were consulted during the process. Four open workshops were organised as part of the project and were attended by a total of 140 visual arts professionals, representing 30 different art organisations and independent professionals. The workshops dealt with various themes related to the development of an operating model for the House of Visual Arts using a variety of methods and tools.

An association was set up to promote the project following the publication of the preliminary assessment. The founding members of the Kuvataiteen talo ry ('the House of Visual Arts Association') are AV-arkki, the Centre for Finnish Media Art, Frame Contemporary Art Finland, Mehiläispesä ry (Galleria Huuto), the Artists' Association MUU, the Union of Finnish Art Associations, the Association of Finnish Sculptors, the Association of Finnish Printmakers, the Artists' Association of Finland, the Finnish Painters' Union, the Association of Photographic Artists and Kuvasto. The chair of the association is the photographic artist Joonas Ahlava.

The House of Visual Arts is an ambitious, long-term project.

THE HOUSE OF VISUAL ARTS is not just a project about the premises, but it is of great importance in terms of visual arts policies. The visual arts scene needs a driving force to help it renew and strengthen. The House of Visual Arts will create added value to Helsinki, but its activities will also have a nationwide impact.

MISSION

The House of Visual Arts will be a national hub of contemporary art, and its activities will develop the visual arts scene and its structures. It will be a platform for working together instead of working alone, and it will strengthen the status of the visual arts and artists in society.

VISION

The establishment of the House of Visual Arts aims to achieve the following positive impacts:

1. to promote encounters with contemporary arts and relationships with audiences;
2. to improve the availability, visibility and accessibility of visual arts;
3. to be a meeting place for the general public, artists and players in the art scene;
4. to sell works of art as part of its services to the public;
5. to enhance the expertise of the operators in the House of Visual Arts;
6. to promote the interests of the field of visual arts;
7. to support artists' in their profession and help them to succeed;
8. to create local and national collaborative activities in the field of visual arts;
9. to be a platform for new international connections and networks;
10. to improve cost-effectiveness by centralising services and procurement; and
11. to co-operate actively with the City of Helsinki and its various departments.

The operating model for the House of Visual Arts

THE AIM is to create an operating model for the House of Visual Arts that is based on networks, cooperation and expertise and that emphasises a collegial approach, develops and introduces good practices for promoting the interests of artists and invests in various partnerships.

Various operators in the field of visual arts have been able to attend workshops, which have been used to draft the operating model. The starting point for the workshops was collaborative structures in the field of visual arts and their development by centralising various functions. In the preliminary assessment, the operating model was outlined from the artists' point of view (services and communality) as well as from the audience's point of view (content).

A STRONG COLLEGIAL APPROACH

The operating model for the House of Visual Arts is based on strong collegiality, which means partnerships between the organisations involved in the project, shared goals, collaboration and the sharing of expertise. Collaboration can involve working together on content and programming, shared facilities and production structures, human resources and collegiality between the staff of partner organisations and the artists as users of the house.

PROMOTING THE ARTISTS' BEST INTERESTS

The organisations in the House of Visual Arts can work together to develop and implement best practices to promote the interests of the operators in the

field of visual arts that could be used as templates in the field in general. These would include templates for exhibition agreements, agreements on levels of compensation and copyright practices. Introducing new operating models will improve the structures in the art scene and artists' working

conditions. Coordinated promotion of interests will give weight to the sector and help it to achieve its goals. This will also include professional support and services for visual artists.

The operating model for the House of Visual Arts is based on strong collegiality.

THOUGHTFUL PARTNERSHIPS

The operating model for the House of Visual Arts is also based on various long-term partnerships. The aim of the project is to adopt a broad and open-minded view as even the most surprising parties can be potential partners. These include other organisations and residents in the area, operators in the visual arts and other arts sectors, art schools, international partners, decision-makers, sponsors and companies in various industries.

SERVICES AND TARGET GROUPS OF THE HOUSE OF VISUAL ARTS

The House of Visual Arts will offer a wide range of services which will be developed to meet the requirements of the different target groups.

POTENTIAL SERVICES	POTENTIAL TARGET GROUPS
Exhibition activities	Members of project partners
Involvement of the public in exhibition activities	Project partners' current audiences and new audiences
Other programme-related activities, e.g. events	Professional visual artists in the Helsinki region
Non-professional activities related to visual arts	Professional visual artists across Finland
Art lending and sales	Buyers and collectors
Art book shop (cf. museum shop)	Art students
Artists' residencies / Community residencies	Art scholars
Studio space (Makerspace, Fab-lab)	Media and visual arts critics
Mentoring and training of artists	Arts and cultural policymakers
Other services for artists	Museum Card holders (approx. 185,000)
Café / restaurant	Number of tourists (2019: Helsinki approx. 4.5 million overnight stays, 54% by international tourists)

Administrative solutions for the House of Visual Arts

THE ADMINISTRATION model best suited to the requirements of the House of Visual Arts depends on the organisations joining in the project. Organisations have different functions, practices and work cultures, and they come in different sizes and with varying budgets. The administration model should also take into account the fact that the organisations involved in the project may change over time. The key is to find a balance between the levels of independence and collaboration among the organisations. The organisations involved in the project must have a sense that their activities are evolving in the new premises.

There are several options for managing and maintaining the House of Visual Arts; it could be a foundation, an association, a cooperative, a property company or incorporation of certain shared services. It was discussed in the workshops that the new administration model should be light and it should not undermine organisational boundaries and identities of the organisations even if the concept is based on collaboration. Most participants welcomed the idea that the operations of the House of Visual Arts Association should be further developed. The report describes the management and decision-making structures of the different administration models in more detail.

The key is to find a balance between the levels of independence and collaboration among the organisations.

Participants in the workshops also agreed that the organisations involved in the project should discuss which similar functions and overlapping duties should be merged in the future. Restructuring the division of duties might create new types of roles that enhance expertise. The workshops also

discussed which services and purchases in the House of Visual Arts should be centralised and put out to tender. Centralised procurement is considered a sensible solution in many cases, such as administration, property management, communications and marketing as well as exhibition technology.

Exhibition activities at the House of Visual Arts

PARTICIPANTS IN the workshops discussed the profile of the House of Visual Arts in relation to other operators in the field of visual arts. They agreed that the House of Visual Arts should not be a competitor to museums or kunsthallen, but it could brand itself as a cosy and relaxed arts hub, a place that exhibits new and high-quality contemporary art on a large scale. Despite the wide range of works of art that it will present, the House of Visual Arts should retain some of the spirit of traditional art galleries.

The preliminary assessment revealed that the project partners are willing to develop the House of Visual Arts' exhibition activities as a whole. The participating organisations will need to share an open-minded approach to organising exhibitions. The values that will guide the exhibition activities at the House of Visual Arts must be in line with the existing values of the organisations, such as transparency, artistic skills, accessibility, professionalism and sustainability. Participants in the workshops agreed that the House of Visual Arts must operate on the principles of diversity and equality. This requires the involvement of operators that participate society from the margins; something that was already taken into account when the workshops were arranged.

The project partners are willing to develop the House of Visual Arts' exhibition activities as a whole.

It will be essential for the exhibition activities at the House of Visual Arts to focus on artists and care: artists will be assisted in the creation of successful exhibitions by being provided with services and support for production at the various stages of the exhibition process. The House should also employ people who specialise in selling works of art and public programming. The House of Visual Arts will take into account artists' lives and careers in their various stages. Mentoring, career counselling and networking are examples of beneficial activities. Various services will help artists to develop their professional skills and to find new work opportunities in Finland and internationally.

The workshops also highlighted the importance of free exhibition space for artists. Ongoing developments in the arts and culture sector suggest that operators in the field are increasingly willing to provide artists with free exhibition spaces, exhibition payments and support for the production of exhibitions. It is hoped that these good practices will also be implemented in the House of Visual Arts.

ORGANISING EXHIBITIONS

The assessment explored people's views on the exhibitions to be held at the House of Visual Arts. What stood out was the wish to have various types of exhibitions and artistic projects. The house should host both exhibitions that take a long time to prepare as well as short-term projects. People also said that there should be more flexibility in terms of the duration of exhibitions. Exhibition schedules also have an impact on the coordination of openings.

Those surveyed hope to see exhibition spaces of various sizes, at least one of which would be a large space available for all organisations in the house. A large exhibition space would make it possible to organise events such as sale events, international exhibitions and the Young Artists exhibitions on a larger scale, which would create more visibility for contemporary art.

Participants in the workshops debated about whether the organisations in the House of Visual Arts should have the option to have their own exhibition spaces. The report identifies some space-related options from which different variations can be developed.

Many artists consider peer review and open applications important.

It was pointed out in the workshops that joint exhibitions in the House of Visual Arts should be decided by processes that are democratic yet bold. The decisions must be based on diverse views, freedom and a democratic approach. Many artists consider peer review and open applications important, but curated exhibitions will also need to have a place at the House of Visual Arts.

Exhibition activities will largely depend on how able and willing the organisations are to work with each other. Genuine collaboration depends on everyone being equal in and committed to the development of exhibition activities. There are different types of exhibition operators, and the Artists' Association of Finland's member associations' galleries, for example, focus on medium-specific exhibition activities.

Spatial solutions for the House of Visual Arts

LOCATION OF THE HOUSE OF VISUAL ARTS

The House of Visual Arts assessment project concluded that two options for the house's location should be considered in more detail: the block known as Kaartin Lasaretti ('the Guards hospital') in Kamppi and the Suvilahti power plant area in Sörnäinen. Kaartin Lasaretti has since been removed from the

market and, consequently, Suvilahti has become the preferred site for the House of Visual Arts.

Other options include Lapinlahti, Orion's former premises in Vallila, the Hanasaari power plant area in Sörnäinen, Kaapelitehdas, Myyrmäki and Itäkeskus.

The House of Visual Arts, if located in Suvilahti, could create synergy with the other organisations and various events.

Suvilahti has several advantages, such as the new plans for Helsinki Art Museum (HAM), the proximity of the University of the Arts Helsinki and Teurastamo, and the artists' house Ars Longa in Kalasatama. The House of Visual Arts, if located in Suvilahti, could create synergy with the other organisations and various events.

Suvilahti is also ideally located in terms of transport connections. Having several organisations working in the same area would expand the range of programmes and events it offers, and this would also make Suvilahti even more attractive as a space for urban culture to local people and tourists alike.

The area of the decommissioned Suvilahti power plant and gas plant in Sörnäinen consists of nine buildings, two gasometers and a courtyard. Suvilahti offers at least four interesting options for the House of Visual Arts:

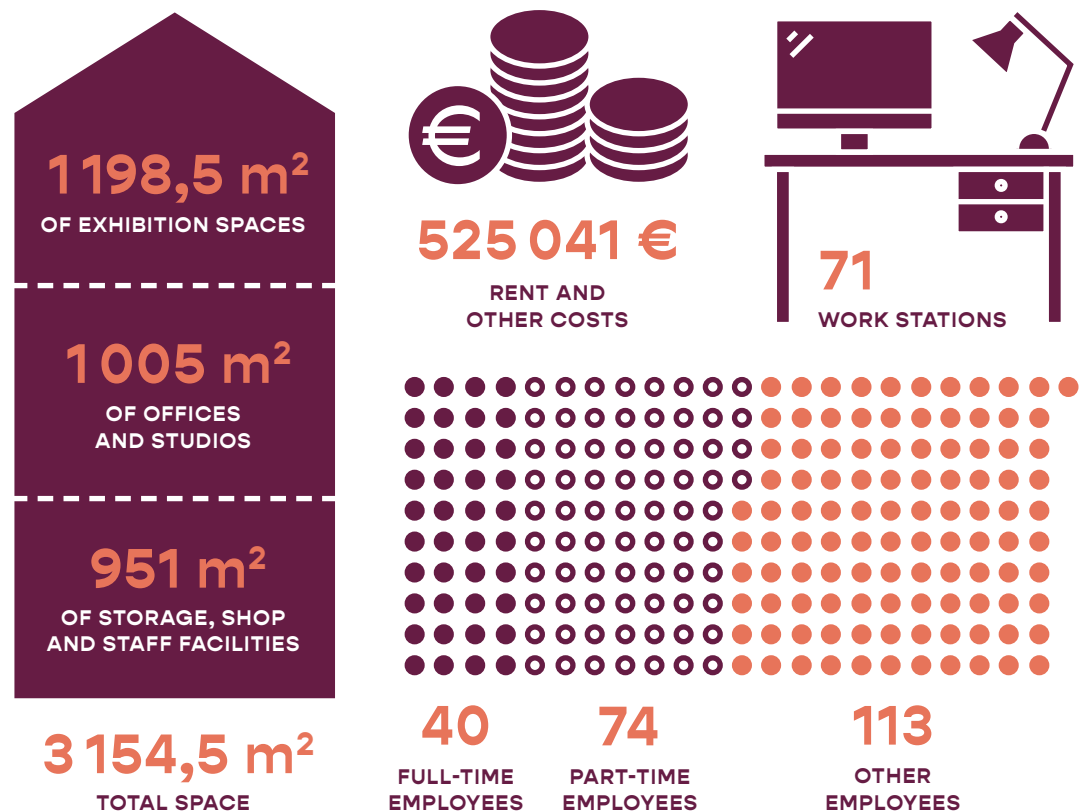
1. **Kattilahalli in the old power plant;**
2. **the steel gasometer (Gasometer 2);**
3. **the planned event block (Suvilahti Event Hub Oy);**
4. **the construction of a new building in the area.**

All plots and buildings in the Suvilahti area are owned and maintained by the City of Helsinki. Kattilahalli, which is used for events, is managed by Kiinteistöyhtiö Oy Kaapelitalo, and the Helsinki Urban Environment Division is responsible for the rest of the area.

PURPOSE AND MANAGEMENT OF THE HOUSE OF VISUAL ARTS PREMISES

Workshops were held to discuss the House of Visual Arts' requirements for space and any special requirements for the premises as well as the location of the House. Information was collected during the assessment on the facilities used by the project partners, and this information was used as background material. The organisations also presented their views on the uses they would have for the facilities in the future.

CURRENT SPACES USED BY THE PROJECT PARTNERS AND THE NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES



The minimum and maximum requirements of the future users and operations of the House of Visual Arts were assessed on the basis of the information gathered in the workshops. The decisions on the size and uses of the premises will be guided by the needs of the organisations to be located in the House of Visual Arts as well as financial realities. It has been said, for example, that the House of Visual Arts will not seek to solve all problems related

to artists' workspaces in the Helsinki metropolitan area. Having spaces for residencies and shared workspaces for artists and curators would be useful on both a national and international level. The report features more detailed proposals for the exhibition spaces, public areas and office spaces.

The House of Visual Arts could be located in a building that requires renovation or in a new building.

The House of Visual Arts could be located in a building that requires renovation or in a new

building, and it could be either rented or owned by the association. The project partners who initiated the assessment prefer ownership to renting. The report describes the pros and cons of owning and renting the property.

Effectiveness of the House of Visual Arts

PROFESSIONAL PERSPECTIVE: What artistic and cultural policy changes are being pursued through the House of Visual Arts?

The House of Visual Arts will enhance collaboration in the field of visual arts. The House of Visual Arts will aim to strengthen the voice and position of visual arts in society by actually bringing the organisations *together*. The House of Visual Arts will create visibility for visual arts and increase their social impact.

The House of Visual Arts will be a platform for art and cultural policy initiatives and experiments related to the presentation of art, for example. Combining resources will support the organisations' own processes.

AUDIENCE PERSPECTIVE: What positive impacts are sought by the establishment of the House of Visual Arts?

The House of Visual Arts will not be a museum or an art gallery, but it will be a new kind of arts hub. The House of Visual Arts may encourage visitors to museums and art galleries to also visit smaller galleries and events, bringing new audiences to visual arts in general. Selling works of art, greater investments in audience-related operations and longer opening hours will be part of the services offered to the public.

URBAN DEVELOPMENT PERSPECTIVE: How will the House of Visual Arts promote the development of the Suvilahti area (or the area in which the house is ultimately located)?

With the House of Visual Arts, visual arts-related services will expand from the city centre to areas that lack such services even though a lot of creatives live in the eastern part of the inner city. A new site for visual arts could also be a tourist attraction in Helsinki.

Recommendations for further action

1. ASSESSMENT OF THE LOCATION AND PREMISES

Kaapelitehdas and the Suvilahti area are excellent examples of how old industrial environments in Helsinki have been adopted for arts and cultural activities. The City of Helsinki could also contribute to the creation of the House of Visual Arts by offering it potential sites. The preferred location would be the Suvilahti area.

Potential rental sites will require an assessment that covers the condition of the property, interior spaces and soil, their adaptability, preservation issues and technical issues, as well as a preliminary plan for the use of the premises. The assessment should include a budget estimate for reconstruction, renovations and architectural designs as well as an estimate for the renovation schedule and future maintenance and operating costs. The assessment should take into account and point out other development work planned in the Suvilahti area, such as transport connections.

In addition to a leased property requiring renovation, other options should also be explored, such as a new building or the possibility to integrate the House of Visual Arts into another property project in the Suvilahti area. The House of Visual Arts Association has held preliminary negotiations on this matter with Suvilahti Event Hub Oy.

2. MULTI-CHANNEL FUNDING

A multi-channel funding model should be in place from the start, consisting of funding from the participating organisations as well as from the state, the City of Helsinki and the private sector (foundations and funds). The state and the City of Helsinki have often provided an equal amount of funding for premises for operators in arts and culture.

3. EXTENSIVE LOBBYING

The preliminary assessment and the report were accompanied by extensive debates about the House of Visual Arts among partners in the field. There will be a need for dialogue with political decision-makers, opinion-leaders, strategic partners and the public as the House of Visual Arts must also be supported by interest groups other than artists. Lobbying and working with stakeholders will create a shared willingness to set up the House of Visual Arts.