

**HAM** Helsingin taidemuseo  
Helsingfors konstmuseum  
Helsinki Art Museum

# Collection Policy 2024–2028



5	<b>COLLECTION POLICY 2024–2028 SUMMARY</b>
8	<b>INTRODUCTION</b>
9	Organisational Changes at HAM Helsinki Art Museum, 2017–2023
10	Strategic Priorities for 2024–2028
12	HAM’s Strategic Objectives and Performance Indicators
16	<b>1. HAM’S ROLE AS THE CITY’S DESIGNATED ART EXPERT</b>
21	<b>2. CONTENT OF THE COLLECTION</b>
21	2.1 Accessions Collection
23	2.2 Public Art Collection
24	2.3 Donated and Deposited Collections
25	2.4 Collection Transfers
26	2.5. Archive Collection and Operational Archive
29	<b>3. COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT</b>
29	3.1 Acquisition Strategy for the City Art Collection
31	3.2 Methods of Acquisition
34	3.3 Acquisitions Policy
38	<b>4. PRESERVATION AND CARE OF THE COLLECTION</b>
39	4.1 Preservation, Conservation and Maintenance
41	4.2 Art Collection Security
43	4.3 Deaccessioning
47	<b>5. ACCESSIBILITY AND USAGE OF THE COLLECTION</b>
47	5.1 Exhibitions
48	5.2 Art in Public Space
48	5.2.1 Public Art
49	5.2.2 Deposited Works from the Collection in City Facilities
51	5.3 Publications
52	5.4 Online Access to the Collection
55	<b>6. COLLECTION SERVICES</b>
55	6.1. Deposits
56	6.2. Loans
57	6.3. Image Requests and Photography Permits
57	6.4. Permits for Events Involving Public Artworks
58	6.5. Regional Museum Responsibilities
59	<b>7. COLLECTION MANAGEMENT</b>
61	7.1. Photographic Documentation
63	<b>8. HISTORY OF THE COLLECTION</b>
65	<b>APPENDICES:</b>
	Agreements related to the Foundation’s formation and collections, and the Per Cent for Art Principle

## SUMMARY

# Summary of the Collection Policy for 2024–2028

**THIS COLLECTION POLICY** OUTLINES the priorities, objectives, and strategic plans guiding the development and management of HAM Helsinki Art Museum’s collections, along with the key indicators used to monitor progress. It applies to the four-year period from 2024 to 2028.

The HAM Helsinki Art Museum Foundation officially commenced operations on January 1<sup>st</sup> 2023. Its core mission is to ensure the careful preservation, maintenance, and considered accession of the City of Helsinki’s art collection. The Foundation also oversees the curation, coordination, exhibition, and depositions of the collection across the city. In addition, it is responsible for making the collection accessible to the public and for providing expert advisory services in the City of Helsinki’s Percent for Art projects and art donation initiatives.

HAM’s mission is to serve as the art museum of the city residents of Helsinki, dedicated to enhancing the visibility and impact of art across the city. Its vision is to establish Helsinki as the most vibrant art hub in Northern Europe by inspiring and connecting people through meaningful artistic experiences. HAM’s work is guided by four core values: a commitment to art, audience focus, an international outlook, and a strong sense of responsibility. (Introduction)

HAM’s operations are governed by the Museum Act and related regulations, the City of Helsinki’s urban strategy, copyright law, and the ethical principles of the museum sector. The museum’s staff carry out a wide range of expert tasks related to the City’s art collection, such as serving also as public art consultants and curators for Percent for Art acquisitions. In addition to expanding a collection that currently holds over 11,000 works, HAM is dedicated to its

preservation for future generations. The collection is made accessible through a citywide deposit system and its visibility is promoted by lending artworks to exhibitions both in Finland and abroad. Through these efforts, HAM encourages public engagement with the collection and fosters a deeper understanding of its value and stewardship. (Chapter 1)

The collection managed by HAM consists of several distinct sub-collections, the largest of which is the Accessions Collection. This core collection is actively and strategically expanded, with a primary focus on contemporary art. New works are acquired annually using funds specifically allocated for art purchases. The Collection also includes Finland’s largest public art collection, comprising over 500 works, most of them site-specific and created in dialogue with their particular locations.

The origins of the City of Helsinki’s art collection date back to the 19th century, when the City first began acquiring and collecting works of art. In its early stages, it primarily consisted of park statues and paintings intended for display in public spaces such as schools and hospitals. Alongside the City’s own acquisitions, the collection has been enriched by several significant donations, the most notable being the *Leonard and Katariina Bäcksbäcka Collection*, donated in 1976. This generous bequest became the cornerstone of the city’s art holdings, prompting the founding of the Meilahti Art Museum, which later became known as the Helsinki City Art Museum. Over time, the *Ingjald Bäcksbäcka and Christina Bäcksbäcka Collections* were separated into distinct entity from the original collection, still continuing to grow through ongoing donations. (Chapter 2)

When HAM was established as a foundation, the City of Helsinki retained full ownership of its art collection, entrusting its care and management to the HAM Foundation. As the City’s designated art expert, HAM is responsible for curating the collection and overseeing its ongoing stewardship. Acquisitions for the Accessions Collection are reviewed and prepared by an acquisitions committee composed of specialists from across HAM’s units. Final acquisition proposals are submitted by the museum director to the City’s cultural director. The Public Art Collection is primarily expanded through Percent for Art projects, with HAM serving as the City’s expert consultant. The collection also grows through donations, deposits, and internal transfers of artworks between City departments. (Chapter 3)

The preservation and care of the art collection are entrusted to professionals with specialised expertise, working in accordance with national and international laws, regulations, and standards

for the protection of cultural heritage. The primary objective of collection care is to maintain the physical integrity of the artworks for as long as possible. This is achieved through a combination of preventive and restorative conservation, meticulous documentation, and strict safety protocols during exhibition and transport. Safeguarding the collection is an integral part of HAM's daily operations, with its effectiveness regularly evaluated through systematic risk management practices. (Chapter 4)

HAM enhances the visibility and accessibility of its art collection through multiple channels. The collection is featured prominently in the museum's own exhibitions, and works are also regularly lent to other museums and exhibition organisers. These loans not only broaden public access to the collection but also foster inter-institutional collaboration, enabling HAM to secure reciprocal loans for its own exhibitions.

HAM's foremost international exhibition initiative is the Helsinki Biennial, held every two years. As a key highlight in the region's art calendar, the biennial offers a dynamic platform for showcasing both newly commissioned works and pieces from HAM's existing collection in a fresh and engaging context. Selected commissioned works from the biennial are acquired for the collection. (Chapter 5)

As the museum with regional responsibility for the Province of Uusimaa, HAM collaborates closely with other museums and serves as the leading authority on art and visual heritage across the region. Its regional initiatives are developed in partnership with local stakeholders and are guided by the principles of openness, dialogue, and sustainability. (Chapter 6)

HAM's collection is showcased not only through exhibitions but also throughout the city in a wide range of settings. Public artworks are installed in outdoor urban spaces, on the façades and grounds of City-owned buildings, and in semi-public indoor environments such as libraries, schools, and daycare centres. Alongside its public art programme, HAM places artworks in City-owned premises through a deposit system, with the aim of creating an urban environment that is engaging, experiential, and thought-provoking. By integrating art into everyday settings, HAM ensures that all residents have equal opportunities to encounter art, bringing it into Helsinki's daily life. Beyond physical spaces, the collection is also accessible online in various formats. Works can be explored through the Finna search service, HAM's website, its 'Explore Public Art' platform, and social media channels. (Chapter 5)



**KATJA TUKIAINEN**  
**Rainbow Eyes**  
**2011**

Photo: Hanna Kukorelli / HAM

# INTRODUCTION

**AS OF JANUARY 1ST 2023**, HAM Helsinki Art Museum began operating as an independent foundation. Although its organisational structure has changed, the art collection itself remains the property of the City of Helsinki and is entrusted to the HAM Helsinki Art Museum Foundation. HAM continues to manage the City’s art collection—referred to hereinafter as either the City Art Collection or the HAM Collection, as contextually applicable.

This document is HAM’s fifth Collection Policy. It defines the museum’s collecting mission and sets out the principles, rationale, practices, and procedures that guide the management of its collection. The policy reflects on past practices, assesses the current status of the collection, and outlines goals for the future. Serving both as a strategic framework and a practical handbook, the Collection Policy articulates HAM’s objectives and protocols while supporting the day-to-day responsibilities of collection management. It includes acquisition guidelines for both the Accessions Collection and the Public Art Collection, while also addressing other key aspects of collection care. The Helsinki City Art Museum (now HAM) was originally founded around the City Art Collection, built primarily from a significant bequest received from Leonard and Katarina Bäcksbäck. The museum continues to receive important donations, and this Collection Policy provides updated guidance on the handling of gifts, bequests, and other new accessions.

## **Background: Organisational Changes at HAM Helsinki Art Museum, 2017–2023**

The previous Collection Policy was approved and published in 2017, marking the beginning of a five-year period that was transformative in many ways. On 1 July 2017, following changes to the City of Helsinki’s management structure, HAM Helsinki Art Museum (hereinafter HAM) was incorporated into the cultural services unit of the City’s Culture and Leisure Division. As part of this reorganisation, the museum’s administration and support services were transferred to the responsibility of the Culture and Leisure Division. In October 2018, the Mayor of Helsinki appointed *Riitta Heinämaa*, PhD, to investigate and prepare a report on HAM’s future. The completed report was submitted to the mayor on 6 August 2019.

Based on the recommendations of this report, the Chief Executive Officer of the City of Helsinki appointed a steering group on 6 November 2019 to oversee the further planning of HAM’s organisational structure, administrative position, and operational role. The steering group’s follow-up report was completed and submitted to the Chief Executive Officer on 3 September 2020, with the endorsement of the Director of the Culture and Leisure Division. The report concluded that transitioning HAM into a foundation would provide significant benefits, including enhanced long-term financial and operational planning, as well as increased self-financing capacity.

HAM Helsinki Art Museum began operating as a foundation on 1 January 2023. While the museum’s operations transitioned to the newly established foundation, ownership of the art collection remained with the City of Helsinki, which entrusted its management to the HAM Helsinki Art Museum Foundation through formal agreements. A series of key agreements—prepared in collaboration with experts from the City of Helsinki’s Culture and Leisure Division and the City Executive Office—were signed on 29 December 2022. These included: the agreement on the transfer of Helsinki Art Museum operations to the HAM Helsinki Art Museum Foundation; the deposit agreement for the City of Helsinki’s art collection (APPENDIX 1); an agreement outlining principles for the joint use of the collection management system; and agreements concerning the transfer of the Tennis Palace, Collection Centre, and K3 premises to the foundation, free of charge. The Collection Centre is jointly operated with the Helsinki City Museum, and its practices remain unchanged.

Following the retirement of long-serving Museum Director *Maija Tanninen-Mattila* in autumn 2022, new leadership was appointed to guide HAM into its next chapter. *Arja Miller* assumed the role of museum director, and *Sanna Katajavuori* was appointed administrative director, with both beginning their tenure in March 2023. Strategic planning for the newly established foundation commenced in autumn 2023 and culminated in the board’s ratification of HAM’s new strategy on 8 April 2024. The Collection Policy was approved on 4 June 2025 by the Director of the Culture and Leisure Division in Helsinki (APPENDIX 5).

## **Strategic Priorities for 2024–2028**

This Collection Policy provides a long-term framework for the museum’s objectives, priorities, and development strategies. Its update was postponed to accommodate recent organisational changes, including HAM’s transition to foundation status, and to ensure that strategic planning and newly defined objectives could be fully integrated into its preparation.

The City of Helsinki has defined the responsibilities and objectives of the HAM Helsinki Art Museum Foundation in its ownership strategy (APPENDIX 2). Regarding the management of the City Art Collection, the strategy states: “The foundation is responsible for the preservation, care, curation, and expansion of the City Art Collection, as well as for its thoughtful usage, presentation, and placement in various citywide settings. The City Art Collection includes works of public art that are curated, placed, and maintained in cooperation with the Urban Environment Division.” The strategy further outlines the following priorities: “The Foundation is responsible for expanding the City’s high-quality art collection, for making it accessible to the public, and for providing expert art consultancy in the City’s Percent for Art projects and art donation initiatives.” In addition, the foundation is expected to develop its operations by collaborating with both domestic and international actors and by strengthening partnerships with private art collections. As the designated museum with regional responsibility for the Province of Uusimaa, HAM carries special responsibilities outlined in the City’s ownership strategy.

The City of Helsinki’s ownership strategy specifies that the performance indicators for collections work are based on the objectives established in this Collection Policy.

The Foundation’s by-laws define its mission as follows: “As part of the Helsinki City Group, the Helsinki Art Museum Foundation serves as the administrator of HAM Helsinki Art Museum. Its mission is to promote and support the fine arts, increase public aware-

ness of art, manage the City’s art museum services and art collection, and carry out other art museum-related activities.”

The Foundation’s responsibilities are further specified as follows:

- “The Foundation is primarily responsible for the management, care, display, and expansion of the City Art Collection, which comprises a Public Art Collection and, secondarily, a Collection curated by the Foundation itself. These collections may also include artworks, archival materials, and artefacts owned by or on deposit from the state or third parties. Collection management responsibilities extend to the usage of the collections, including art loans and related activities.
- “The Foundation may deposit HAM-administered works from the City Art Collection, as well as from its own collections, in various locations within the Helsinki City Group or in other appropriate deposit settings.
- “As the City of Helsinki’s designated art expert, the Foundation provides advisory services for construction, urban planning, and other urban development projects. It is also responsible for overseeing the selection and implementation of artworks in the City’s Percent for Art projects, in accordance with the policy and practices approved by the City of Helsinki.
- “In addition, the Foundation organises exhibitions, events, and audience engagement initiatives—both in Finland and internationally—in a variety of formats. It also coordinates a range of customer service and public-facing programmes.
- “The Foundation actively fosters and maintains domestic and international networks and community relations within the fine arts field. It supports the preservation and digital accessibility of visual art and contributes to related research and publishing efforts.

“The HAM Helsinki Art Museum Foundation Board is responsible for ratifying the museum’s Collection Policy—including its objectives and performance indicators—and for determining the schedule for policy updates.”

## **HAM’s Strategic Objectives and Performance Indicators**

The current strategy was approved by the Foundation’s Board at its meeting on 8 April 2024.

### **MISSION**

HAM’s mission is to serve as the art museum to the residents of Helsinki dedicated to increasing the presence, visibility and impact of art across the city.

### **VISION**

HAM envisions Helsinki as the most engaging art capital in Northern Europe—one that inspires and unites people through art.

### **VALUES**

#### **COMMITMENT TO ART**

Art is at the core of everything we do.

#### **AUDIENCE FOCUS**

Our work is guided by the needs and interests of our audiences.

#### **INTERNATIONAL OUTLOOK**

We view international engagement as a vital part of our identity and practice.

#### **RESPONSIBILITY**

We act sustainably and ethically in response to the challenges of our time.

The following section provides a more detailed account of HAM’s strategic objectives and responsibilities as they relate to the Collection Policy:

- A) As the City of Helsinki’s designated art expert, HAM is responsible for expanding the City Art Collection in a systematic, professional, and strategically aligned manner on behalf of the Helsinki City Group. We harness synergies across HAM’s various units to enhance and present the collection, integrating acquisitions, public art commissions, exhibitions, and the Helsinki Biennial into a cohesive whole.
- We strengthen our expertise by actively following and contributing to international projects focused on art collections, curatorial practices, and public art development.

- B) We enhance the visibility of art in urban spaces and deepen the connection between the City Art Collection and the public by improving:
- accessibility for all
  - public awareness
  - documentation practices
  - physical and digital access for residents and diverse audiences
  - audience understanding and sense of shared ownership.
- C) We foster international engagement and promote diversity within the city’s artistic landscape.
- Working in collaboration with the Helsinki City Executive Office and the Urban Environment Division, we identify opportunities to commission international public artworks, particularly through exhibitions, the Helsinki Biennial, and Percent for Art projects.
  - We promote diversity in the fine arts and the broader art community by embedding inclusivity into our decision-making processes.
- D) We safeguard the long-term preservation of artworks for future generations.
- We develop Citywide processes, guidelines, and clearly defined responsibilities to ensure the consistent care of the collection.
  - We continuously strengthen our conservation expertise.
  - We regularly review and update our risk management plans and safety protocols to protect the collection.
  - We remain committed to the ongoing development of the Collection Centre, maintaining close collaboration with the Helsinki City Museum.
  - We aim to enhance collaboration and clarify processes and agreements related to art acquisitions between HAM and the City.
- E) We are committed to responsibility in every aspect of our collection work.
- We prioritise ecological sustainability in line with the objectives of the Carbon-Neutral Helsinki Action Plan.

- We strive to clarify both our own and Citywide processes and agreements related to art procurement, while also streamlining collaboration.
- Our dedication to eco-social responsibility and Helsinki’s cultural diversity informs how we expand the collection, make curatorial decisions, present artworks, and manage collection care.
- HAM’s Responsibility Working Group plans and implements sustainability initiatives, ranging from broad strategic policies to practical measures such as optimising transport logistics, recycling materials, and improving artwork storage.

We use a range of indicators to monitor progress toward our objectives. Building a collection is a long-term endeavour, and success can only be measured over time, which makes it difficult to set precise numerical targets.

The following indicators help us assess how well we are meeting our goals:

#### **Art collection indicators**

1. Visibility of the collection, measured by the number of artworks featured in exhibitions, loans, deposits, and on digital platforms
2. Customer orientation in deposit-related decisions and processes (customer surveys, background research on deposited artworks)
3. Progress toward establishing a permanent public display of the collection

#### **Public art collection indicators**

1. Number of exhibitions and public commissions
2. Number of new public artworks commissioned through the Helsinki Biennial
3. Introduction of new collaborative models with the Urban Environment Division and the Helsinki City Executive Office
4. Tangible improvements in joint processes with the Urban Environment Division, the Helsinki City Executive Office, and the Culture and Leisure Division
5. Number of international public art projects



**SAM VANNI**  
Contrapunctus  
1959

Photo: Hanna Kukorell / HAM

# 1. HAM'S ROLE AS THE CITY'S DESIGNATED ART EXPERT

**HAM HELSINKI ART MUSEUM'S** responsibilities and areas of expertise are established in the Foundation's by-laws. As the City of Helsinki's designated art expert, HAM offers professional consultancy services related to the acquisition, care, and exhibition of the City Art Collection.

HAM's work is also governed by the Finnish Museum Act and associated regulations, the City of Helsinki's policies (including guidelines on art acquisitions), and copyright law. Additionally, the museum adheres to the ethical standards established by the *International Council of Museums (ICOM)*, which apply to museums, their leadership, and personnel.

HAM's professional museum staff undertake a wide range of specialised tasks related to managing the City Art Collection. Core processes—such as acquisitions, deposits, loans, and deaccessioning—are meticulously documented, regularly reviewed, and continuously improved. This expert work is inherently multidisciplinary, involving collaboration across various professional teams. It encompasses acquisitions, collection care, exhibitions, deposits, curatorial duties, art loans, registrations, administrative functions, collection management, research, public engagement, communications and marketing, product development, and comprehensive sustainability initiatives that permeate all aspects of the museum's operations.

Building an art collection requires deep and continuously updated knowledge of both art history and contemporary artistic developments. It also demands broad awareness of the artworld, including insight into emerging themes, materials, techniques, and innovative forms of expression. Curatorial expertise additionally requires a thorough understanding of the context of each acqui-

sition—its relationship to the existing collection, its intended location, or its placement in public space. Curators must also possess keen insight into relevant historical and topical issues, along with the foresight to anticipate challenges related to the artwork’s reception, interpretation, and long-term care and conservation.

HAM serves as the City of Helsinki’s designated expert and curator for public art acquisitions under the City’s Percent for Art policy. As Finland’s most active commissioner of Percent for Art projects, the City’s commitment to this policy is reflected in the substantial number of new commissions managed by HAM’s Public Art Unit, as well as the increasing demand for its expertise at regional, national, and international levels.

Public art projects are inherently multidisciplinary and collaborative. HAM’s curators work closely with the museum’s in-house architect and other specialists to coordinate the integration of artistic processes within construction projects. HAM’s expert role extends beyond project coordination: we actively champion the artist’s vision, ensuring that it is supported throughout the process while fostering open, ongoing dialogue about the artistic content. Additionally, HAM strives to elevate the status of art and artists by helping our City partners better understand the unique nature of artistic work. This includes advocating for contract models and commissioning processes that are more responsive to artists’ needs, as well as enhancing the integration of art into everyday construction management practices. HAM anticipates and aligns a broad spectrum of technical requirements, navigating and reconciling the diverse interests of multiple stakeholders. Our expertise goes beyond aesthetic considerations—it requires a deep understanding of the broader context, balancing construction constraints, future user expectations, administrative and legal frameworks, and the lifecycle planning of artworks, including provisions for their ongoing care and conservation.

HAM is additionally responsible for the preservation and care of the City Art Collection, ensuring its accessibility for future generations. The expertise of our conservators, along with the support of the Collection Centre, is invaluable in this vital work. HAM’s conservators collaborate closely with our in-house architect to coordinate, guide, and oversee the care and restoration of public artworks—even when maintenance responsibility and associated costs lie with the City of Helsinki’s Urban Environment Division.

HAM engages in multidisciplinary collaboration to enhance the accessibility and public recognition of the City Art Collection. Curated exhibitions featuring works from the Collection not only enhance its public visibility but also provide new contextual perspec-

tives and fresh insights. Creating a memorable exhibition experience is a collective effort involving multiple teams across the museum— not only the collections and exhibitions units, but also specialists in audience engagement, technical services, conservation, registration, customer service, and marketing and communications.

The expertise of HAM’s Collections Unit is also evident in the carefully curated selection of works from the Accessions Collection displayed across the City’s public spaces. HAM’s deposit system plays a crucial role in broadening access to the City Art Collection for wider audiences. HAM manages all new art deposits and oversees the relocation, temporary storage, and reinstallation of existing works within City premises. Artworks are continually circulated between municipal offices, HAM’s Collection Centre, and conservation facilities.

Art loans are a vital component of HAM’s collection work, significantly enhancing public awareness of both the City of Helsinki and its art holdings. HAM actively lends artworks to exhibitions organised by a diverse range of institutions nationally and internationally, with each loan serving as an opportunity to strengthen, expand, and deepen its networks. The museum’s registrars manage the entire loan process, from initial inquiries and formal agreements to logistics and transportation coordination.

The HAM Collection, comprising over 11,000 works, is managed through a dedicated collection management system that records all new acquisitions, artwork images, documentation, deaccessions, and other collection-related actions. This system also generates an annual collection accounting report. Staff trained in its use play a crucial role in ensuring that all information is entered accurately and comprehensively.

HAM continuously gathers and updates information about its art collection. Research is an integral part of exhibitions and publications featuring or relating thematically to the HAM Collection. The museum collaborates closely with art historians and other external experts to deepen understanding of the collection and its cultural significance. Research partnerships with universities and independent specialists are vital in advancing knowledge about the HAM Collection. In future, maintaining high standards in collection management will rely on specialised expertise and ongoing exchange of knowledge. Information about specific works is regularly reviewed and verified to ensure accuracy and relevance.

HAM is dedicated to fostering broader public understanding and a sense of shared ownership of the City Art Collection. This commitment is realised through a variety of initiatives designed to increase the collection’s visibility and engagement. The public can experience the City Art Collection in multiple ways: through curated

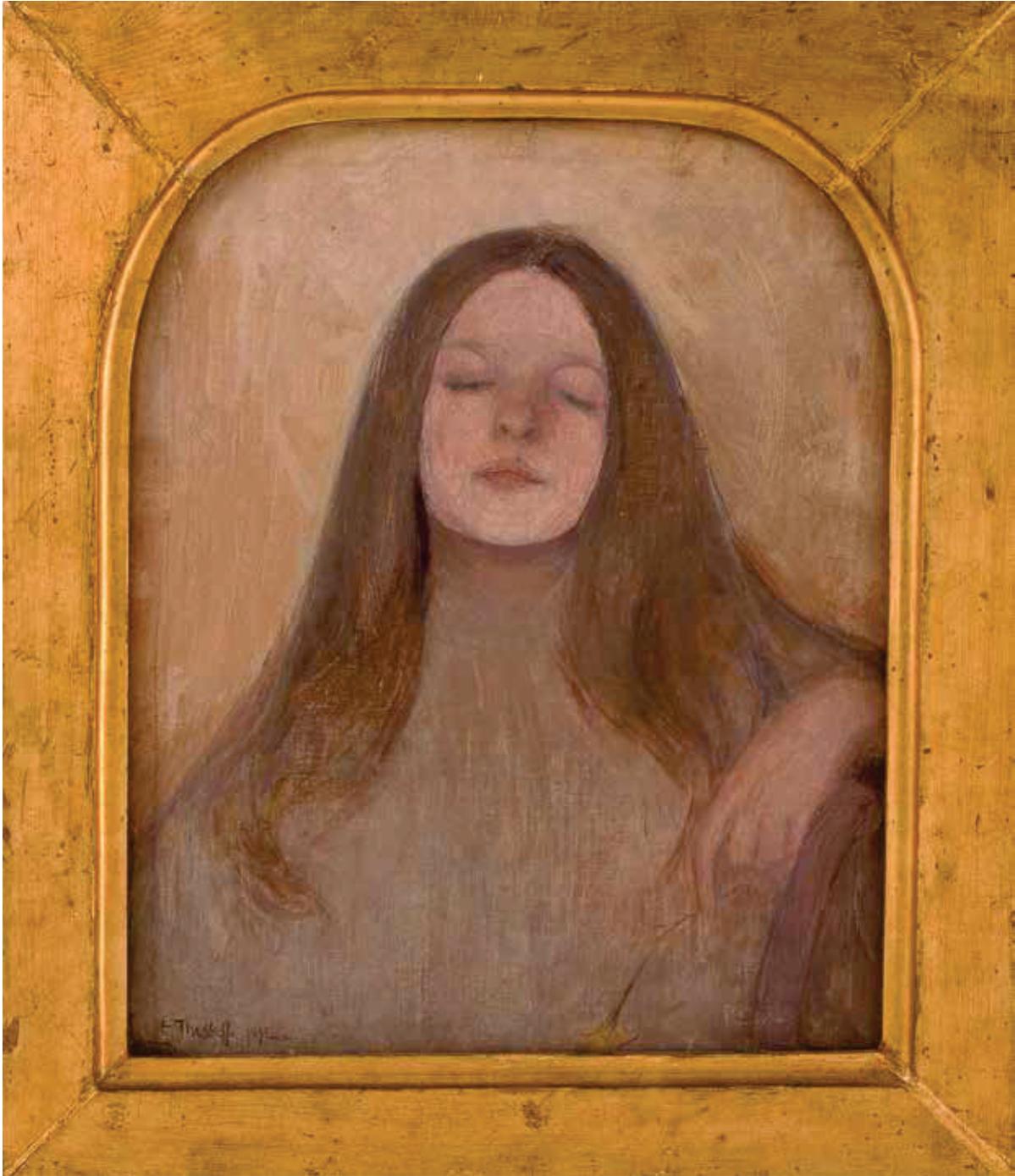
exhibitions, public artworks, and pieces displayed throughout City premises. Additionally, digital platforms—such as the Finna search service—offer users convenient online access to explore the collection. HAM’s website provides detailed information about the collection, its history, and recent acquisitions. Public art commissions are planned with community involvement at their core: artists present their proposals to local residents and future users of the sites, while images and descriptions of commissioned works are made accessible via HAM’s online ‘Explore Public Art’ search tool. Innovative approaches are being piloted to engage residents in the early stages of artist selection for public art projects. In some instances, such as artworks placed in schools, building users have actively participated in selecting specific pieces. HAM remains committed to exploring new ways to encourage public participation and deepen audience engagement, not only through new public commissions but also by adopting fresh methods of presenting the collection, deposited works, and existing artworks in the city’s public spaces.

HAM serves as the designated museum with regional responsibility for the Province of Uusimaa, offering specialised consultancy as a leading authority on fine arts and visual heritage. The museum continuously develops its regional expertise through a wide range of partnerships and initiatives, remaining committed to close collaboration with other art museums in the area. One of the key emerging challenges in the field is the need to establish clearer, more distinct profiles for individual art collections.

HAM Helsinki Art Museum’s sustainability efforts are coordinated by a dedicated Responsibility Working Group, comprising representatives from across the museum’s various units. This group oversees the implementation and ongoing development of HAM’s Responsibility Action Plan, which reinforces the museum’s commitment to sustainable and ethical practices. The plan addresses the ecological, social, and economic dimensions of HAM’s operations, setting out clear objectives, actionable steps, and measurable indicators for each area of responsibility. It is regularly reviewed and updated to align with evolving standards and best practices.

In HAM’s collection work, our commitment to responsibility is reflected through a variety of practices, including environmentally sustainable approaches to storage, maintenance, and logistics; a strong focus on audience engagement, social responsibility, and accessibility; and an acquisitions policy that is systematic, economically sustainable, and attentive to diversity and equity within the museum’s operating environment.

Further details on HAM’s expert role are explored in the following chapters of this Collection Policy.



**ELLEN THESLEFF**

Thyra Elisabeth

1892

Photo: Maija Toivanen / HAM

## 2. CONTENT OF THE COLLECTION

### 2.1. Accessions Collection

**THE HAM COLLECTION IS COMPOSED** of several distinct sub-collections, the largest being the Accessions Collection. This sub-collection is expanded each year through the acquisition of new artworks, supported by a designated annual appropriation. Until the end of 2022, this funding was part of HAM’s internal investment budget. As of 2023, the responsibility for these appropriations was transferred to the City of Helsinki’s Culture and Leisure Division, which now allocates the funds through its dedicated art investment budget.

The Accessions Collection is expanded actively and systematically, with a primary focus on contemporary art. Reflecting the inherently international nature of today’s Finnish art scene, HAM’s acquisition practices embrace a global perspective. Operating in the multilingual and multicultural context of the Helsinki metropolitan area, HAM works closely with a diverse range of stakeholders. Many works by artists born outside Finland have been acquired—often in connection with the museum’s temporary exhibitions—enriching the collection with several notable additions of lasting significance.

In addition to contemporary acquisitions, historically significant works that complement HAM’s existing holdings have also been acquired through auctions. Today, the Accessions Collection comprises approximately 7,000 works, including several distinctive bodies of work and notable individual artists. Altogether, the HAM Collection holds work by more than 2,300 artists.

The Accessions Collection features an extensive and representative selection of Informalist works from the 1960s, alongside significant examples of constructivist and geometrical art. Several art-

ists—particularly members of the *Prisma* Group and leading Finnish abstract painters—are represented by substantial bodies of work. In some cases, individual artists are represented by more than 100 pieces, with a portion of these works having been acquired through generous donations.

The Accessions Collection features a substantial selection of works from the 1970s and 1980s, many of which were originally acquired from artists working outside the mainstream. A notable component of this period is the *Jan Olof Mallander* Collection, acquired in 1990, which forms a distinct subcollection within the Accessions Collection. It focuses on alternative art movements of the 1970s and highlights a core group of artists who exhibited at the influential Halvat Huvit (Cheap Thrills) Gallery on Huvilakatu. The gallery is remembered for championing groundbreaking movements such as conceptual art and pop art.

The Accessions Collection includes a significant number of paintings by artists active in the 1980s. This decade is also extensively represented in the Harkonmäki Collection, which was originally acquired for the Accessions Collection but has since been a distinct entity. Characterised by large-scale works, the Harkonmäki Collection vividly reflects the spirit of the era, with a particular emphasis on Finnish contemporary art from the 1980s.

A distinctive strength of the Accessions Collection is its consistent representation of emerging artists from each generation. The HAM Gallery (formerly known as Kluuvi Gallery) has played a pivotal role in launching the careers of many young artists, with numerous works from its exhibitions acquired into the collection. HAM’s curatorial expertise and keen awareness of evolving artistic trends have enabled the museum to document new movements early and meaningfully through timely acquisitions.

The Accessions Collection includes a substantial number of media artworks—around 200 in total—placing HAM among the leading institutions in Finland in terms of media art holdings.

Photography also forms a major component of the collection, with over 1,900 photographic works comprising a significant subcollection in their own right. Notable highlights include a robust selection of documentary photography from the 1990s, as well as the *Stadin nuoret* (Youth of Helsinki) series, featuring works by 29 photographers dating from 1955 to 2000. This collection was acquired following the eponymous exhibition held at HAM.

The Accessions Collection further includes a strong representation of women artists from earlier generations, whose contributions are well represented in both acquisitions and donated collections.

## 2.2. Public Art Collection

The HAM Collection includes Finland’s largest selection of public art, comprising over 500 works. Just over half of these are permanently displayed outdoors in public spaces such as parks, squares, and on the façades or grounds of City-owned buildings. A comparable number of site-specific works can be found indoors, in semi-public spaces like libraries, schools, and daycare centres operated by the City of Helsinki. HAM’s Public Art Collection continues to grow by approximately 15 to 20 new works annually.

Not all public artworks visible throughout Helsinki belong to the HAM Collection—some are owned by private individuals, corporations, or the state.

Most of the works in the Public Art Collection are site-specific, created in dialogue with their intended locations. In addition to these, HAM has placed approximately 2,500 works from its Accessions Collection in various City-owned buildings.

Spanning three centuries, the Public Art Collection continues to grow each year, thanks in large part to the City of Helsinki’s commitment to the Percent for Art policy. The collection is both unique and nationally significant, featuring iconic works such as the Havis Amanda statue, the Sibelius Monument, the National Memorial to the Winter War, and numerous presidential monuments. Traditionally, public art commissions have been awarded to the most accomplished and renowned artists of their time. More recently, however, HAM has also focused on supporting emerging talents by offering them opportunities to create their first public works.

The City of Helsinki has also expanded its public art holdings through donations. The Finnish state has gifted several of these, including all of Helsinki’s presidential monuments and the Paavo Nurmi statue. Other notable donations include the Sibelius Monument, The Three Blacksmiths, and—a more recent addition—the National Memorial to the Winter War.

### 2.3. Donated and Deposited Collections

Complementing the Accessions Collection, HAM's holdings include several significant bequests donated to the City of Helsinki. Among the most notable are the art collections of *Leonard and Katarina Bäcksbäcka*, *Gösta Becker*, *Aune and Elias Laaksonen* and *Katriina Salmela-Hasán and David Hasán*.

The most prominent of these bequests is the 448-piece *Leonard and Katarina Bäcksbäcka Collections*, which primarily features 20th-century Finnish art and forms the cornerstone of Helsinki city's art collection. Leonard Bäcksbäcka's Konstsalongen Art Gallery, established in 1915, was one of the most influential galleries in Finland in its day. It played a pivotal role in shaping the national art scene, and the HAM Collection owes much to the gallery's systematic, long-term curatorial efforts. From its inception, the gallery focused on supporting emerging artists and nurturing close ties with the artist community, with a consistent emphasis on painterly and figurative colourism. Received in 1976, the Bäcksbäcka bequest prompted the City of Helsinki to establish a dedicated art museum in Meilahti. In 1979, the institution was officially named the Helsinki City Art Museum. The bequest includes many iconic Finnish masterpieces by celebrated masters such as *Tyko Sallinen*, *Marcus Collin*, *Alfred William Finch*, *Jalmari Ruokokoski*, and *Ellen Thesleff*. The collection was later expanded with the addition of the *Collin Collection*, and it also includes a notable selection of 20th-century French art.

*Leonard and Katarina's* son, *Ingjald Bäcksbäcka*, succeeded his father as director of the Konstsalongen Art Gallery and remained in the role until 1978. Their granddaughter, *Christina Bäcksbäcka, PhD*, continued the family legacy as gallerist and dedicated art collector. At her request, the original Bäcksbäcka bequest was formally distinguished from later additions, which were established as the *Ingjald and Christina Bäcksbäcka Collection* in 2018. This collection includes all works donated by Christina Bäcksbäcka from 1980 onward. It currently comprises over 300 works and continues to grow through ongoing donations. Selected works from both *Bäcksbäcka* collections are permanently on display in HAM's exhibition spaces.

In addition to the Bäcksbäcka legacy, the City of Helsinki has received several other significant donations. Among these is the *Raimo and Maarit Huttunen Collection*, the first part of which was received in 2018. Comprising over 300 works, it reflects a distinc-

tive curatorial vision focused primarily on Finnish contemporary art. This collection, too, continues to expand through ongoing donations.

The City has also received smaller bequests from artists such as *Alice Kaira* and *Anitra Lucander*.

Another important addition is a collection of 38 glass objects by designer and sculptor *Timo Sarpaneva*. Originally accessioned to the Helsinki City Art Museum in 1995, this collection was deposited with the Design Museum until 2022, when the agreement ended and the sculptures returned to HAM's custodianship.

## 2.4. Collection Transfers

Collection transfers serve both as a means of acquisition and a method of deaccessioning works from an existing collection. When the transfer occurs between collections under the same ownership—such as those held by the City of Helsinki—it is treated as an administrative process. HAM and the Helsinki City Museum, both operated by the City, have engaged in several such internal transfers.

Over the years, a number of significant transfers have taken place. One notable example occurred during the comprehensive school reforms of the early 1980s, when artworks located in schools were formally accessioned into the City Art Collection. These school-based collections included works either acquired independently by the schools or donated through the *Taidetta kouluihin* (Art for Schools) Association. The association played a key role in bringing works by some of Finland's most prominent artists into educational environments.

In 2018, a collection of plaster sculptures by *Hilda Flodin* was transferred from the Helsinki City Museum to HAM. The collection consists primarily of maquettes and sculpted anatomical studies.

The oldest part of the City Art Collection—the *Otto W. Furu-hjelm Collection*—was transferred from the Helsinki City Museum to HAM in 2015. Bequeathed to the City in 1883, the collection includes 58 works, primarily comprising old Italian and Dutch paintings acquired in St. Petersburg, as well as 17th- to 19th-century Russian landscapes and hunting scenes.

## 2.5. Archive Collection and Operational Archive

Since its founding, HAM has systematically documented its work, gradually building an extensive archive. Today, the museum’s archival work follows a formal plan. HAM’s archives are composed of three primary components: a catalogued paper archive, a photographic archive, and a collection-related archive integrated with the museum’s collection management system. Each contains overlapping content—such as documentation of exhibitions and the museum’s history—but with distinct emphases. The collection-related archive is unique in that it links directly to individual works in the art collection.

The Paper Archive comprises catalogued materials documenting HAM’s institutional history and operations. It includes newspaper clippings, publications from the museum’s own series, and printed ephemera such as invitation cards and posters. While not designed as a public research archive, it serves primarily as a resource for internal documentation and reference.

The Photographic Archive primarily consists of digital images of works in the collection, all managed through HAM’s collection management system. It also includes documentary photographs of exhibitions, events, and other key highlights, which are systematically preserved for internal use. In addition to digital assets, the archive contains a passive section for older formats such as slides and paper prints.

The Collection-Related Archive is closely integrated with the museum’s collection management system and contains materials directly tied to specific artworks and artists represented in the collection. These include images, sketches, documents, artefacts, and other contextual materials. The archive is organised into four distinct categories: 1. Collection History, 2. Exhibitions History, 3. Art Museum History, and 4. Collection Artists.

1. The Collection History Archive contains items such as uninventoryed portraits of historical figures from the City of Helsinki, visual documentation related to donated collections, and other relevant materials illuminating the evolution of the City Art Collection.
2. The Exhibitions History Archive includes catalogued materials produced or received in connection with HAM exhibitions that relate specifically to works in the City Art Collection.

3. The Art Museum History Archive comprises materials documenting the museum's own institutional history, such as installation plans for the City Art Collection across various HAM venues and installation photographs from past exhibitions.
4. The Collection Artists Archive holds materials related to artists represented in the collection, including photographs and contextual documents offering insight into the artists' lives and work.



**LEENA NIO**

Composition with a freshly dyed hair and secondhand sweater  
2023–2024

Photo: Sonja Hyytiäinen / HAM

# 3. ACCESSIONS TO THE COLLECTION

## 3.1 Acquisition Strategy for the City Art Collection

**WHEN HAM WAS ESTABLISHED** as a foundation, ownership of the City Art Collection remained with the City of Helsinki. The City entrusted the HAM Foundation with custodianship of its collection. HAM continues to manage and expand the City Art Collection in accordance with a formal agreement between the City and the Foundation. While the transition to a foundation model introduced certain changes to the decision-making structure around acquisitions, HAM’s role as the City’s principal art expert has remained unchanged.

All acquisitions are guided by HAM’s professional expertise and curatorial vision, with decisions made transparently and in accordance with public accountability.

Acquisitions for the Accessions Collection are coordinated by a dedicated acquisitions committee comprising expert representatives from HAM’s various departments. Committee members are appointed by the museum director. Proposals for new acquisitions may originate internally or be submitted by external stakeholders. Final proposals are compiled and presented by the museum director.

Official acquisition decisions are typically made by the City’s Director of Culture—or another designated official within the Culture and Leisure Division—in accordance with the City’s approved acquisition budget and policies.

The Public Art Collection is primarily expanded through Helsinki’s Percent for Art policy. This policy applies to City-led construction and urban development projects—including buildings, streets, parks, and zoning projects—allocating a percentage of each project’s

budget to public art. These funds are primarily used to commission site-specific artworks.

HAM serves as the City’s consultative art expert throughout the Percent for Art process. The client is typically the City Executive Office or the Urban Environment Division. HAM’s Public Art Unit prepares an artist proposal for each eligible project. After internal review and approval by the museum director, the proposal is submitted to the project’s working group, which may include representatives from the client, the project’s architects, and end users. As the City’s designated art expert, HAM has the authority to recommend the most appropriate artist for each commission. While the working group provides input on practical considerations and preferences, final artist selections are made by HAM. The museum director then submits a formal proposal for the commission, and HAM oversees the development of the artist’s draft. Once the working group approves the finalised draft, the project proceeds to commissioning. Upon completion, the new work is accessioned into the City Art Collection. All official decisions related to these commissions are made by the City’s Director of Culture.

HAM also acquires new public artworks annually through a separate appropriation, in which the commissioner is the Culture and Leisure Division. The commissioning of these works, as well as their accession into the City Art Collection, follows the same official procedure as acquisitions for the Accessions Collection.

Each year, the City of Helsinki allocates dedicated funding to support both the growth of the City Art Collection and the commissioning of public art. These appropriations are structured as follows:

1. The Art Acquisition Budget is designated for purchasing works for the Accessions Collection.
2. The Public Art Acquisition Budget is intended primarily for commissioning new public artworks for permanent installation in public spaces throughout the city. In some cases, this budget may also support temporary works or pieces located on particular properties or within buildings. Additionally, it may be used for the restoration and repair of existing public artworks.

Both budgets are included in the investment appropriations granted annually by the Culture and Leisure Committee as part of the City’s budgeting process. A separate art acquisition appropriation may also be allocated for the purchase of works from the Helsinki Biennial.

## 3.2. Methods of Acquisition

As the City of Helsinki’s designated art expert, HAM is responsible for preparing proposals for the acquisition of new artworks and their accession into the City Art Collection. The collection is expanded through a variety of methods, including:

Acquisitions funded by annual appropriations

- Purchase of completed artworks
- Commissioning of new works

Acquisitions funded through the Percent for Art budget

- Commissioning of site-specific public artworks
- Purchase of completed artworks

Donations and bequests

Deposits

Collection transfers

HAM plays an active role in shaping the contemporary art field through its acquisitions policy, remaining attentive to emergent trends in visual culture both in Finland and internationally. Works for the Accessions Collection are acquired from galleries as well as directly from artists. In the case of historical works, acquisitions may also be made through auction houses.

In addition, HAM acquires artworks presented in its own exhibitions and at the Helsinki Biennial. Close collaboration between the museum’s departments fosters synergy between curatorial programming and collection development. This integrated approach also works in reverse: existing works from the HAM Collection—as well as previously produced or curated pieces—are frequently featured in the museum’s exhibitions and Biennial presentations. If HAM decides to acquire a work presented in an exhibition or at the Helsinki Biennial, the production costs may be financed through acquisition funds included in the respective exhibition or Biennial budgets. In some cases, a work may be commissioned specifically for an exhibition, after which it becomes part of the HAM Collection. The Public Art Acquisition Budget may also be used to commission artworks that debut in exhibitions or at the Biennial, with the intention of later placing them on permanent display in public spaces throughout the city.

The Public Art Collection is primarily expanded through the Percent for Art Policy.

The Percent for Art Policy allocates a portion of public construction budgets specifically for commissioning art. This funding is used to create new, site-specific works for locations such as public buildings, parks, streets, and squares. By adopting this principle, cities and public institutions demonstrate their commitment to supporting the arts and enhancing the quality of the built environment. Helsinki has applied the Percent for Art principle since 1991. In 2021, the City formally established it as a permanent policy (see Appendices 3 and 4) and expanded its scope to include urban renewal and infill development projects. With its active construction sector, Helsinki has become not only Finland’s most prolific commissioner of public art but also an international and prominent operator in integrating art into the urban landscape.

In Helsinki, funding for art is incorporated into all major investments in buildings, streets, and parks. In urban planning and renewal projects, the policy is implemented by collecting contributions from developers. These contributions are calculated based on total floor area and are tied to the granted building rights. One prominent example is the Kalasatama district, where an ambitious public art programme has been underway since 2014 and will continue well into the 2030s.

For all Percent for Art projects, HAM serves as the City of Helsinki’s designated art expert and curator. It prepares artist proposals and facilitates collaboration between artists, clients, designers, and future users of the space. Once a project is completed, HAM manages its communications and publicity, and oversees the formal accession of the artwork into the City Art Collection.

HAM also acquires public artworks through its Public Art Acquisition Budget, which operates independently of construction-based funding mechanisms. This appropriation promotes regional equity by enabling the acquisition of public artworks for areas where no City-led construction—and therefore no Percent for Art funding—is available. In accordance with HAM’s strategic goals, this budget is primarily used to commission works for HAM’s exhibitions and the Helsinki Biennial.

Artists are typically selected for public art projects through a curatorial process led by HAM. In addition to direct commissions, artists may be chosen through art competitions, which take the form of either open calls—with anonymous submissions—or limited competitions, in which proposals are solicited from a curated group of artists. When organising such competitions, HAM adheres, where applicable, to the guidelines established by the

Artists' Association of Finland. Since open competitions are more time- and resource-intensive than invitational processes, HAM determines the format on a case-by-case basis. To diversify the pool of artists working in public art, HAM also organises portfolio calls, proactively identifying candidates for upcoming commissions.

Donations have played a vital role in the evolution of the City Art Collection ever since the 19th century, particularly on the part of historical works. HAM serves as the City's expert body on all donations to the Accessions Collection, issuing official statements and acting as the formal recipient on behalf of the City.

Public artworks, too, are often acquired via donation—in fact many of Helsinki's historical public sculptures were originally gifted to the City. While the City of Helsinki generally does not fund memorials to individuals, donated memorials may be accepted into the collection. All proposed donations are evaluated by HAM based on the same criteria as other acquisitions, with particular attention paid to artistic quality and long-term maintainability. The Urban Environment Division assesses proposals from the perspective of siting, technical feasibility, and other practical concerns. These evaluations are carried out collaboratively to determine the viability of the proposed gift. Donors are required to cover all costs associated with the donation process. To ensure consistency and transparency, HAM is currently working to establish City-wide guidelines for public art donations, which will define procedures, responsibilities, and decision-making processes.

Over the years, HAM has also accepted deposits, whereby the artworks remain the property of the lender while HAM assumes responsibility for their management and care. In considering such deposits, it is essential to ensure that the associated costs are reasonable and that the duration of the loan is appropriate. For these reasons, HAM generally prefers donations over deposits. In the case of public artworks on deposit, the legal owner retains responsibility for conservation, while the Urban Environment Division maintains the site in which the artwork is installed. Because these works fall under the Urban Environment Division's jurisdiction, HAM currently holds no direct responsibility for them. As such, current practices regarding the deposit of public artworks are being reviewed and updated during this strategic period.

Internal transfers of artworks between City departments are handled as administrative procedures. The receiving department is responsible for determining whether a transferred work should be formally accessioned into its collection. Occasionally, artworks not yet part of the HAM Collection are discovered in public spaces or facilities around the city. In addition, there are public artworks in

municipal areas that were commissioned or installed by the Urban Environment Division but never formally accessioned by HAM. In such cases, each work is individually evaluated to determine whether it meets the criteria for inclusion. Only works that meet HAM’s acquisition standards are accepted into the collection. Once accessioned, the artwork becomes part of HAM’s formal custodianship and is maintained with the same care as pieces acquired through purchase or donation.

### **3.3. Acquisitions Policy**

As the City of Helsinki’s designated art expert, HAM is responsible for determining which artists and artworks become part of the City Art Collection. HAM expands the collection actively and systematically, approaching this role with care and awareness of the professional responsibility it entails. HAM is committed to continually expanding its expertise, critically evaluating its decisions, and learning from experience. Integral to this process is a conscious effort to uphold eco-social sustainability throughout every stage of acquisition.

Contemporary visual art is increasingly diverse and multifaceted. Through its acquisitions, HAM aims to capture the richness and complexity of this evolving landscape, while fostering a deeper understanding of the themes and issues shaping contemporary artistic practice. The acquisitions policy is intentionally broad and flexible, empowering HAM to select the most compelling and relevant artworks of the moment. At the same time, it provides a clear framework that ensures acquisitions are meaningful and timely, resonating with both HAM’s vision and the identity of the City Art Collection.

Each new acquisition or donation reflects the collection’s ongoing evolution. Every work is carefully evaluated in relation to the existing collection, contributing to its distinctive character. The artworks acquired and curated by HAM serve not only as documents of their time but also as enduring contributions to the evolving narrative of art history.

New works selected for the collection primarily engage with the most significant contemporary art trends. Finnish artists today operate within a vibrant international context, making distinctions between local and global practices increasingly irrelevant. HAM collaborates with a wide network of voices from the multilingual and multicultural Helsinki metropolitan area. For HAM, interna-

tionality means maintaining a global outlook rooted in active exchange, dialogue, and engagement with the broader world.

HAM is dedicated to acquiring and commissioning works from as broad and diverse a spectrum of professional artists as possible.

HAM's acquisitions policy is rooted in a long-standing commitment to groundbreaking contemporary art that challenges conventions and explores new frontiers. From its inception, HAM has sought out artists who offer fresh, unexpected perspectives, both aesthetically and conceptually. The collection includes early works by many artists who have since become influential figures in the art world.

Visual art, like all art, mirrors the realities and social concerns of its time. Today, themes such as the climate crisis, humanity's relationship with nature, and pluralistic worldviews are dominant in contemporary artistic discourse. Documenting these evolving perspectives through acquisitions is a core part of HAM's mission. The museum actively seeks socially engaged, critically reflective works that capture the complexity of the present moment.

Contemporary art exists within a broader continuum, extending and reinterpreting the enduring legacy of art history. Alongside works addressing current issues, HAM's acquisitions include timeless pieces that explore universal aesthetic and material concerns.

Curating newly commissioned public artworks presents a distinct set of challenges. Site-specific pieces are inevitably shaped by spatial, contextual, and environmental factors, influencing both the creative process and the final outcome. All public artworks are, to some degree, site-responsive, requiring close dialogue between artists, curators, and the location itself. Beyond artistic decisions, practical constraints must also be navigated. Unlike works displayed in museums, public art reaches broad and often unintended audiences. Outdoor pieces engage a diverse cross-section of the public in everyday urban life, while indoor works in spaces such as schools and daycare centres become part of the formative experiences of children and young people.

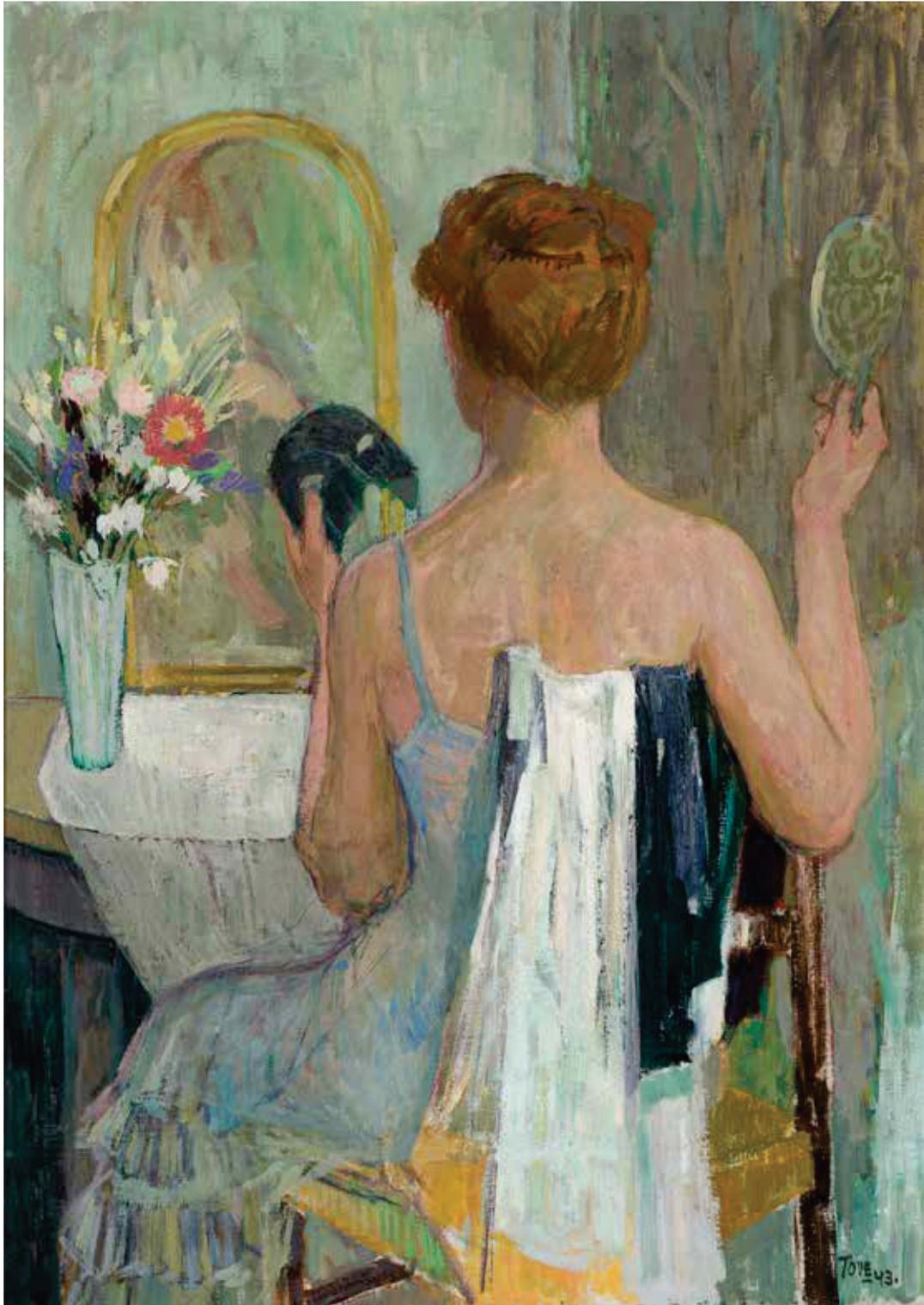
Most public artworks today are designed to endure, but the lifespan of artworks varies widely. Some are intentionally temporary or event-based for valid artistic reasons. Even temporary works leave a lasting legacy through documentation, preserving their impact within the collection. Many ephemeral projects engage deeply with ecology, sustainability, and responsible creative practice, reflecting the evolving relationship between art and the environment.

The enduring criteria for all new acquisitions include high artistic quality, professionalism, and skilled execution. The City's acqui-

sitions are not constrained by time period, subject, or geography, nor by technical or categorical boundaries, but all works must be representative of the fine arts and the broader field of visual culture. HAM actively supports professional artists and values the meaningful content they produce. In its new strategy, commitment to art forms the foundational core of all museum endeavours, grounded in a deep trust in the power of art and artists to inspire insight, provide spiritual nourishment, and resonate on a personal level.

In select cases, HAM also acquires older artworks, especially those with a meaningful connection to the existing collection.

Acquisitions are vital for preserving cultural heritage for future generations. As one of Finland's key visual art institutions, HAM faces the ongoing challenge of ensuring that its core mission remains viable amid acquisition budgets that struggle to keep pace with rising art market prices.



**TOVE JANSSON**  
Before the Masquerade  
1943

Photo: Yehia Eweis / HAM

## 4. PRESERVATION AND CARE OF THE COLLECTION

**THE PRESERVATION AND CARE** of the HAM Collection are entrusted to a dedicated team of professionals specialising in the handling, documentation, and conservation of artworks. Their work is conducted in accordance with national and international laws, regulations, and ethical standards governing the protection of cultural heritage. This core team—including conservators, museum technicians, registrars, photographers, an in-house architect, and curators—collaborates closely to ensure that every artwork, whether physical or digital, is preserved in its original condition for as long as possible.

Effective preservation rests on several key pillars: meticulous documentation, thorough cataloguing, precise inventory management, and ongoing oversight through a comprehensive collection management system. These efforts are supported by a combination of preventive and restorative conservation measures, alongside stringent security protocols applied at all locations where artworks are exhibited, stored, or transported.

The collection management system functions as the central repository for all information relating to acquisitions, donations, individual artworks, and their current whereabouts. It also records every procedure performed on the artworks, providing a complete history of their care. Maintaining accurate and up-to-date data is a vital component of HAM's risk management strategy.

## **4.1. Preservation, Conservation, and Maintenance**

The preservation process covers every stage of an artwork's life-cycle within the collection, from its initial assessment and documentation upon arrival, through exhibition and presentation, to its secure transport and long-term care, including any required conservation actions.

Conservation encompasses both preventive and restorative strategies designed to protect artworks and ensure the collection's longevity. Preventive conservation focuses on establishing and maintaining environmental and handling conditions that minimise deterioration without physically altering the artwork.

These preventive conservation measures include:

- Strict adherence to preservation, handling, and exhibition guidelines grounded in thorough research of the artwork's materials and techniques, often supported by consulting interviews and instructions provided by the artist. For new public artworks, HAM's expertise in material durability and technical resilience is integral throughout creation and installation, ensuring long-term preservation.
- Comprehensive condition documentation using detailed written reports and high-quality photography. Continuous condition monitoring during display and transit allows for the early detection of any deterioration.
- Training and guidance for proper artwork handling provided to staff and partners. Protective measures include instructional signage to discourage touching, physical barriers, display cases, and appropriate framing to safeguard the works.
- Engagement of qualified service providers for professional handling and transportation. Clear agreements, detailed handling instructions, and, when necessary, courier supervision ensure that artworks are properly cared for throughout transit.
- Rigorous preservation protocols prior to and during display and deposit, including condition assessments and environmental evaluations. Factors such as security, lighting, temperature, and humidity are carefully controlled to maintain the artworks' integrity.

- Continuous monitoring and regulation of ambient conditions at exhibition, storage, and deposit sites via building automation systems that provide real-time environmental data. Storage solutions, packaging materials, and transit methods are chosen with care to maximise protection.

Hands-on conservation refers to direct, practical interventions aimed at preserving or restoring the physical integrity of an artwork. These measures may involve adding, removing, or—when necessary—replacing components of the work. Common treatments include surface cleaning, structural stabilisation, realignment, damage repair, and the reattachment of flaking paint or other loose elements. Any decision involving the replacement of original parts is approached with great care, following a thorough evaluation process that includes multidisciplinary consultation and detailed condition assessment. All conservation actions are comprehensively documented and recorded in the collection management system.

Ongoing maintenance, whether during an exhibition or at a deposit location, often involves a range of conservation-related tasks. In some cases, routine maintenance may be delegated to external service providers. These tasks can include replacing electrical components—such as light bulbs—or cleaning public artworks, particularly those incorporating elements like water features. Such maintenance is typically coordinated in collaboration with the Urban Environment Division.

The City Art Collection holds more than 500 public artworks spanning three centuries. As these works age over the years, they require ongoing maintenance, repairs, and conservation—responsibilities managed by HAM’s Public Art Unit in close collaboration with the Urban Environment Division. HAM is committed to preserving these works for future generations, maintaining them as faithfully as possible to the artist’s original intent for as long as their condition allows. When a work can no longer be repaired or preserved in a meaningful way, it may be formally deaccessioned from the collection following HAM’s established procedures.

Public art maintenance includes conservation, technical repairs, cleaning, and the application of protective surface treatments. HAM takes a proactive approach by systematically planning routine maintenance and conservation, while also responding promptly to unexpected issues such as damage or vandalism.

On 16 March 2023, HAM signed a public art maintenance agreement with the Urban Environment Division and the Culture and Leisure Division. The practices outlined in this agreement are

being implemented in close collaboration with the Urban Environment Division. As part of this process, existing maintenance guidelines for individual artworks are being updated, and responsibilities—particularly regarding Percent for Art commissions located on specific properties—are being more clearly defined.

Public artworks may occasionally need to be relocated and stored during urban development or street construction projects. Once the project is completed, the artwork is typically returned to its original location—or as near as possible—or reinstalled in a way that preserves its original context. This option is not always feasible, however. Major changes to the site, the absence of a suitable new location, or the demolition of nearby structures may prevent reinstallation. In such cases, artworks may remain in storage for extended periods and can ultimately be considered for deaccessioning.

In addition to commissioning permanent site-specific public artworks, HAM also produces temporary and time-limited public art projects. These works are created with a defined lifespan and are not maintained beyond their intended duration. Nonetheless, they are thoroughly documented, and this documentation is preserved in the collection management system.

## **4.2. Art Collection Security**

Ensuring the physical security of artworks is a core responsibility and key priority in any museum’s daily operations. At HAM, security measures are regularly reviewed and updated using structured risk management practices to maintain their effectiveness. This work is overseen by HAM’s executive management, security working group, and the Collections and Public Art Units, whose efforts are guided by their combined expertise. Risk management is also carried out in close coordination with the Culture and Leisure Division. Security protocols and levels can be swiftly adjusted should circumstances so require. The overall security of the collection is reinforced through a combination of preventive conservation measures and a comprehensive array of technical safety systems.

The placement of artworks in City offices and public spaces—whether as deposits or commissioned installations—inevitably involves a degree of calculated risk. HAM mitigates this risk through the careful selection of artworks, thoughtfully planned installation methods, and the considered design of commissioned pieces. Close collaboration with staff at each placement site further ensures that the works are handled and maintained appropriately. For Percent

for Art commissions, on-site users are provided with guidance on the care and protection of artworks in their spaces. In future, property managers will also receive dedicated maintenance instructions tailored to these commissions. Feedback mechanisms and active engagement with residents help strengthen the long-term care and management of installed works.

One of HAM's core responsibilities is the regular inventorying of artworks housed at the museum's Collection Centre, placed at deposit sites, or installed through Percent for Art projects. Each visit to these locations includes careful verification of the artworks' condition and exact placement, with any discrepancies being promptly addressed. In recent years, many deposit sites have been reviewed, particularly in connection with updated labelling efforts. By adding labels, interpretive texts, and contextual information on Percent for Art projects, HAM enhances public understanding of individual artworks and raises awareness of the broader City Art Collection. These efforts also support the City's asset management processes and improve the exchange of information between art sites and HAM. Inventorying is carried out on an ongoing basis, particularly during office relocations, renovations, property sales, or organisational changes.

Approximately every five to seven years, HAM conducts a comprehensive inventory survey of all deposit and Percent for Art locations across the city. These surveys collect up-to-date information on each artwork's status, verifying its exact location, assessing its condition, and updating contact details for the responsible parties. This process occasionally leads to the rediscovery of artworks previously listed as 'whereabouts unknown'—sometimes even after decades of being unaccounted for. HAM's staff play an active role in tracing and identifying such works. As a matter of principle, artworks are not removed from the deposit list until multiple search efforts have been made and all reasonable avenues for locating them have been exhausted.

The most recent full inventory survey was conducted between 2018 and 2020. The process—from distributing verification requests to updating the collection management system—spans several years. Sustained, two-way communication with deposit and Percent for Art sites is essential to maintaining accurate records. This communication is supported through written guidelines, site visits, and regular inventory checks. Contact information for the curators responsible for these tasks is publicly available on HAM's website.

HAM shares its Collection Centre with the Helsinki City Museum. The facility is equipped with high-level security throughout, ensuring the safe storage of artworks. Similarly, HAM's exhibition

spaces at the Tennis Palace meet international museum standards for both security and environmental controls. Both locations feature advanced systems for maintaining stable ambient conditions, comprehensive fire detection and suppression systems, and robust anti-intrusion protection.

### **4.3. Deaccessioning**

Preservation ethics are fundamental to all museum practice: an art museum’s foremost duty is to safeguard artworks for the benefit of future generations. However, in certain cases, continued preservation is no longer viable due to unavoidable factors. In such instances, an artwork may be considered for deaccessioning. Deaccessioning is a rare and carefully deliberated process, undertaken only when there are compelling and well-founded reasons. It involves the permanent removal of an artwork from the collection, both physically and through an official change in its status within HAM’s collection management system.

The primary principle of deaccessioning is that the removal of an artwork must be fully and demonstrably justified. A work may be considered for deaccessioning when it poses a safety risk—such as structural instability or the presence of hazardous materials—or when it has suffered irreparable damage due to environmental conditions, vandalism, or changes to the surrounding built environment. In cases where a work has been lost or stolen and cannot be recovered despite reasonable efforts, deaccessioning may also be warranted. Additionally, some artworks naturally reach the end of their intended life cycle. Many contemporary artists create works that are not meant to endure indefinitely, and the increasing use of experimental materials and techniques can lead to unforeseen changes that compromise the artwork’s original form or intent. While conservation efforts may resolve some issues—such as replacing deteriorated components—there are cases in which deaccessioning is the only viable course of action.

Not all artworks are tangible objects—art may also take the form of sound, moving image, ephemeral materials, performance, event-based practices, temporary installations, or digital creations. In some cases, a work may consist solely of a conceptual idea or a set of instructions. When acquiring such works, HAM agrees in advance on their intended life cycle, including how they will be maintained and, if applicable, how they will be managed at the end of that cycle. This may involve defining terms for eventual deaccess-

sioning. The same proactive approach applies to donations: the expected lifespan of the work and any relevant conditions are defined and recorded as part of the donation agreement.

The evolving formats of media art and the rapid advancement of exhibition technologies present significant challenges for traditional museum preservation practices. Media artworks often rely on storage formats and technologies that eventually face obsolescence, making long-term preservation particularly complex. Museums must also carefully consider the role of technology within these works—specifically, the extent to which the equipment is an integral part of the artwork and how it should be maintained over time. To address these challenges, media art acquisition agreements typically include detailed provisions for the work’s preservation and future presentation, such as options for updating or migration of technical formats.

Deaccessioning can also function as a strategic tool for developing and refining the art collection. Since the late 19th century, the City Art Collection has been shaped through acquisitions and donations from a variety of sources. From the outset, artworks were acquired not only for the museum but also for display in outdoor and indoor public spaces, intended to enrich the daily lives of city residents and employees. Systematic cataloguing and professional care of the collection began in the late 1970s, with the number of dedicated specialists steadily increasing ever since. However, some older inventory records remain incomplete or inaccurate, failing to meet current museum documentation standards. Additionally, certain works accessioned in earlier years no longer align with today’s quality criteria for museum collections. Today, the museum’s acquisition principles are clearly defined in this regularly updated Collection Policy, while deposits and public art projects are managed through structured processes, clear objectives, and routine inventories. Despite these efforts, over the decades, some artworks have been lost or destroyed due to unforeseen circumstances.

Sometimes, significant changes to the location or surrounding environment of a public artwork or site-specific installation might necessitate its removal. While the primary objective is to identify a suitable new site for the displaced work, this is not always feasible—especially when the artwork’s conceptual integrity is deeply tied to its original context. In some cases, the work may be physically integrated into structures that are demolished, destroyed, or sold. Public artworks are also susceptible to theft and vandalism. Additionally, maintenance costs—such as rising energy expenses—can become prohibitively high. When such costs cannot be reasonably mitigated through modifications, deaccessioning the artwork may need to be considered.

As part of its strategic objectives, the City of Helsinki periodically sells idle properties that it no longer needs. Occasionally, these properties include integrated, site-specific artworks that belong to the HAM Collection. If such works cannot be removed or relocated without compromising their artistic integrity—or if their site-specific nature makes relocation unfeasible—they may need to be deaccessioned when the property is sold. Each case is evaluated individually, with the primary goal of ensuring the artwork’s continued preservation and care. Efforts are made to engage the new property owner in a commitment to maintain the work. To facilitate this, HAM is developing a proactive planning and cooperation model in partnership with the Urban Environment Division, which oversees the sale of City-owned properties.

Following the implementation of the MuseumPlus collection management system at the end of 2021, HAM initiated a project to systematically review artworks that had been deaccessioned or were proposed for deaccessioning. Since then, the entire collection has undergone a retrospective assessment of its deaccessioning history.

The decision to deaccession an artwork is deeply influenced by the extent to which it possesses unique value. Such decisions are never taken lightly and are approached with a profound sense of responsibility, acknowledging the museum’s role as a long-term steward of cultural heritage for future generations. Nonetheless, it remains essential to critically reassess individual works or parts of the collection in response to evolving priorities. Additional factors that must be considered include the artist’s role and rights, particularly copyright and the artist’s moral right to access and engage with their work.

The deaccessioning process draws on the expertise of multiple internal stakeholders and, when necessary, external specialists. A core principle of this process is ensuring that the artist or their estate is consulted and respected. Whenever possible, the museum makes every effort to contact the artist or relevant copyright holders before proceeding.

Transparency is ensured by integrating the deaccessioning process into public decision-making. HAM evaluates the need for communication on a case-by-case basis, ensuring that all relevant stakeholders are kept informed openly and appropriately.

No artwork is deaccessioned without a thorough evaluation. The final assessment and deaccessioning proposal are compiled by a team of museum professionals, based on detailed discussions and in accordance with jointly established criteria and the ICOM Code of Ethics for Museums. In some cases, this process may result in the discontinuation of the deaccessioning process.



**LEENA LUOSTARINEN**

Red Silk

1995

Photo: Sonja Hyytiäinen / HAM

# 5. ACCESSIBILITY AND USAGE OF THE COLLECTION

## 5.1 Exhibitions

**HAM'S EXHIBITIONS AT THE TENNIS PALACE** (Tennispalatsi) showcase a dynamic mix of international contemporary classics, Finnish modern and contemporary art, and exhibitions curated around new research connected to the HAM Collection. The HAM Gallery specifically spotlights emerging Finnish contemporary artists.

Annually, HAM organises around ten exhibitions featuring both international and domestic art. These exhibitions provide Helsinki's residents with access to high-quality art experiences, educational programmes, and engaging audience outreach. HAM's international projects—most notably the Helsinki Biennial—significantly enrich the region's visual arts landscape.

HAM primarily presents works from its collection through temporary exhibitions at the Tennis Palace. Alongside these, a curated selection of highlights is permanently displayed in the museum's galleries. Forming the heart of the museum is HAM Roots, the *Leonard and Katarina Bäcksbacka* Collection has its dedicated first-floor space. The HAM Collection is also featured in annually rotating thematic exhibitions curated by both in-house experts and invited external curators.

The City of Helsinki owns several public artworks by *Tove Jansson* that are now part of the HAM Collection. Originally created for various city buildings, some of these large-scale works have been relocated to the museum. These include the frescoes *Party in the Countryside* (1947) and *Party in the City* (1947), originally

commissioned for Helsinki City Hall’s Kaupunginkellari restaurant and now on permanent display at HAM. The collection also holds Jansson’s window paintings for the Apollonkatu Girls’ School (now Minervaskolan, 1944); the murals *Rest After Work* (1945) and *Electricity*, painted for the staff canteen at the Strömberg factory in Pitäjänmäki; and her original competition sketches for the *Play* murals (*Lek*, 1955), designed for Aurora Hospital’s children’s ward. *Tove Jansson’s* connection to HAM dates back to her first solo exhibition in 1943 at *Leonard Bäcksbäck’s* Konstsalongen Art Gallery, where he acquired her painting *Before the Masquerade*, now held in the HAM Collection. A dedicated space within HAM is reserved for rotating exhibitions of Jansson’s work, refreshed every two years. Through exhibitions and research, HAM actively promotes the rich legacy of Jansson’s Helsinki-based artist family, highlighting her historical importance and the enduring international relevance of her art.

In 2024, HAM launched a development project to reconceptualise its first-floor exhibition spaces, which are primarily dedicated to the HAM Collection. The aim is to create a larger, unified space for presenting both the HAM Collection and *Tove Jansson’s* work. As part of this initiative, a new exhibition and programming concept will be introduced for contemporary Finnish art, replacing the current HAM Gallery and integrating more fully with the museum’s overall curatorial programme. The renovated first floor is scheduled to reopen in 2026.

## 5.2 Art in Public Space

### 5.2.1. Public Art

A significant portion of HAM’s Public Art Collection is permanently on view throughout the city’s urban spaces. Additionally, artworks installed in semi-public indoor environments—such as schools, day-care centres, libraries, and other City-owned buildings—bring art into the daily lives of diverse audiences. Complementing these displays, HAM has also deposited approximately 2,500 works from its Accessions Collection across various municipal premises throughout Helsinki.

The widespread presence of public art enriches the urban environment, making it more engaging, inspiring, and thought-provoking. By integrating art into everyday settings, it becomes an

accessible, natural part of daily life for all residents, regardless of background. Public artworks enhance the built environment, fostering a strong sense of local identity and community pride. They also serve as vital tools for art education, providing informal learning opportunities citywide. Furthermore, the visibility of public art contributes to Helsinki’s reputation as an international hub of art and culture.

HAM’s Public Art Collection is also readily accessible online via the ‘Explore Public Art’ search feature on the museum’s website. This platform currently offers detailed information and images of outdoor artworks, with plans to include indoor works in public buildings in the near future. Moreover, information about public artworks from the HAM Collection is available through the Finna search service, which aggregates materials from around 100 Finnish museums, libraries, and archives. Outdoor artworks are additionally marked on the Helsinki Metropolitan Area Service Map.

### **5.2.2. Deposited Works from the HAM Collection in City Facilities**

The placement of artworks across various City facilities is a key service HAM provides to enrich the daily lives of Helsinki’s residents and employees. Through this deposit system, approximately 20% of the City Art Collection is on continuous public display, enhancing the everyday environments of those who live and work in Helsinki. HAM installs artworks from the collection in offices of municipal divisions and municipal enterprises as well as in premises belonging to the Helsinki City Group’s subsidiaries and joint municipal authorities. In exceptional cases, and with approval from the museum director, artworks may also be temporarily placed outside the City organisation—for example, for promotional or marketing purposes.

When selecting deposit locations, HAM strives to ensure a balanced distribution of artworks across City districts and municipal divisions. Artworks are displayed in a wide variety of public facilities, including schools, libraries, and senior service centres. A significant number are also deposited in social and healthcare facilities, as well as rescue service locations. Following the transfer of responsibility for organising these services from municipalities to regional wellbeing services counties in early 2023, Helsinki remains unique as an independent wellbeing services county.

Deposited artworks are primarily installed in publicly accessible areas—such as customer service rooms, lobbies, meeting spaces, and break rooms—where they can be enjoyed by the broadest possible audience. Curatorial decisions are made with the user experience as a priority. Preference is given to newly renovated spaces and locations not yet featuring works from the HAM Collection. Additionally, HAM contributes to the planning of art placements in new construction projects, allowing artworks to be curated as cohesive ensembles during the design and building phases. This integrated approach ensures a high-quality art experience from the outset. Overall, HAM’s deposit system aims to enhance the accessibility, visibility, and usability of the City Art Collection. Periodically, larger participatory projects—such as those planned in collaboration with HAM’s Education and Customer Experience team—are organised in locations like schools. All deposited artworks displayed in public facilities are accompanied by informative labels, providing key details including the artist’s name, the work’s title, and its date of completion.

Art deposits are a vital part of HAM’s Collections Unit work, extending the museum’s presence and collection visibility beyond traditional exhibition spaces and significantly enhancing public access to art. By placing artworks in City-owned premises, the deposit programme reaches audiences who might not otherwise visit museums or encounter art in their daily lives. This approach fosters a greater sense of familiarity and relevance, engaging a broader and more diverse public. In these everyday environments, art can spark reflection and inspire conversation. When thoughtfully selected with the end-user in mind, deposited artworks enrich the visual landscape and contribute positively to the overall atmosphere of the workspace.

HAM manages and maintains the City Art Collection, which currently includes approximately 2,500 works on deposit across various City-owned premises. In recent years, the number of suitable locations for displaying art has declined due to service consolidations and the divestment of many former City properties. Additionally, evolving architectural trends—such as the prevalence of open-plan offices—have reduced available wall space, limiting opportunities for hanging or installing artworks.

Sustainability and eco-social responsibility are central to HAM’s artwork deposit practices. Eco-efficiency is a core objective, guiding both internal workflows and the planning and execution of deposits. Unnecessary transportation of artworks is avoided; works are only relocated when justified, such as during office moves or renovations. HAM also oversees the care and conservation of deposited

artworks and plays an active role in planning and implementing new deposit sites. Managing the existing deposits—which account for approximately 20% of the City Art Collection—requires substantial coordination and logistical planning. This effort involves close collaboration between HAM’s Collections Unit and technical staff, including registrars, museum technicians, conservators, and photographers, ensuring that artworks are installed, handled, transported, and documented safely and professionally.

### 5.3. Publications

Disseminating information across multiple channels is a key strategy for HAM to raise awareness of its art collection and programming, while also enhancing the museum’s public profile. Through its publications, HAM contributes to artistic discourse and broader social debate, embraces diverse perspectives, and actively engages in international dialogue within the art world. Publishing plays a vital role in advancing HAM’s research, documenting the museum’s curatorial work, and preserving its institutional history. With a rich legacy spanning nearly 160 titles in its eponymous publication series, HAM produces a select number of new publications each year, primarily aligned with its exhibitions.

Over time, HAM has released several collection-specific volumes that delve into the formation of its donated collections, the collectors behind them, and selected works. Notably, the Bäcksbäcka Collection has been the subject of two major publications, the most recent being *Satavuotisen toiminnan jälkiä – Taidesalongen 1915–2015* (Traces of a Hundred Years – Chronicle of the Konstsalongen Art Gallery, 2015), a comprehensive commemorative volume chronicling the history of the Konstsalongen Art Gallery and the Bäcksbäcka family’s collection. HAM’s latest collection catalogue, *Bambi Forever*, published in early 2024, showcases the *Raimo and Maarit Huttunen Collection*, donated to the museum in 2018.

In connection with HAM’s 2019 Ellen Thesleff exhibition, the museum launched a series of pocketbooks spotlighting artists represented in the Bäcksbäcka Collection and related curatorial themes. Subsequent titles in the series include *Greta Hällfors-Sipilä and Sulho Sipilä* (2021), *Viggo Wallensköld* (2021), and *The Girl Who Turned Into a Rosebush* (2024).

## 5.4. Online Access to the Collection

HAM is dedicated to making the City Art Collection widely accessible to all Helsinki residents. The collection is showcased through exhibitions, public artworks throughout the city, and artwork deposits in municipal buildings. Beyond these physical encounters, residents can explore the collection online via multiple digital platforms, including the national Finna search service, HAM's website, the 'Explore Public Art' service, and social media channels. During the current Collection Policy period, HAM will also extend access through Europeana, a Europe-wide aggregator of cultural heritage content.

Approximately 1,500 artworks from the HAM Collection are currently searchable on Finna, a shared platform used by Finnish museums, libraries, and archives, offering interfaces in Finnish, Swedish, English, and North Sámi. Users can explore the collection by artist, subject, technique, or thematic categories such as Tennis Palace exhibitions, the Bäcksbäcka donated collection, outdoor public art, and indoor public art in schools, libraries, and daycare centres. The online catalogue is regularly updated, with metadata that is machine-readable and available via an open API.

HAM's website provides an overview of the museum's collection, history, recent acquisitions, and current activities. Public artworks can be accessed through multiple portals, including Finna, the museum's website, and the Helsinki Metropolitan Area Service Map. The 'Explore Public Art' service features approximately 500 artworks, complete with images, detailed information, and location data. The collection also inspired an innovative 2023 Helsinki Biennial digital artwork, where artificial intelligence reimaged the city through machine perception.

Digitisation and accessibility are core priorities in modern museum practice, aligning with national goals for the entire Finnish museum sector. HAM actively promotes open data and strives to expand digital access to the City Art Collection by publishing artworks and metadata as broadly as copyright allows. The museum favours open and widely recognised licensing frameworks, such as *Rights Statements* and *Creative Commons* licenses.

Digital transformation offers new opportunities in arenas such as public engagement, including community participation in cultural heritage preservation. HAM has advanced this through initiatives such as collecting public memories related to sculptures. Digital service development at HAM is strongly user-focused, prioritising customer experience.

A key challenge in online publishing is navigating copyright law and licensing costs. In Finland, copyright lasts 70 years after an artist's death, which means that most works in the HAM Collection remain under copyright and require licensing for digital use. This issue affects all Finnish art museums and has led to proposed collective solutions, such as the *Taidekokoelmat verkkoon* ('Art Collections Online') agreement between the Visual Arts' Copyright Society Kuvasto and the Finnish Museums Association. However, its future currently remains uncertain, and individual museums may need to negotiate separate agreements. This matter is expected to be resolved during the current Collection Policy period.

By making its collections available online, HAM aims to broaden access to Helsinki city's art collection, connect with new audiences, and enhance the visibility, impact, and understanding of the collection both in Finland and internationally. In developing the collection and its digital services, HAM places particular emphasis on openness: from licensing that supports reuse, to participatory approaches, inclusivity, and a holistic commitment to responsibility.



**AI WEIWEI**  
Divina Proportione  
2012

Kuva: Sonja Hyytiäinen / HAM

## 6. COLLECTION SERVICES

**THE FIRST CHAPTER INTRODUCED** the expertise and specialist services that HAM provides to the City of Helsinki. This next chapter focuses on HAM's deposit policy, explaining how artworks are distributed across various locations throughout the city. Beyond these core responsibilities, HAM also lends works to exhibition organisers, licenses images, and serves as the designated museum with regional responsibility for the Province of Uusimaa. It is important to note that HAM does not issue certificates of authenticity, provide artwork valuations, or offer conservation services to private individuals. Additionally, HAM is not involved in all of Helsinki's public art initiatives—only those artworks that are formally accessioned into the City Art Collection fall under its remit.

### 6.1. Art Deposits

HAM's Collections Unit offers an art deposit service that integrates works from the City Art Collection into the everyday environments of Helsinki's residents. Through this service, artworks can be borrowed for public and semi-public spaces, including City offices, workplaces, municipal enterprises, subsidiaries, and other locations within the Helsinki City Group. Eligible venues include schools, health centres, youth centres, libraries, and various other public facilities. Artworks are typically installed in communal areas such as lobbies and break rooms, where they can be appreciated by a wide audience, including City employees, residents, and visitors alike.

All deposited artworks and ensembles are curated with the recipient's preferences in mind. As a general policy, new deposits are drawn exclusively from the Accessions Collection, not from donated collections. Only a portion of the new works acquired each year

are suitable for deposit, as HAM's primary focus remains on developing its core collection. Nevertheless, the number of new deposits has remained consistent annually.

The duration of the deposit process varies, depending on the artworks and location, ranging from a few months to several. After the initial planning and coordination phase, the selected works undergo comprehensive preparation, which may include condition checks, conservation, restoration, protective measures, framing, and photography. Once ready, a mutually convenient time is scheduled for installation, tailored to the technical requirements of each piece. Every installed artwork is accompanied by a label detailing key information, such as the artist's name, the title of the work, and the date of completion.

Each deposit project is assigned a designated contact person responsible for liaising with HAM and the curator overseeing the deposit. This contact information is stored in HAM's collection management system. All deposited artworks are subject to a formal agreement that outlines the responsibilities of both HAM and the deposit recipient.

The deposit process is initiated when a customer contacts HAM. It becomes formally active once the deposit curators have reviewed the request and added it to their work schedule. The process concludes with a customer feedback survey.

## **6.2. Art Loans**

HAM regularly lends artworks from the City Art Collection to museums and other exhibition organisers, thus enhancing public access to the collection. Art loans are a key element of inter-museum collaboration, enabling HAM to both share its holdings and borrow works for its own exhibitions. Each year, HAM lends approximately 60 artworks for around 14 exhibitions, both within the Province of Uusimaa—where HAM holds the status of the museum with regional responsibility—and elsewhere in Finland. A small number of international loans are also arranged annually.

All loans are governed by a formal written agreement, and HAM's loan practices align with international museum standards. Borrowing institutions must be professionally managed and demonstrate compliance with HAM's requirements for security, fire and theft prevention, and environmental conditions of the premises. Each loan request is assessed individually, with particular attention paid to the condition of the artwork and HAM's own exhibition commitments.

The borrower is responsible for all costs associated with the loan, including insurance, transport, and any additional expenses. If an artwork necessitates a transport crate, framing, or special handling—such as frame replacement at the borrower’s request—these expenses are also borne by the borrower. However, HAM does not charge for standard procedures such as condition checks or basic protective measures like framing or backing, as these are considered part of routine collection care.

A standard loan fee is applied to both domestic and international loans, consistent with current market rates. International loans typically involve more extensive requirements, including reinforced packaging, custom transport crates, and dedicated installation instructions. These additional measures are included in the loan fee.

### **6.3. Image Requests and Photography Permits**

HAM receives a diverse range of image requests from private individuals, artists, researchers, journalists, and publishers. These inquiries frequently involve in-depth guidance, particularly regarding copyright and usage rights. On average, approximately 40 image requests per year result in a formal image use agreement, with usage rights granted for around 80 images annually. A fee is charged for the commercial use of images, in accordance with standard market rates. However, image use is free of charge for non-commercial purposes for clients such as researchers, museums, and City-affiliated organisations. In the context of art loans, images are provided to the borrowing institution free of charge for the duration of the exhibition, including use in related publications and materials. Commercial photography permits may be granted for locations where HAM’s artworks are on display.

It is the responsibility of the image user to identify and obtain any necessary copyright clearances and to pay any associated fees.

### **6.4. Permits for Events Involving Public Artworks**

Helsinki’s most iconic public sculptures often serve as focal points for celebrations, events, artistic interventions, and public campaigns. However, advance permission from HAM is required for

any form of physical interaction with an artwork or its integral elements, such as pedestals, bases, or water features. To safeguard the condition and integrity of these works, permissions are granted selectively and only under clearly defined conditions. Event organisers are also responsible for resolving any copyright issues and ensuring compliance with the City of Helsinki’s public event regulations. HAM does not issue permits for the use of public artworks in advertising or commercial campaigns.

## **6.5. Tasks of the Museum with Regional Responsibilities**

HAM serves as the museum with regional responsibility for the Province of Uusimaa, acting as the officially designated expert on art and visual heritage. This status, granted under the Museums Act (314/2019), qualifies HAM for enhanced state funding to support its regional mandate. HAM’s regional work is guided by a three-year action plan, developed in collaboration with the Finnish Heritage Agency. Thematic priorities change annually and may focus on areas such as collections, exhibitions, or public art.

As a convener of professional art museums and visual arts practitioners in the region, HAM provides a platform for the exchange of expertise, the sharing of best practices, and access to national and international networks. It also promotes the advancement of visual arts and their heritage by organising training sessions, professional gatherings, and regional symposia that address current topics and field-specific needs.

HAM offers expert consultancy on a broad range of subjects, including project planning and contracts, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility, as well as the production, conservation, and upkeep of public art. It also supports regional collaboration in areas such as digital accessibility and shared collection management practices.

All regional cooperation is developed in partnership with local stakeholders, the Finnish Heritage Agency, and the national network of regional museums. Together, these institutions work to foster openness, dialogue, and sustainability across the museum sector.

## 7. COLLECTION MANAGEMENT

**HAM RELIES ON ITS DIGITAL COLLECTION** management system to efficiently catalogue, manage, and maintain the City's collection of over 11,000 artworks. To support this work, HAM uses MuseumPlus, a system provided by Zetcom Nordics Oy and widely used by museums throughout Finland and Europe. The platform enables the management of comprehensive data on each artwork, including provenance, historical context, artist information, collection and donor records, and other research-related material.

All newly acquired and donated artworks are promptly documented and catalogued in HAM's collection management system upon receipt and formal accessioning. This process includes photographing the work, recording detailed information, and entering relevant provenance documentation to ensure a comprehensive record.

To support effective collection management and long-term care, HAM requires artists to submit a detailed work report upon completing any new public artwork. This report should outline the creative process and concept, list the materials used, and provide the artist's recommendations for ongoing maintenance. The report, along with any supporting drafts or sketches, is archived in the collection management system, offering valuable insights into the artwork's creation process and conceptual background.

Beyond basic documentation, the collection management system maintains extensive records of acquisitions, location history, and conservation actions. It also tracks exhibitions, deposits, loans, and long-term public art and restoration projects. Additionally, the system houses artwork-specific resources such as conservation and maintenance photographs, installation instructions, an

image archive, and a database of source literature that supports the museum's internal reference library.

The collection management system tracks all artworks in the HAM Collection, as well as those deposited with the museum, works deposited elsewhere by the City of Helsinki, and deaccessioned items. Even if an artwork is destroyed or removed from the collection for any reason, its information is preserved in both the system and the City's records. In line with established museum standards and the ICOM Code of Ethics, artworks that are lost, destroyed, or formally deaccessioned are transferred to the Deaccessions Collection. Their records remain in the system to ensure continuous documentation, even if the artwork no longer exists physically.

The system also maintains an archive collection, serving as HAM's internal resource for cataloguing archival materials directly related to the art collection, as well as exhibition documentation material that is not formally accessioned. This archive includes ephemera acquired over time, such as historical reproductions from school collections. Materials within this archive can be added or removed as necessary.

System administrators are responsible for training and guiding users on proper use of the collection management system and its data entry protocols. System backups are managed by the software provider. The system generates a collection accounting report, which is integrated into the City of Helsinki's capital accounting and audited annually as part of the City's financial statements. Unlike machinery or equipment, artworks are not subject to annual depreciation. When an artwork is formally deaccessioned, its original acquisition value is accordingly removed from the City's balance sheet.

All of HAM's content-producing staff are responsible for keeping the collection management system up to date. The project lead for each exhibition ensures that any new information generated during the exhibition process is entered into the system.

Key priorities in contemporary museum practice include collection digitisation, long-term data preservation, and efforts to ensure broad accessibility to information.

## **7.1. Photographic Documentation**

Photographic documentation is a vital component of HAM’s collection management. High-quality images are essential not only for making artworks accessible to the public online but also for showcasing the collection to city residents, wider audiences, and both national and international expert networks. Professional photographs support a wide range of communications, enable commercial use, and enhance accessibility by facilitating inclusion in public digital databases and platforms.

Comprehensive, high-quality photographic documentation of as many works as possible is crucial for effective and responsible collection stewardship, ensuring that the collection is fully integrated into all aspects of the museum’s work.

HAM’s in-house photographers document all newly accessioned acquisitions and commissioned public artworks. Artworks on loan or installed in City premises across Helsinki are photographed prior to transport and, where relevant, at their exhibition or installation sites. Public artworks are photographed as soon as possible after completion. This documentation is especially important for temporary, ephemeral, or event-based public artworks, where photographs serve as key lasting records of the work.



VILLE VALLGREN

Havis Amanda

1908

Photo: Yehia Eweis / HAM

## 8. HISTORY OF THE COLLECTION

**THE ORIGINS OF THE HELSINKI CITY ART COLLECTION** trace back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when the City began acquiring artworks to establish a public collection. From the very beginning, a key objective was to integrate visual art into the daily life of Helsinki's residents. Early acquisitions included "statues to beautify parks and tableaux" intended for public institutions such as schools, retirement homes, and hospitals. The City's first commissioned public statue was the *Johan Ludvig Runeberg Monument*, unveiled on the Esplanade in 1885. Two years prior, in 1883, Helsinki received its first significant art donation when Lieutenant General *Otto W. Furuhjelm* bequeathed 58 artworks to the City in his will, with the intention of establishing a future public museum. Although this did not transpire immediately, the Helsinki City Museum eventually opened in 1911. The art collection itself was officially named the Helsinki City Art Museum much later, in 1979.

In its early decades, responsibility for art acquisitions lay with the City's Chamber of Finance, until 1931, when it was transferred to the City Board. To further encourage the integration of art into public spaces, the Fine Arts Committee was established in 1954. Its mandate was to acquire "works of art from Helsinki artists for city institutions and agencies and to beautify public spaces throughout the city." The Committee included both City officials and professional artists. In 1966, the City's central administration appointed an Art Secretary to oversee the City Art Collection as its curator. That same year, the Fine Arts Committee expanded its acquisition guidelines to include works by artists from across Finland, not only from Helsinki.

During the 1970s, the City received several major donations of artworks. The City's Art Centre Committee, established in 1968,

explored the idea of creating an art centre to showcase Helsinki's growing art collection. This vision came to fruition in 1976 with the opening of the Meilahti Art Museum, which was specifically founded to exhibit the significant collection donated by *Leonard and Katarina Bäcksbäck*.

The official adoption of the name 'Helsinki City Art Museum' took place in 1979. While the Helsinki City Museum also maintains an art collection, its focus differs: it collects works related to Helsinki's history, urban identity, and documentation of city life, whereas Helsinki Art Museum prioritises acquisitions based on artistic merit.

The City of Helsinki's collection of public sculptures has likewise expanded substantially through donations. HAM Helsinki Art Museum is responsible for managing sculptures and other public artworks located on City-owned land and property. However, the care and maintenance of certain historical monuments fall under the jurisdiction of the Helsinki City Museum.

Administratively, the art museum was part of the City of Helsinki Cultural Office until it became an independent institution in 1998. In 1999, HAM gained significant new exhibition space in the city centre with the opening of its galleries at the Tennis Palace. For over a decade, the museum operated across multiple venues until the Meilahti Art Museum closed in 2012, consolidating all exhibitions at the Tennis Palace. The former Kluuvi Gallery, active since 1968 on Unioninkatu, was also integrated into this central location. Following extensive renovations, the expanded exhibition spaces—now twice their original size—reopened in autumn 2015.

In 2017, the City of Helsinki introduced a new organisational structure, placing HAM within the Culture and Leisure Division as part of the City's cultural services. Since early 2023, HAM Helsinki Art Museum has operated as a foundation within the Helsinki City Group. The City of Helsinki has entrusted HAM with the stewardship of its art collection, tasking it with the management, cataloguing, exhibition, and maintenance of all City-owned artworks.

## Appendices

APPENDIX 1:

Agreement on the Deposit of the City Art Collection with the HAM Helsinki Art Museum Foundation

APPENDIX 2:

Ownership Strategy

APPENDIX 3:

City Board Decision, 13 December 2021, §940 – Continuation of the Percent for Art Policy and Operating Practices for Percent for Art Projects

APPENDIX 4:

Working Group Report, 14 October 2021 – Continuation of the Percent for Art Policy and Update of Associated Funding Practices

APPENDIX 5:

Decision by the Director of the Culture and Leisure Division on the approval of HAM Helsinki Art Museum's Collection Policy on 4 June 2025

# HAM

Helsinki Art Museum

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