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**UNDER EMBARGO UNTIL NOON, DECEMBER 12, 2024**

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**The Finnish Art Society awards nearly 300,000 euros in support of the fine arts**

The Finnish Art Society awards thirteen major art prizes annually (the Ducat Prize for young artists, the Lifetime Achievement Award for mature artists, ten William Thuring Prizes for artists aged 35-45, and the Edvard Richter Award for art writers). Grants are additionally distributed to young artists and art writers. The total sum awarded in grants and prizes this year was 298,500 euros.

**Ducat Prize to Jirko Viljanen**

This year’s Ducat Prize for young artists went to Jirko Viljanen.The Ducat Prize was established in 1858 and is Finland’s oldest art award. Valued at 16,000 euros, it is the most highly endowed of the Finnish Art Society’s prizes.

**Jirko Viljanen** (b. 1991, Lahti) translates complex and difficult emotions and experiences into visual form. He works within an imagery shaped by symbolism and surrealism, often drawing from personal experiences filtered and processed through the logic of dreams.

The worlds depicted in Viljanen’s works bear resemblances to our familiar surroundings, yet they exude a sense of strangeness, with things not necessarily being what they first appear to be. Subtle emotions and sensations beneath the surface challenge and reshape the realm of perception.

The intimate scale of Viljanen’s works, combined with their simultaneously soft and rugged texture, creates a distinctive and almost tangible beauty. His pieces convey the artist’s gestures and touch, inviting viewers to engage with the works and reflect on their own feelings. In his creations, Viljanen may incorporate techniques such as monotype, pastels, and ink.

Visions of the deficiencies and pains of existence and of beings emerge in his imagery, softened by the warmth and gentleness of a process of understanding and acceptance – free of pity or patronising attitudes. These elements are inherent to being and living.

**Lifetime Achievement Award to Matti Peltokangas**

Matti Peltokangas is the recipient of the Lifetime Achievement Award for long-term excellence in the fine arts. The prize is valued at 10,000 euros.

**Matti Peltokangas** (b. 1952, Virrat) is both a modern and traditional sculptor, for whom it is essential to show the process of crafting in the form of a work. The traces of the process highlight the origins of the materials: stone extracted from rock and how it is shaped, and how wood is material grown in a specific place. Similarly, the act of shaping a form is always an effort rooted in time – and space – as is evident in traditional sculpture.

Even in robust forms, the works of Peltokangas carry a delicate and temporally detectable sensitivity on their surface, a tension of timelessness and life. Skilfully rendered bronze or wooden sculptures depicting figures contrast with works stemming from the almost minimalist basic forms of stone carving. The timelessness of stone and the fleeting vibrancy of human life intersect in Peltokangas’ numerous public sculptures as well as his smaller works. His understated yet monumental sculptures are humble, yet make a lasting impression on memory and mind.

**William Thuring Prizes**

The William Thuring Foundation is the main supporter of the Finnish Art Society. The William Thuring Prizes consist of a main prize and nine other designated prizes awarded to visual artists aged between 35 and 45. The main prize is valued at 14,000 euros, the others at 6,500 euros.

**William Thuring main prize to Inka Bell**

**Inka Bell** (b. 1981, Espoo) is known as an artist who pushes the boundaries of printmaking and materials. She combines paper with, for example, metal and employs digital techniques such as laser engraving alongside traditional printmaking methods. Bell’s visual language often relies on geometric forms. She disrupts the conventional rectangular format, and her paper sculptures represent innovative hybrids of printmaking and sculpture, often with a kinetic dimension. Her art is characterised by layering and playfulness. Inka Bell has revitalised and carried on the significant tradition of Finnish Constructivism in a fresh way.

Bell graduated with a Master of Fine Arts in Printmaking from the Academy of Fine Arts at the University of the Arts Helsinki in 2021. Her recent solo exhibitions include Galleria G (2024), Forum Box, Helsinki (2023), Bricks Gallery, Copenhagen (2022), Porvoo Art Hall (2022), and HAM Gallery, Helsinki (2020). In summer 2024, she took part in the *Observation* exhibition at the Art Centre Purnu.

**Other designated prizes**

The nine other designated prizes went to the following visual artists:

**Ahlfors Liisa** (b. 1985, Reisjärvi), Tampere / installation, environmental art

**Aho Timo** (b. 1980, Vantaa), Helsinki / sculpture, installation

**Apajalahti Sampo** (b. 1980, Järvenpää), Helsinki / painting

**Hyrkkänen Anna** (b. 1979, Tampere), Tampere / sculpture, installation

**Marno Hanna** (b. 1981, Helsinki), Siikainen / sculpture, environmental art

**Oikarinen Mari** (b. 1981, Suomussalmi), Rovaniemi / sculpture, textile art

**Palojärvi Ida** (b. 1981, Oulu), Helsinki / sculpture, installation

**Raitanen Tiina** (b. 1983, Viitasaari), Helsinki / sculpture

**Rusanen Jukka** (b. 1980, Jyväskylä), Lahti / painting

**Edvard Richter Award to Timo Valjakka**

The Finnish Art Society presents the Edvard Richter Award annually in recognition of an outstanding art book or essay published during the year under review. The prize is valued at 10,000 euros.

In 2024, the award will be granted to art critic and non-fiction author **Timo Valjakka** (b. 1953, Helsinki) for his book *Taiteen matkassa – Kirjoituksia taiteesta ja sen tekijöistä* (“A Voyage with Art – Writings on Art and Its Makers”, Parvs, 2024). Valjakka’s interest in writing began in the 1980s, leading to a full-time writing career in the 1990s. Trained as a visual artist, Valjakka has taught at Helsinki’s Academy of Fine Arts, served as editor-in-chief of the Nordic arts journal Siksi, directed Kunsthalle Helsinki and the Finnish Institute in London, and worked as a freelance curator. He is widely recognised for his contributions as a regular writer for Finland’s main newspaper Helsingin Sanomat, a role he continues today.

The *Taiteen matkassa* anthology showcases a writer with extensive expertise in his subject. The book includes reprints of Valjakka’s art reviews from the early 1990s to the mid-2000s. His essays bring his personal experiences into the contemplation of art, while leaving space for readers to engage with the works through his text.

In book form, Valjakka’s experiential approach and writing skills come to the fore. Fundamental ideas about making art and understanding the world, which have popped up in various publications over the years, are revisited across different examples, forming the book’s solid core.

In the preface, Valjakka writes about striving for precision and avoiding positioning himself between artists, artworks, and readers. This objective is successfully achieved. His writing is clear, beautiful, and expressive, without drawing attention to itself. The author’s background as a visual artist is evident in the profound understanding of artistic practice that permeates the text.

The writings in *Taiteen matkassa* constitute a remarkably rich body of work, highlighting the need for today’s media landscape to offer art writers greater opportunities to showcase their talents.

**Grants awarded to young artists**

Thirty young artists received a grant of 6,000 euros each. A total of 328 applications were received, one of which was submitted by an artist collective. Young artist grants are intended for professionally trained artists aged 35 or younger.

1. **Aitamurto Tuomas** (b. 1999, Helsinki), Helsinki / painting, drawing
2. **Alanko Onni** (b. 1992, Helsinki), Helsinki / painting, installation
3. **Ang Siew Ching** (b. 1989, Singapore), Espoo / video, graphic art
4. **Arend Vera den** (b. 1996, Netherlands), Kangasniemi / drawing, video
5. **Buchmann Aime** (b. 1991, Helsinki), Helsinki / media art
6. **Elagoz Samira** (b. 1989, Helsinki), Berlin/Helsinki / video, performance
7. **Falaileh Mariam** (b. 1990, Kuopio), Helsinki / ceramics, sculpture
8. **Hallenberg Meri** (b. 1993, Helsinki), Helsinki / painting, sculpture
9. **Hamada Natalie** (b. 1994, Syria), Espoo / graphic art
10. **Hartikainen Arttu** (b. 1988, Vantaa), Vantaa / painting, drawing
11. **Hyttinen Annamaari** (b. 1990, Sonkajärvi), Helsinki / painting
12. **Jokimies Maaria** (b. 1992, Punkaharju), Helsinki / painting
13. **Julku Kirsi** (b. 1993, Töysä), Tampere / painting
14. **Karjalainen Kiia** (b. 1992, Espoo), Hyvinkää / installation, graphic art
15. **Kemppi Salla** (b. 1993, Kouvola), Turku / sculpture, installation
16. **Koskinen Ville** (b. 1990, Helsinki), Helsinki / media art, video
17. **Luukkala Emma** (b. 1992, Alajärvi), Helsinki / painting, sculpture
18. **Lähteenmäki Lauri** (b. 1992, Helsinki), Helsinki / photography, installation
19. **Mette Matilda** (b. 1997, Lahti), Helsinki / sculpture, installation
20. **Nissinen Elina** (b. 1991, Kotka), Helsinki / sculpture, installation
21. **Nybacka Frans** (b. 1993, Kangasala), Helsinki / painting, drawing
22. **Pekkala Anna** (b. 1989, Mänttä), Helsinki / sculpture, installation
23. **Pennanen Emilia** (b. 1990, Vantaa), Helsinki / photography
24. **Ramberg Jerker** (b. 1989, Helsinki), Turku / drawing, painting
25. **Saarikoski Kristo** (b. 1992, Tuusula), Helsinki / painting, frescoes, installation
26. **Suikkanen Saimi** (b. 1994, Imatra), Helsinki / painting
27. **Tanttu Vijaya Aurea** (b. 1996, Helsinki), Helsinki / painting, drawing
28. **Tuomisalo Mimma** (b. 1994, Tampere), Helsinki / graphic art, installation
29. **Valtonen Christine** (b. 1992, Espoo), Helsinki / textile art, painting
30. **Westerberg Arno** (b. 1998, Helsinki), Helsinki / painting, sculpture

**Signe Tandefelt Grant**

The Signe Tandefelt Grant is awarded to art critics and art writers. It is designed for the purpose of promoting art writing and enlivening Finnish art criticism. A total of 35 applications were received this year, four of which were applications submitted by collectives. Nine applicants were awarded grants amounting to 10,000 euros in total.

1. **Gaál Miklos Juhani** (b. 1974, Espoo), Amsterdam / 1500 € / for author fees for an essay book
2. **Hakoköngäs Amanda** (b. 1993, Tervola), Tornio / 1100 € / for finalising a series of articles and essays about the northern Finnish artist collective “Group Kemi”
3. **Kangasvuo Jenny** (b. 1975, Helsinki), Oulu / 1000 € / for writing art reviews about northern Finnish art
4. **Lindberg Carl Sebastian** (b. 1978, Helsinki), Helsinki / 1000 € / for travel expenses to the Berlin Biennale 2025
5. **Mustonen Onni** (b. 1990, Helsinki), Helsinki / 1000 € / for writing an article about comics published in American labour movement newspapers in the 1920–40s
6. **Nieminen Salla** (b. 1988, Hyvinkää), Hämeenlinna / 1200 € / for writing a four-part article series exploring different experiential ways of viewing visual art in an accessible and concrete manner
7. **Nyqvist Sanna** (b. 1977, Kirkkonummi), Helsinki / 1200 € / for literary work resulting in an essay to be published alongside Chappe’s upcoming exhibition (spring/summer 2026)
8. **Mänttä Art Lovers** / 1000 € / for author fees for editing the 2025 social media catalogue
9. **Ylikangas Maaria** (b. 1978, Kalajoki), Helsinki / 1000 € / for writing an essay for a book with the working title "Raahe Book"

**About the Finnish Art Society**

The Finnish Art Society was founded in 1846 to support Finnish artists and promote the practice and enjoyment of art. Its annual prizes and grants are decided by the Board, based on proposals submitted for its consideration by specialized committees.

**Ducat Prize and Lifetime Achievement Award, Young Artists’ grants:**

The members of the grants and awards committee are artist Antti Tanttu (chair), artist Heini Aho, artist Hannaleena Heiska, Pessi Rautio, MA, and Riikka Stewen, PhD and lecturer.

**Edvard Richter Award, Signe Tandefelt Grant:**

The members of the literary committee are critics Helen Korpak, MA Fine Arts (chair), critic Sini Mononen, PhD, and writer and photographic artist Hanna Weselius, PhD Fine Arts.

**William Thuring Prizes:**

The members of the committee are Päivi Karttunen, MA (Board member), Sarianne Soikkonen, MA (Board member) and artist Hannaleena Heiska (Board member).

Additional information:

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