



Press Release 26 Feb 2020

The Finnish artworld takes climate action

Four Finnish artworld bodies – Frame Contemporary Art Finland, Helsinki International Artist Programme (HIAP), IHME Helsinki, and Mustarinda – have recruited a shared eco-coordinator to reduce their climate emissions. The job description of the eco-coordinator employed on IHME Helsinki’s initiative includes identifying various ways of reducing emissions in artwork production and telling the artworld about what has been learned, so that sustainable operating models become the norm. This is the first time that someone with the job title “eco-coordinator” has been employed on the Finnish art scene.

The four organizations employing the eco-coordinator all work in their own way. Each year, IHME Helsinki creates an accessible artwork in public space and, last year, updated both its strategy and its experts to respond specifically to the challenges of climate change. Frame takes Finnish art to the world and, for instance, organizes the Finnish Pavilion at the Venice Biennale; HIAP runs artist residencies in Helsinki and is active in international collaborative projects. Mustarinda is a largely volunteer-based grouping of artists and researchers that promotes the ecological reconstruction of society, and cultural and natural diversity. During its decade in existence Mustarinda has, for instance, focused on creating ecological practices in the Mustarinda building in Kainuu, and elsewhere in the world.

All the organizations have paid attention to ecologically sustainable guidelines before. Each year, IHME invites an established artist from abroad to Finland, so that art lovers do not have to travel abroad in pursuit of art, and aims to produce artworks using a local workforce and materials that take the environment into account. Frame has launched an initiative to change Finnish State Travel Regulations; the current Regulations instruct all state-funded bodies to prioritize air travel. HIAP and Mustarinda’s joint projects have investigated the transition to the post-fossil-fuel era, for example, with regard to energy, transportation and food.

“Frame’s mission is to bring Finnish art to the world. Encounters between people are at the heart of everything. How can this be done in a high-quality, cost-effective way without destroying the climate?” asks Frame’s Director **Raija Koli**.

“How are we to safeguard artistic freedom within a framework of life-sustaining systems?” asks IHME Helsinki’s Executive Director **Paula Toppila**. “We cannot leave the change in ideas and actions required by the climate crisis to potential innovations in art. Artworks, too, have to be produced in emission-free ways or with as few emissions as possible.”

“The shared employee represents a major opportunity for dialogue between the organizations,” says HIAP’s Director **Juha Huuskonen**. “In the age of climate change, collaboration is the cornerstone of everything.”

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