



## National Museums in Finland

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### Summary

This report analyses the growth of the Finnish museum scene from its early beginnings in the nineteenth century through to the big national museum organizations: the Finnish National Gallery, the National Museum of Finland and the Natural History Museum. The timeframe is particularly interesting due to the historical setting: when the first initiatives to form national collections saw the light of day, the country was in the midst of political turmoil. Separation from Sweden had taken place in 1809, and Finland, as a Grand Duchy of Russia, was searching for a new identity. The nation-building process, driven by Swedish-speaking academics, artists and politicians, was visible in all sectors, from the fine arts to literature, history writing and science. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, language-policy issues divided the field into two separate camps. Favouring either the Finnish or Swedish language became a political matter.

When the country gained independence from Russia in 1917, an express need for national institutions such as national museums became evident. Nationalism reached a peak and was seen and heard in architecture, the fine arts, literature and music. The civil war in 1918 and, later on, the World War did not close the museums, but affected their work on a very practical level. The cold-war period was partly mirrored in the politically appropriate exhibition programmes. The nation's geopolitical struggle only became the subject of exhibitions later on, when it was possible to approach their contents from an analytical distance.

The development of the three national museums has depended on Finnish cultural policy and on politics in general. The nineteenth century was an era of vigorous national development and the creation of institutions, the formation of collections and collecting practices. The twentieth century featured the growth of the museum profession and expertise, and the museums' relationship with their audiences changed. Political changes, the industrialization of the country, a relatively rapid shift from an agricultural society to a service and IT society have affected museums' activities, too. Internationally important trends and issues have been reflected in the exhibition programmes.

One of the central observations is that the crucial factor was the professional expertise used in running the museums, building up the collections and putting them on display. Thus, the success of the big national museums depends not only on the contents of the collections, exhibitions and various programmes targeted on different audiences, but on their human resources.

Summary table, Finland

Name	Inaugurated	Initiated	Actors	Ownership	Type	Values	Temporal reach	Style Location
The Finnish Art Society (FAS)	1846	1834	Civil Society, Aristocracy	Civil Society	Art	Finnish Art in Western Tradition, international art.	19 <sup>th</sup> c.	Various apartments until opening of <i>Ateneum</i> , central Helsinki.
Ateneum Art Museum, part of FAS/FNG	1888 <i>Ateneum</i> (collections of the FAS)	1870s	Civil Society, Aristocracy	Civil Society	Art	Finnish Art in Western Tradition, international art.	19 <sup>th</sup> c.	<i>Ateneum</i> , purpose-built, neo-renaissance, central Helsinki.
Sinebrychoff Art Museum, part of FAS/FNG	1921 (Sinebrychoff Art Collection)	1880s	Private	State	Art	International art, emphasis on Swedish art	17 <sup>th</sup> – 19 <sup>th</sup> c.	<i>Sinebrychoff</i> , private house, classical style, central Helsinki.
The Finnish National Gallery	1990	1982	Parliament	State	Art	Finnish Art in Western Tradition, international and contemporary art, furniture.	16 <sup>th</sup> – 20 <sup>th</sup> c.	<i>Ateneum</i> , <i>Sinebrychoff</i> , <i>Kiasma</i> (1998-), central Helsinki.
<i>Kiasma</i> , part of FNG	1998 <i>Kiasma</i> (part of FNG)	1990 (1960s)	Parliament	State	Art	Contemporary Art, National and International.	20 <sup>th</sup> c.	<i>Kiasma</i> : purpose-built (1998), modern style, central Helsinki.

Etnografisk Museum	1760, 1828	1840	University	University	Cultural History	National Pre-History and Culture	Stone age to 19 <sup>th</sup> c.	Various locations, included in the National Museum, central Helsinki.
The National Museum of Finland	1916	1893	Parliament	State	Cultural History	National Pre-History and Culture.	Stone Age to the present day	Purpose-built in national romantic style; Helsinki
The Finnish Museum of Natural History	1925	1811	University	University	Natural History	National specimens of nature, universal values	Stone age to the present	Old school, (bought 1923), neo-classical style, central Helsinki.

## Introduction

The Finnish museum field today consists of more than 1000 museums. Professional museum organizations run a total of 326 museum sites. Compared with the number of citizens – the population of the country is 5.5 million – the number of museums is one of the highest in Europe.

This report analyses the growth of the Finnish museum scene from its early beginnings in the nineteenth century through to the big national-museum organizations: the Finnish National Gallery, the National Museum of Finland and the Natural History Museum. Other museums of national and regional relevance are the regional museums of cultural history (22), regional art museums (16) and museums with national status for presenting a special field, such as design, architecture, theatre and Finnish glass (17). Details of these are given in the appendices.

The vast majority of Finnish museums were originally established on private initiatives. In the nineteenth century, this happened on both a private and semi-public level. Private collectors donated their lifetime achievements to ‘the nation’ and encouraged local authorities to establish museum institutions around their collections. As semi-public institutional bodies, various societies, such as the Finnish Art Society, played a key role by providing an institutional framework for collecting.

Whereas private bodies and private funds drove the early beginnings, two hundred years later, the museum sector forms an important part of the culture industry and is supported by public funding. The State allocates funds for museums on an annual basis and supports the big nationals with substantial sums.<sup>1</sup> Regional museums and museums of national importance also get substantial funding from the state. (Museum Statistics 2009)

The responsibility for developing the museum field is in the hands of the Ministry of Education and Culture, which is the most important policy maker. (Ministry of Education and Culture Strategy 2020) On museum issues, it consults the Finnish Museum Association and, in particular, works closely with the National Board of Antiquities and the Finnish National Gallery. The Museum Act (1996/1166) provides a concrete framework for this.<sup>2</sup>

Apart from developing the museum field on the policy and stakeholder level, museum-related research also enriches the big picture. Since 1983, museology has been taught at the university level in Finland (Vilkuna 2010: 339). The first professor of museology was appointed in 1998 at the University of Jyväskylä. (Vilkuna 2010) A history of Finnish museums was published in 2010 (Pettersson & Kinanen 2010) and the Finnish forum for museum-related research was established in May 2010, bringing together scholars from different disciplines.

The most significant references for the report cover the history of the big national museums: Mikko Härö’s study on the history of the National Board of Antiquities (2010) and Derek Fewster’s study *Visions of the Past Glory: Nationalism and the Construction of Early Finnish History* (2006) that analyses the formation of the National Museum, whereas Susanna Pettersson’s study *Suomen Taideyhdistyksestä Ateneumiin. Fredrik Cygnaeus, Carl Gustaf Estlander ja taidekokoelman roolit* (From the Finnish Art Society to the Ateneum: Fredrik Cygnaeus, Carl Gustaf Estlander and the roles of the art collection) (2008) covers the early history of the Finnish Art Society and its collection, thus creating the framework for the core collection of the Finnish National Gallery. The institutional developments and the history of the collections of the Natural History Museum

are discussed in various articles and other publications, but the institution still lacks an in-depth study. *Suomen museohistoria* (Finnish Museum History) (2010), edited by Susanna Pettersson and Pauliina Kinanen, provides a general overview of the development of the Finnish museum field, in-depth case studies and complete lists and statistics concerning the founding of the museums, thus forming one of the key sources for the report. A larger number of earlier publications complete the set of references.

The timeframe for this report spans the formation of the collections from the seventeenth century and the academic collecting of the natural history specimens up to the first decades of the professional museums and collection management of the early twentieth century. The rapid growth of the museum sector, organizational changes and the professionalization of the field in the twentieth century will be discussed, as well as the most relevant future challenges for the big national museums. One of the key focuses, however, is the development of the nineteenth century, when institutionalized collecting grew to be a part of civilized society.

The timeframe is particularly interesting due to the historical setting: when the first initiatives to form national collections saw the light of day, the country was in the midst of political turmoil. Separation from Sweden had taken place in 1809, and Finland, as a Grand Duchy of Russia, was searching for a new identity. When the country gained independence from Russia in 1917, the express need for national institutions such as national museums became evident. The civil war in 1918, the world war and the cold-war period were partly reflected in museum history. Political struggles took different forms: at the beginning of twentieth century, language became one of the symbols of nationalism. Culture and its outcomes were rebranded for the Finnish-speaking nation.

Bearing all this in mind, several questions can be asked. What was the institutional role of the emerging collections in relation to the nation in the political environment of nineteenth century Finland? Did the political situation affect the formation of the collections? Once the national museum institutions were finally established, were they able to respond to the needs of their audiences?

Communicating the core contents with the aid of collection displays was the museums' strongest tool in the nation-building process. I will argue that the crucial factor was the professional expertise used in running the museums, compiling the collections and putting them on display – bearing in mind that the other key factors were funds allocated for running the institutions, buildings to house the collections, political trends that either favoured or disapproved of the national institutions, and the relationship with the public at large. Memory organizations such as museums contributed to the nation-building process by selecting, safekeeping, caring for and displaying the national narrative.

Therefore it is essential to analyse the development of the museum profession alongside the institutional history and the surrounding society. Even though it will not be possible to answer all the questions within the limitations of this report, it is interesting to point to where future research ought to look. Such questions include the scientific background of the early museum men, and the innovations and trends in science and art. Was there, for instance, a broader consensus amongst European museum makers that national experts followed? It can also be asked whether there were hidden national agendas or political taboos that the national museum organization would rather not touch, leaving such subjects to the other stakeholders? What

about the future challenges for national museum institutions in a globalized world where Finland no longer represents the cold, dark edge of the world, as described by the nineteenth century museum men?

This report provides an overview of the Finnish national-museum scene by contextualizing the formation of the national collections, analysing the role of three national institutions showcasing natural history, art and cultural heritage, and looking at the challenges that face them within contemporary society.

## **The nineteenth century context**

In Finland the national need to create collections and to establish museum institutions emerged around the mid-nineteenth century. Given the fact that, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, the museum field was non-existent, apart from the study collections in Finland's one university – there were no public collections, no exhibitions, and consequently no writing in the press – the developments occurred quite rapidly.

The first collections were established through the efforts of various societies that were founded to promote the arts and culture. It is essential to point out that these nationally orientated collections represented, from a museological point of view, a different philosophy and character from that of the first botanical, zoological, geological and paleontological collections that had already been set up for educational purposes in the seventeenth century, and used accordingly in the university, in the former capital, Turku. The first collections of the new era were formed by the Finnish Art Society (1846), the Finnish Antiquarian Society (1870), and the Finnish Society for Arts and Crafts (1875), and were intended for the nation.

The early nineteenth century brought many significant political changes. In 1809, Finland fell into Russian hands as a result of the Swedish-Russian War of 1808–9. Separation from Sweden resulted in fundamental changes to the political and economic scene. The capital was moved from Turku to Helsinki, together with key functions, such as political organs, the church and university. Helsinki became the centre of finance and commerce, providing an excellent environment for wealthy businessmen who were interested in collecting. Moreover, the political changes had a major impact on the cultural identity of the people. Balancing between East and West became a trademark of Finland for almost two centuries.

Also, the language became an issue as a symbol of the nation. Swedish, Russian and French were the languages of the cultural elite and the governing class. In time, the language of the working class, Finnish, gained strong supporters amongst the Swedish-speaking elite, not least because of the founding of the Finnish Literature Society in 1831. (Sulkunen 2004) Favouring the use of a certain language became a statement in itself. As Finland's leading Hegelian philosopher, J. V. Snellman, put it in his frequently quoted text (1861): "We are no longer Swedes; we can not become Russians; we must be Finns; and further: Swedish is the language of the Swedes, Russian of the Russians; should not the Finns have a right to own their language, and luckily they do own a such." (Fewster 2006, 116.)

During the first decades of the nineteenth century, Finland was swept up in a national movement that was reflected in the arts and culture. The country needed a history of its own and literally created it by writing, composing, sculpting, painting and collecting 'typical' specimens that reflected the character of the country. Meanwhile, the educated class was searching for the

true soul of the nation, *The Kalevala*, the national epic, was published in Finnish in 1835 and translated into Swedish (1841), French (1845) and Russian (1847). Also, an early popularization of Finnish history, *Suomen historia*, was written by Johan Fredrik Cajan and published in 1846.

Acts of concrete cultural work include the opening of the Drawing School in 1848 and the organization of the first public art exhibitions by the Finnish Art Society in 1849 (Pettersson 2008: 83–8). In 1851, Finland started to follow and participate in the world fairs as an independent stakeholder, thanks to its autonomous position as a Grand Duchy of Russia. (Smeds 1996) The first cultural journals, such as *Finske Tidskrift*, founded in 1876, also appeared. Moreover, the first purpose-built building for the beaux-arts and arts and crafts, the Ateneum, designed by architect Theodor Höijer, was erected in 1887 and opened to the public in October 1888.

A relatively small team of cultural activists who were well-positioned in society played the key roles: politicians, economics and academics each contributed their share to the nation-building process. It is worth noting that almost every initiative included academics from the university, thus ensuring that the core contents would be discussed with its students: the latest developments in literature, theatre, architecture, arts and crafts and the fine arts were an important national topic.

Artists kept to this same pattern, which served mutual needs, until they began studying in Paris in the 1880s, breaking free from the heavy academic tradition. This also caused a rupture in the grand, national narrative. The national aspirations to illustrate the nation, to enforce the narrative, were challenged by the artistic need to be independent and creative.

At the end of the nineteenth century, the politically turbulent years of the so-called Russification period under Czar Nikolai II drew artists even closer together and to the nation. Since it was forbidden to be openly nationalistic artists found other ways of contributing to the national narrative. Jean Sibelius composed some of his masterworks, lyrics with hidden meanings were written, and Akseli Gallen-Kallela and others created symbolist paintings to express the nation's political standpoint, its passion to become an independent country. This was finally achieved in 1917 when Finland gained independence.

Although the national museum process had already started at the end of the nineteenth century, and all the necessary preparations and decisions had been made under Russian rule, the young, independent nation benefited hugely from the setting up of national monuments and sites. They simply took on another meaning, now as symbols of the young nation. Museums and their collections played an important role in depicting the story of Finland. The newly built National Museum had been opened to the public in 1916. (Fewster 2006) The collections of arts and crafts had been moved out of the Ateneum and put on display at Hakasalmi Mansion House in 1912. (Pettersson 2010: 181) Natural history collections were given pride of place in the former premises of the Russian school building and were opened to the public in 1925. (Terhivuo 2010: 196) This reflected the intense developments underway in the museum field, and substantial effort was put, not only into opening the already existing collections to the general public, but also into creating new ones.

Opening a museum became a symbol in itself. When the Finnish Museums' Association was established in 1923, the museum field was already growing rapidly. (Kinanen 2010, 62) The biggest growth concentrated on small cities and the countryside. Local museums of cultural

history played an important role in highlighting the local traditions and culture, while the national museums, backed by strong links with the academic field, i.e. universities, monopolized the right to display the master narrative. One of the key observations is that the museum men were practising academics. The keepers of the collections and chairmen of the boards were university professors and lecturers. Accordingly, the national museums were expected to hire the best experts and to educate the future generations of museum professionals.

The clear need to create national museum institutions naturally fell into three categories: culture heritage, art and natural history. Later on, the selection was widened when the first house museums were founded to honour culturally and politically important figures, such as painter Akseli Gallen-Kallela (1961), Marshal Mannerheim (1951), architect Alvar Aalto (1966) and composer Jean Sibelius (1972 and 2007), thus providing an in-depth view into the lives of the nation's key figures. It is worth noting that the majority of such museums came to highlight the national narrative, but were free from any official, policy-level responsibilities.

Examples of the formation of the museum field of the nineteenth century came from neighbouring Sweden and Denmark, and especially from German-speaking Europe. (Fewster 2006; Selkokari 2008; Pettersson 2008) The Finnish museum men of the nineteenth century, such as professors Carl Gustaf Estlander (1834–1910) and Eliel Aspelin-Haapkylä (1847–1917), had travelled widely in Europe, looking for models for the Finnish collection field and for museums yet to be founded.

The earliest public debates concerning the need for national museum institutions had begun already in the 1840s, when the widely travelled philosopher Johan Vilhelm Snellman (1806–81) wrote several articles in one of the newspapers, whereas the 1870s were the key era for the public debate concerning the need for national museum institutions that reflected the nation's character and outcomes. It is to be noted, though, that the natural-history collections were not the focus of this debate. Minerals, bird's eggs and butterflies did not involve such tense political undertones as art and artefact collections intended to highlight the *Volkgeist*, the spirit of the nation. On the other hand, these collections provided a relevant and concrete framework for the 'country'. Plants, soil and animals were building blocks of the beloved environment illustrated in publications such as Zachris Topelius' *Finland framställt i teckningar* (1845), a series of ambitious drawings depicting the most important views of the country from south to north.

The land, its history and the creations of the mankind were anchored in these three categories of collections. The National Museum was to take care of the archaeology and cultural heritage, while the Finnish Art Society covered the fine arts, and the Natural History Museum was sovereign in its own field. Clashes were avoided, although older Finnish art, such as old portraits and religious paintings or sculptures, were categorically the prerogative of the National Museum. This was due to the fact that the Finnish Art Society had defined the history of the Finnish fine arts as 'beginning' when the Society was founded in 1846. Art older than that belonged to a different, historical, category.

The early decades and the mid-nineteenth century can be described as an era of cultural activists: individuals who sincerely believed that it was every civilized man's duty to make a contribution to the nation. Lots of manpower was channelled into cultural enterprises originated by individuals and operated by societies that formed semi-public platforms for cultural activities.

Unlike in many other countries, where the national collections were of a royal origin, Finnish collection resources were literally compiled from scratch. Museums and collections in German-speaking Europe, Paris, London and Finland's neighbouring countries Sweden and Denmark provided examples and inspiration. Cushioned between Sweden and Russia the Finnish collections initially focused on the contemporary, i.e. on nineteenth century material. Documenting the present and purchasing art with the paint still fresh was not the most typical approach during an era that valued *Galeriefähigkeit*, as Friedrich Pecht described it in 1877. A work of art had to deserve its place in a collection. (Sheehan 2000, 94–5)

## **Art, cultural heritage and natural history in national museums**

This section will look more deeply into the history of the big national museums. The nineteenth century had been an era of inspiration and ideology – of national aspirations, the formation of the cultural field, and semi-public actors such as societies that allowed individual participation in the nation-building process. The twentieth century, in turn, was an era of putting things into practice. Museums were founded nationwide, the museum profession developed and an understanding of collection management and of the needs of the audience grew. It was also an era of increasing state support. Towards the end of the twentieth century, museums in general became increasingly aware of their role as a cultural-industry sector that provides services for various target groups.

The museum field grew extensively. Networks of regional museums and regional art museums were created in the 1980s as a part of official, ministry-driven cultural policy. Specialized museums took responsibility for concentrating on specific issues. Topics varied from theatre to sports, from railways to agriculture, military issues and traffic. (Mäkelä 2010; see also appendices) Some specialized museums, such as museums of architecture and design, were set up to promote Finnish culture on an international level, resulting in a number of touring exhibitions, publications and events, and establishing a practice that was adopted by many other museums. This became particularly important from the 1960s on, after the rise of Finnish Design.

The big national museums developed separately from one another, each covering their own range of tasks and responsibilities. Growth and various financial needs created pressure to tailor the institutional structure and the governance of the organizations to make ends meet. Societies were transformed into foundations and foundations into state agencies. Only the Natural History Museum has been able to retain its status as a separate unit in the university. The Ministry of Education and Culture oversaw the majority of these organizational changes.

### **The Finnish National Gallery**

The Finnish National Gallery holds a key position in the Finnish art museum field as the largest art museum in the country and as a museum with national responsibilities. Many of the key activities of current art museum practice were developed within the Finnish National Gallery and its predecessor organizations, dating all the way back to the founding of the Finnish Art Society in 1846 with the original intention of establishing a framework for fine arts activities: from schooling artists to collecting art and displaying it to the public.

Core functions that originated already in the nineteenth century include collection care and management, conservation, exhibitions, libraries and archives, and developing the art museum

profession. The education of the public was implemented with the aid of the ideas of the Enlightenment, since the aim was to bring the fine arts closer to the nation. In its early stages, the university professors and lecturers Fredrik Cygnaeus, Carl Gustaf Estlander and Johan Jakob Tikkanen formed the core of the early museum profession and developed its activities. The early steps toward state funding were also taken as early as 1863, when the Senate decided to allocate funds for the Drawing School, and later by acquiring artworks for the Society's art collection.

The Finnish Art Society was the executive body from 1846 to 1939, when operations were handed over to the Finnish Art Academy Foundation. The Foundation was established in response to the increasing difficulties that the Finnish Art Society had faced when trying to maintain both the collection and the art school, and trying to balance this with the increasing requirements of the art world. The Art Society had been regarded as an old-fashioned organization and its management had faced strong criticism, especially from artists. These turbulent times were reflected in museum-staff turnover. During the two first decades of the twentieth century, the Art Society had had four different keepers of the collection. (Valkonen 1991) The major political changes also affected the Art Society's finances and its ability to function as a cultural institution: Finland became an independent nation in 1917, and drifted into a civil war in 1918. Despite the challenges, the collection was kept open to the public.

There had been previous attempts to reorganize the management of the Art Society. In 1922, a Trustee had replaced the Board. Instead of solving the problem, the situation had become worse, due to the fact that the new organizational body had now come into the hands of the inner elite of the art world. In 1933, the tensions were articulated as a language-political issue. A number of artists accused the Art Society of discriminating against Finnish-speaking artists, while Swedish-speaking artists were more favoured. This relatively fierce debate lasted for five years and ended when the Finnish Academy of Fine Arts Foundation was founded in 1939. (Valkonen 1989; Malkavaara 1989; Pettersson 2010b: 184–5).

During the era of the Foundation, i.e. from 1940s to the end of the 1980s, the Finnish museum scene and art field went through a radical change. A number of new and important museum venues, such as Amos Anderson Art Museum (1965) and Helsinki City Art Museum (1976), were opened in Helsinki, providing alternative views on the fine arts. In the 1950s and 1960s, ambitions for the contents of the collections and exhibition policy grew, and the museum profession became a desirable option for art historians graduating from the university. The art museum was now a platform for international art, showcasing not only individual artists such as Giacomo Manzù (1960) and Paul Klee (1961), but also the most cutting-edge contemporary art of its time (ARS 61). This was mostly thanks to the Director Aune Lindström (1901–84), who had started her career as a curator in 1927 and took over as Director in 1952. (Laitala [Pettersson] 1993)

In the 1970s, political relations with the Soviet Union and the East in general were also represented in the exhibition programme, symbolizing the friendship between the nations. Russian and Soviet art were represented in a series of exhibitions in 1972, 1974, 1976 and 1977. The museum played a role in the larger political drama, carefully scripted by the politicians. (Pettersson 2010b: 186) At the same time, this was the era of the development of the educational programme, with the first museum educator being hired in 1973. The first events for specific

audiences were launched, followed by publications, tailor-made exhibitions and events (Levanto 1991, 2010).

Questions related to space, or the lack of it, were raised on several occasions during the twentieth century. In 1921, Paul and Fanny Sinebrychoff's donation enlarged the collection with one of the biggest private art collections in the Nordic countries. Along with this collection came a building that was opened to the public in January 1960. The museum work done in the Ateneum building had faced severe difficulties due to the fact that the space was not sufficient for both the collections and the temporary exhibitions. In the 1970s, temporary exhibitions were even banned temporarily. This created a certain tension, due to the growing need to organise exhibitions. Displaying the national collection was not enough for the expanding museum scene. To be able to reach visitors the Ateneum also needed temporary exhibitions.

The museum looked for alternative solutions and dreamed of a separate building that would be dedicated solely to art museum use. This alternative was discussed in several forums and even included in the city of Helsinki's development plans. Finally, in 1977, the Ministry of Education and Culture decided to renovate the Ateneum building for the museum, and the art schools were re-located elsewhere. The renovation began in 1985 and the building was reopened in May 1991. Now, for the first time ever, all three floors were dedicated to the fine arts. (Pettersson 2010b: 187) In the spring of 1998, the role and functions of the building were fundamentally altered when the Museum of Contemporary Art moved to the new Kiasma building, designed by the American architect Steven Holl.

The Finnish National Gallery was set up in 1990 to carry on the work of the Foundation. The new National Gallery organization comprised the Sinebrychoff Art Museum, as well as the Ateneum art collection. The Museum of Contemporary Art also began as a new department of the organization, and was assigned part of the exhibition premises in the Ateneum building. The pictorial and archival materials of the information and exhibition department of the foundation and of the Ateneum Art Museum were organized into the Central Art Archives. In addition, a general department was established to provide administrative and other support services. The National Gallery became an umbrella organization, consisting of three separate art museums and a special art archive, which share a centralized administration and support functions. (Vihanta 2010b)

The National Gallery came to its first crucial turning point on the eve of its tenth anniversary in 2000, when the Act and Decree on the Finnish National Gallery were amended. In them, the institution, originally established as a director-led unit, was given a separate board of directors. As part of this, the names of the three Museums were changed. The Museum of Finnish Art got back its original name of Ateneum Art Museum, the Museum of Contemporary Art became the Museum of Contemporary Art Kiasma, and the Museum of Foreign Art became the Sinebrychoff Art Museum. Only the fourth unit, the Central Art Archives continued under its former name.

The amendments continued in 2001, when the provisions on the internal organization of the National Art Gallery and its Rules of Procedure were revised. The aim was primarily to improve the prerequisites for the three art museums to pursue independent activities with distinct profiles. The units producing support services for all three museums were modified in response to today's challenges. The National Gallery set up a separate development unit in order to strengthen its

role as a national provider of development and support services for the art museum field. (Pettersson 2010d)

One of the most important assets of the Finnish National Gallery is its collection of 36,000 works of art – from medieval icons to the latest names in contemporary art – and a sizeable archive collection of visual arts spanning the history and memory of Finnish visual arts.

The role of the Finnish National Gallery as the compiler of the national cultural heritage calls for a clear collection strategy. The first collection policies were published as late as 1991 and 2006. In the early stages, i.e. the mid-nineteenth century, the mission was to build as complete a picture of the developments in the history of the arts as possible. Examples of old European art created a narrative framework for the emerging national art. Works were acquired for the sake of representing the story, sometimes even at the cost of artistic value (Pettersson 2008; 2010e).

The twentieth century collection policy can, in turn, be described with the expression ‘filling the gaps’. The nineteenth century Hegelian concept of a complete collection was taken for granted without further analysis or criticism. (Pettersson 2010a) Gaps in the collection were revealed, sometimes with painful undertones and references to the limited resources, and individual artists were added to the story. This was not a problem with Finnish art, which was affordable, but international ambitions faced certain limitations. Thus, only a few examples of international art were added to the collection, while the backbone was constructed around Finnish art, thus enforcing the national character of the collection. Archive material, such as artists’ letters, completed the selection and provided important empirical material for researchers.

Due to the constant lack of funds, the collection was, as it had always been, heavily depending on donations. Towards the turn of the millennium, the new art history, re-reading and re-coding the story of art, affected the formation of the collection. To take one concrete example, a number of female artists were placed in the limelight, to take pride of place in the broader narrative. Some new artist names from the past were also introduced and included in the collection. One of these was Elga Sesemann (1922–2007), who caught museum director Soili Sinisalo’s eye, and this resulted in a series of acquisitions: altogether 17 works were added to the collection after 1994. (Vihanta 2010a) Works of non-traditional character were also acquired: virtual art, documents of performances and happenings, concepts and installations, to mention a few examples. The new collection policy (2006) allowed artists to enter the collection earlier than ever before: instead of representing the establishment, even art school students could make a breakthrough by selling a piece to the National Gallery. (Jyrkkiö 2008; Pettersson 2010e) This, in turn, reflects the rapid pulse of consumer society, also mirrored in the museums’ busy documentation of the contemporary art world and culture.

The trends of the twenty-first century urge the museum field to share collection resources and to make better and more effective use of collections. (Pettersson, Jyrkkiö, Hagedorn-Saupe & Weij 2010) Thus, the Finnish National Gallery also focuses on national and international use of the collection, which will be reinforced from the perspectives of collection management, collection mobility, digital availability, and expertise.

The history of the Finnish National Gallery reflects not only the organizational growth of the institution, but also the growth of and changes in the art field. It also provided an early model for state-supported collection work. The Finnish Art Society, founded on the model of *Kunstvereins*, set the grounds. Once its activities expanded beyond the society’s actual capacity to run them,

part of the operations were handed over to the Finnish Art Academy Foundation. This was in 1939. The following decades were a time of professionalization of museum work, with better collection management, touring exhibitions, new publications, international exhibition programmes, a growing number of staff – and lack of space. Balancing between presenting traditional art, the collection, and contemporary trends became more and more of an issue after the Second World War and the rise of modernism. Art, and especially Finnish Design, were used to brand the nation, and thus were given extra attention. On the other hand, the museum was consciously taking risks, too, by presenting controversial, challenging art that provoked strong audience reactions. The series of ARS exhibitions, organized since 1961, provided a typical forum for such innovations. (Kastemaa 2010)

Towards the end of the millennium, when the Finnish National Gallery was founded and the work was reorganized, it became clear that the traditional idea of ‘national’ had to be re-coded and analysed. Three museum sites offered different approaches to the fine arts. The Ateneum remained the site for the national treasures, while the Sinebrychoff Art Museum offered a gateway to older international art, and Kiasma focused on the contemporary-art scene.

### **National Museum**

The National Museum, as an institution, carries what is probably the most pre-coded role within the historical and contemporary context. As a Grand Duchy of Russia, Finland was fully aware of the symbolic value of the ‘national’ collection and national museum. As Derek Fewster has shown in his study, the National Museums in particular became a site for the ‘history culture’ and a constructor of the modern ethnicity of Finnishness. (Fewster 2006)

Many of the core activities of the National Museum had already been established during the days of Swedish rule. For example, prehistoric fixed relics and monuments were declared to be under government protection in Sweden as early as 1666. The clergy were ordered to provide descriptions of interesting archaeological and geological sites within their parishes. This law was extended a few decades later also to include any valuable metal objects found in the ground.

The most influential early developers of the nascent national museum were Johan Reinhold Aspelin (1842–1915) and Professor Eliel Aspelin-Haapkylä (1847–1917). J.R. Aspelin was eventually nominated as the first state archaeologist in 1885 and remained in the post until his death in 1915. (Härö 2010: 129–31)

The Archaeological Commission was established in 1884 and its first tasks were to take care of and take responsibility for archaeological monuments and sites. It was also already stated at this point that the national or ‘central’ museum would later operate under the management of the head of the Commission, i.e. the state archaeologist. Before the existence of the national museum, all found objects and collections had to be directed to the care of the university museum, which had served as the centre for culture-heritage collections.

The legislation was revised again later in the nineteenth century. The order regarding monument preservation in the Grand Duchy of Finland was issued in 1883. This order was also the starting point for the current Antiquities Act of 1963. The act covers ancient barrows, burial grounds, habitations, rock paintings, sacrificial stones and other places of worship, hill forts, and the ruins of significant buildings. According to the Antiquities Act, any object at least a hundred years old of unknown ownership must be handed over to the National Board of Antiquities.

Shipwrecks a hundred years or older in the sea or other waterway are also protected. Preservation of the archaeological cultural heritage is the responsibility of the Department of Archaeology and the Department of Monuments and Sites of the National Board of Antiquities, and of certain provincial museums.

The core collection of coins and medals had already been established in 1760, but the first official recognition of the collections was in 1828, when they had been moved from Turku to Helsinki. In 1840, the collection was given premises by the university and a name: *Etnografisk Museum*. It should be noted however, that at this point, the term museum referred to a university-run exhibition or collection display rather than to a 'museum' as we understand it today. Nine years later, the collection was divided into two separate sections, with coins and medals forming one distinct entity, and cultural heritage the other. Over the years, it was moved and displayed in various settings in the Finnish capital of Helsinki. (Härö 2010: 131–3)

The need for a national museum institution became increasingly evident, with not only the collections, but the institution, too, requiring a building of its own. The most intense discussions went on after the Hunger Years in the 1870s, when the Finnish Art Society and the Society of Arts and Crafts also joined in the public debate. Various options were discussed. One solution was to establish an Art Academy based on the classical model and to put the fine art collections under its roof. Another was to combine the fine arts and arts-and-crafts collections with art education. The third model, which entered the discussion later, played with the idea of uniting the collections of the Finnish Art Society and the future national museum. (Pettersson 2008) These alternative approaches reflected a genuine need to fight for a national-museum institution.

In 1893, the Finnish nation received a major donation from Herman Frithiof Antell (1847–93), the country's first professional collector, who left all his possessions to the state. His wish was to encourage the State to establish a national museum and to continue acquiring objects and art for the collection that he had begun when he was living in Paris. (Arkio 1975; Talvio 1993) This bequest speeded up the museum process by providing substantial funds for developing the existing collections.

The search for an appropriate site for the building began, and numerous different plans were made before an official architectural competition was held in 1901. Architects Herman Gesellius, Armas Lindgren and Eliel Saarinen submitted the winning proposal. The building was finished in 1910, but it was not until 1916 that the interiors and displays were completed and the actual opening of the national museum could take place. (Wäre 1991; Härö 2010: 137)

In 1908, the Commission changed its name to the Prehistoric Committee. It provided a multidisciplinary platform for historians, linguists, lawyers, art historians, archaeologists, architects and ethnographers, thus forming a basis for the future museum profession in the cultural heritage sector. The setting up of the prehistoric, historic and ethnographic departments in 1912 rearranged the organization. This was followed by further administrative changes in 1917, 1920 and 1925. (Härö 2010: 131–2, 138)

Whereas the work of the Finnish Art Society had been aimed at visually presenting the nation and its culture by showcasing nature, the landscape and the people, either painted on canvas or sculpted in marble or wood, the Finnish Antiquarian Society and Archaeological Commission worked to promote the importance of the prehistoric material and of monuments and sites as significant elements of the cultural heritage. Understanding the built environment, archaeological

finds and ethnographic material also played a major role. This was also the material that was closest to the nation's heart. Understanding the development of living, everyday items, such as plates and spoons or tables and stools, was a topic that spoke directly to the people. It was best displayed in an open-air museum, Seurasaari – Fölisö, which was opened to the public as part of the national museum organization. (Härö 2010: 137)

The first collection displays at the National Museum repeated the organizational division into prehistory, history and ethnography. Ideas and inspiration for collection displays had been drawn from Berlin, Stockholm and other cities. (Selkokari 2010; Härö 2010: 138) Unlike its sister organization, the Finnish Art Society and the Ateneum, the National Museum was a centre of ambitious academic research. Each new task, such as restoration work on ruins, castles and churches, led to new research initiatives. Co-operation with the university was vital and resulted in extensive publications that created the intellectual body for twentieth century art history in Finland. It is worth noting that, as Mikko Härö has pointed out, the antiquarian disciplines and art history were not brought together until Lars Pettersson (1918–93) took over as professor of art history at the University of Helsinki in 1951. (Härö 2010: 139)

During the twentieth century, the collection and documentation policy was refined and planned. Compared with the acquisition process for the national art collection, this task had clear aims and objectives. Churches, mansion houses and other notable buildings and interiors had to be documented. By 1925, the museum had begun to document whole villages, including both their material and immaterial culture. New methods, such as filming, were introduced immediately after the Second World War. Changes in society, politics and trends were also reflected in the museum's documentation work. If the Ateneum did its share by arranging exhibitions of the Soviet art in the 1970s, the National Museum, in turn, started documenting working-class culture. (Härö 2010: 140)

The collection has grown relatively large in numerical terms. Today, the archaeological collections include ca. 30,000 main features; the Historical Collections ca. 135,000 objects; the Ethnological Collections ca. 85,000 objects; Finno-Ugric Collections ca. 16,000 objects; the Ethnographic Collections ca. 26,000 objects, and the Coin Cabinet collections ca. 170,000 objects. The Maritime Museum of Finland's collections contain ca. 15,000 articles. ([www.nba.fi](http://www.nba.fi)) In order to devise sustainable collection strategies for the future, the National Museum has been working since 2009 on a nationwide collections policy for the cultural-history sector. ([www.nba.fi/fi/tako](http://www.nba.fi/fi/tako))

The biggest institutional reorganization took place in 1972, when the National Board of Antiquities was established to oversee all the legally mandatory work, such as preserving ruins, archaeological sites and shipwrecks. The National Museum became a department of the National Board of Antiquities. The other three departments were research, built heritage and administration. By the end of 1973, the number of staff had exploded to 234 persons. (Härö 2010: 142–3) This was a clear attempt to organize the growing field of work under a single umbrella organization. Simultaneously, the National Board of Antiquities became the most important official body representing the museum field.

The latest streamlining of the organization took place in 2010, after the appointment of the new Director General, Juhani Kostet, and was announced in January 2011. According to this reorganization, the core processes of the National Board of Antiquities are protecting the cultural

environment, caring for the cultural environment, archives and information services, and developing the museums field and the National Museum. (NBA press release 5.1.2011) The content remains the same as before, but the work is internally differently organized.

The National Museum and the National Board of Antiquities have developed out of a passionate desire to establish a national museum for the vast organization governing the country's legally mandatory museum work. The story of the nation is told not only by collections of objects, but also by mansion houses, castles, shipwrecks and ruins. The organization has a wide range of legally required duties and responsibilities, and this 'invisible' work still forms a major part of its activities. Given the fact that the responsibilities are so vast, it can be asked whether, conversely, this ties the hands of the organization: a position of authority requires stability and rules out risk-taking.

As part of the larger umbrella organization, the National Museum has adopted a safe and rather neutral role, which does not involve overly harsh criticism or questioning. The collection displays create an overall image of the story of the nation from the ice age to the present. It provides in-depth analyses and reinterpretations, and contributes to the writing of the national scholarly history, but does not seek to provoke. The temporary exhibition programme focuses on themes of general interest and does not emphasize difficult topics, such as the political traumas of the civil war, sex, gender, ethnic minorities or disabled people in contemporary society, to name a few examples. In the new millennium, these issues have taken pride of place in the exhibition programmes of regional and specialized museums.

### **Natural History Museum**

The earliest history of the Natural History Museum dates back to the seventeenth century: the Academy in the city of Turku. The Academy created the basis for scientific research on nature, and the collections grew accordingly. The collected specimens formed the most important, empirical material. The growth of the collection loosely followed scientific trends. For example, the first writings about birds, mammals and insects appeared after the mid-eighteenth century, and this was immediately reflected in the collection. Collections of early connoisseurs were acquired: for example, the shell collection of Professor Herman Spöring (1749) and the mineral collection of counsellor of commerce Henrik Kalmeter (1753). Donations were also important. (Terhivuo 2010: 193–4)

Professional connections and interactions between scholars provided a solid basis for the collection work. Wide-ranging travel around the world, to North America and other continents, resulted in sample collections of seeds and plants. When Carl Reinhold Sahlberg (1779–1860) took up his post as keeper of the collection in 1813, the collection included 10,000 mineral and 12,000 plant samples. Most of the collection was destroyed in September 1827, when the city of Turku burned down. (Terhivuo 2010: 194)

The collection had to be re-established at the university of the new capital, Helsinki. An extensive network of travellers was called in to perform this duty. Ships' captains, army officers and wealthy businessmen were advised to bring samples back to Finland. The collections were opened to the public at the end of the 1850s. They were also enriched in 1858 by a substantial donation of plants and animals by *Societas pro Fauna et Flora Fennica*, which had re-collected the plant specimens destroyed in the Turku fire. (Terhivuo 2010: 195–6)

The idea of a larger museum entity, a national Natural History Museum, began to be formulated at the same time as ideas about a public fine arts collection, a collection of arts and crafts, and a national museum were being debated in narrow academic circles, and also in the press. The new museum would bring plants, minerals and mammals all under the same roof. It is worth noting that the initiator of this idea was Magnus von Wright (1805–68), a painter and conservator who became famous for his bird paintings and stuffed animals. He was also a Board member of the Finnish Art Society, and thus well aware of the cultural aspirations concerning museum institutions and collections.

It took more than 130 years before von Wright's vision of a national natural history museum organization was realized: the university collections, which had been open to the public on various sites, were granted national status as late as 1988. In this context the collections that had been administrated as part of university departments were brought together to form departments of the new museum organization. In 2004, the botanic garden was also included in this organization (Terhivuo 2010: 195–6) Today, the vast collections include some 13 million samples, the majority of them insects.

The museum has always operated at several venues in Helsinki. Since 1925, the core collections have been displayed in the former Russian school building. The botanic garden in Kaisaniemi Park and the mineral cabinet, with its representative meteorite collection on the university museum's premises, belong to the same organization.

The collection, like many others, has benefited from the lifetime achievements of private collectors. At their best, the major purchases created highlights in the collection display. One of the best examples was the bone collection belonging to Professor of anatomy, Evert Julius von Bonsdorff, which was purchased in the 1950s, and put on display for more than forty years. Important donations have included collections of spiders, molluscs, crustaceans, bird eggs, butterflies and bryophytes. (Terhivuo 2010: 197) The formation of the collection has been affected by private collectors' expertise and their ability to put time and effort into the collecting work. Thus, for example, politically turbulent times and war overshadowed these private initiatives.

As Juhani Terhivuo has pointed out in his study, the collection's most important task was to serve scholarly needs, and so the collection was initially only open to the public for four hours on Sundays. Apart from showcasing the story of Finnish flora and fauna – the 3D version of nature that had been carefully illustrated in paintings and depicted in novels – the collection embraced the whole world. In the 1950s and 1960s when travelling abroad was the exception rather than the rule, the Natural History Museum represented for many visitors the only real contact with exotic animals and plants. The museum quickly became one of the most popular domestic travel destinations. (Terhivuo 2010: 196) One of the signature pieces in the collection was – and still is – a two-headed calf.

Compared to the other two national museum institutions the Natural History Museum has differed most in its relationship with the public. In the nineteenth century, the Finnish Art Society was already targeting its exhibitions on the widest possible public, the 'nation', in line with the ideals of the Enlightenment. Guided tours of the collections were already being held early on, and the museum's publications aimed to deepen understanding of the fine arts. The most recent activities have ensured that the collections are available online. The National Museum also

worked to educate people by providing exhibitions for special target groups, arranging events and extending its publishing policy from scholarly publications to books with commercial potential. For the Natural History Museum the broader public played a secondary role until the last decades of the twentieth century, when audience feedback encouraged the museum to extend its opening hours, develop its exhibition programme, and to create special touring exhibitions. For instance, in 1988–2004, the Natural History Museum produced 26 touring exhibitions.

The Natural History Museum has clearly become a museum of the people. In 2010, after the reopening of the museum, it achieved record audience numbers with 152,000 visitors, thus attracting substantially more visitors than the National Museum. (See the appendices) This transformation from a somewhat closed institution into a visitor attraction has raised the museum's organization onto another level. At the same time, it continues to be a study collection and serves as the centre of guidance and information for other natural-history museums in Finland.

### **Professional expertise and relationship with the public**

The history of the national museum institutions is, in the majority of cases, also the history of the development of the museum profession. (Palviainen 2010) Thus, it is important to realize that institutions and their key actors, the gatekeepers, have defined the philosophical discourse about what had value in arts and culture, i.e. what mattered most. Special attention must be paid to the power figures in the field, those who had close connections with or were part of the academic, political or business world – and their idea of the public.

Any attempt to understand the formation of the national or European museum field requires a closer look at the professionals and their networks. Whom did they meet? Which books did they read? Which were the museums to visit and the places to go? What were the elements that the museum men from different nations shared? The same goes for mapping out the contemporary museum field. Professional networks, international initiatives, conferences and various venues, both on site and online, provide platforms for creating strong professional bonds. Public funding is probably one of the most efficient facilitators for this kind of professional exchange of ideas and expertise; many recent examples include European Union funded projects that bring museum professionals and scholars together.

The development of the Finnish museum profession and the impact of the national institutions have not been studied systematically. Nevertheless, certain aspects can be highlighted in the history of the development of the museum profession. In this context, it is worth noting that all three case studies in this report, i.e. collections of natural history, cultural history and fine arts, have been linked to the university from the very beginning of the collection and museum activities.

The Natural History Museum was initially a scholarly institution primarily serving the various academic needs. Thus, ideas of audience interest did not affect collection displays, publication policy or other programming, and the museum profession within the Natural History Museum did not develop with the same aims and objectives as the rest of the museum sector. Museum staff were university staff with an obligation to teach and work with the students. The collection was a tool for that work.

The first collection displays and exhibitions at the newly opened National Museum were closely connected with the research interests of the leading museum personnel and with courses at the university. Mikko Härö says in his study that even the earliest publications by J.R. Aspelin and Eliel Aspelin-Haapkylä, the makers of the National Museum, can be interpreted as representations of the museum display. (Härö 2010: 137) In his study, Derek Fewster points out that the displays divided the nationalists: even before the official opening of the National Museum, it was considered a relative failure, and Swedish and Finnish nationalists discussed a possible need to erect a better monument to the 'ethnic traditions' that they represented. Plans for a Central Museum of Swedish Finland and a *Kalevalatalo* (Kalevala House) were made, but they did not lead to concrete action. (Fewster 2006: 307)

Whereas Aspelin and Aspelin-Haapkylä implemented their scholarly ideas within the thick walls of the National Museum, analogous aspects can be traced in the life's work of Professor Carl Gustaf Estlander. He was Chair of the Finnish Art Society, initiator and founder of the Society of Arts and Crafts, and author of several books, including *De bildande konsternas historia* (1867). He taught art history and literature at the university, wrote about the arts, not only in his books, but also in the daily press, bought art and arts and crafts to the semi-public collections, and was partly responsible for displaying them – and most importantly, founded the biggest-ever art institution in the country, the Ateneum.

It is important to understand from where he had learned what to value in the arts and why, and who his closest professional allies were. Mapping out his interests we learn, just to mention a few examples: that he admired the 'father' of all museum men Gustaf Waagen (1794–1868), to whom he paid a visit in 1859; that he adored the collections in Berlin and Dresden; and that he was deeply influenced by the work of the founder of the South Kensington Museum, Sir Henry Cole (1808–82). His academic contacts included Swedish art historian Professor Carl Rupert Nyblom (1832–1907) and art historian Lorentz Dietrichson (1834–1917) from Norway, both of whom were members of the team that worked together on the Nordic journal *Tidskrift för Bildande Konst och Konstindustri* (1875–76). He took part in the famous art historians' conference in Vienna in 1873 and visited several world fairs. A similar list could be compiled for each and every one of the gatekeepers from the nineteenth century up to the present, showing their mutual interests and possible dislikes, but reconstructing this network is beyond the scope of this study.

Estlander's writings, scholarly work, teaching at the university, public debates and proceedings as a gatekeeper of the fine arts and arts and crafts all followed the same logic as Mikko Härö suggests when analysing the writings and collection displays of J.R. Aspelin and Eliel Aspelin-Haapkylä. This was not at all an exceptional pattern at the time, when the same power figures held several key positions and were also connected to each other nationally and on a Europe-wide basis.

During its first decades, the formation of the Finnish museum profession went hand in hand with the academic world. This was due to the fact that the professionals were professors and lecturers who took responsibility for the collections on a part-time or voluntary basis. Later, when the workload increased and more time and devotion were needed, the profession required specialists who would concentrate solely on museum issues. This resulted in a situation in which the separation between the university and the museum became a reality. Professors no longer worked for the collections, nor did they make the acquisitions. The most visible distance emerged

between professors of art history and the museum professionals responsible for the fine arts collections at the Ateneum. The museum's publications did not receive the same scholarly respect as, for instance, the results of the highly ambitious research program at the National Museum.

Since they first opened, the Finnish National Gallery and the National Museum have been audience-driven, educational institutions, whereas the Natural History Museum has focused solely on scholarly activities. It should also be noted that the development of the Finnish school system provided direct links with the youngest audiences. For example, after the opening of the National Museum in 1916, 7500 school children visited the site with their teachers (the total number of visitors was 52,000).

When the Finnish Art Society was founded and the Drawing School established, the role of the art collection was clear: it was to provide models for future artists. In 1863, the art collection was also opened to the public and special attention was paid to members of the working class. By the time of the opening of the Ateneum in 1888, it was clear that the collection was intended to educate the whole nation. (Pettersson 2008) The needs of audiences were discussed and different services, such as lectures, began as soon as the Ateneum was opened. The library was also open to the public.

J.R. Aspelin had already said in 1874 that: "the nation wants to get to know itself and its predecessors memories from the past." He was of an opinion that the national museum should illustrate the development of the nation. (Lamminen 2010: 110) This view was very similar to the idea of representing the story of art as a continuous narrative. (Pettersson 2010a) The story needed explaining and various methods were used, guided tours being one of them. Initially, one of the duties of the keepers of the collection was to be available to anyone who had questions about the works and objects exhibited. During the first decades of the twentieth century, museum staff still guided groups, and this was regarded as part of the daily routine as late as the 1950s and 1960s. In the 1970s, the institutions hired full-time museum educators and this work began to expand.

After the Second World War, museums and libraries took on the task of being places for continuous learning. Carl Gustaf Estlander had already emphasized the Ateneum's duty to educate, and his followers Johan Jakob Tikkanen, Torsten Stjernschantz and Aune Lindström specifically implemented these ideas. Lindström's background gave her a special interest in education: apart from having a PhD in art history, she had been trained as a teacher.

In the cultural-historical context the educational role of the museums probably matters the most, although, at the beginning of the twentieth century, there was no common scheme adopted by both schools and museums. This approach only entered school curriculums after the war, when use of the national collections became essential. Still today, the majority of school classes visit all the national museums at least once during their basic education. Political decisions, such as free entry for all under-18s, have been made to encourage use of the collections. Inviting young audiences into the museums is regarded as an investment in the future.

The big national museums have succeeded in creating a lasting relationship with the public. As museum-visitor statistics show (see appendices) the national-museum institutions were among the top 10 most-visited museums, with an annual turnout of more than 100,000 visitors per site. Since the 1990s, online visitors have also formed a specific group of interest. It can be argued that part of that success comes directly from the privileged position of the national museum

institution. Those who visit one or two museums during their lifetimes are more likely to choose a national museum site than a venue with less national visibility and importance.

The twentieth century arc of professional development typically leads from the academic museum man and university professor to the multitasking museum professional who needs to know the public and to master many subject fields. The museum professionals who used to produce authoritative information for the ‘uneducated masses’ in the nineteenth century are now, after the turn of the millennium, facing the realities of the social-media society. Instead of lecturing from the top down, sharing the contents and building them up together with target groups now provide fertile ground for learning. This requires not only a different mental approach from museum professionals, but also the ability to speak another language. This is an especially tricky challenge for national-museum institutions dealing with hard-core contents.

Since the 1970s and especially the 1990s, the three national museum organizations have reacted to the changes by hiring new staff: education officers, information and marketing staff, and web and gallery hosts, who test out alternative ways of interacting with audiences. The stories of the national collections have been told using various methods and media. After the breakthrough of the Internet, the national museums have also started to operate online. Only the Finnish National Gallery, online since 1995, has used the Internet’s potential to create different learning environments around specific themes.

### **Concluding remarks: national museums and contemporary society**

The development of the three national museums has depended on cultural policy and on politics in general. The nineteenth century was an era of intense national development and the creation of institutions, the formation of collections and of collecting practices in general. The twentieth century was marked by the growth of the museum profession and expertise, and museums’ relationships with their audiences developed. Political changes, the industrialization of the country, a relatively rapid shift from an agricultural society to a service, and IT society all have affected museums’ activities, too. Internationally important trends and issues have been reflected in exhibition programmes; sometimes because it has been politically wise to do so (for example, Soviet art), sometimes for reasons such as global awareness (for example, climate change).

Around the turn of the millennium, thanks to the international museological debate, the big national museums became increasingly conscious of the problematic role of a ‘national’ museum, and started actively participating in the process of defining and re-defining the positions of the museums. Publications such as Raili Huopainen’s *Tulevaisuuden museossa* (In the future museum) (1997) and Susanna Pettersson’s *Tulevaisuuden taidemuseo* (The Future Art Museum) (2009) showcased the problems to be tackled and suggested various strategies for the future. These issues were also discussed at the Ministry of Education and Culture. One of the milestones was the *Museum 2000* programme, which included relevant suggestions for the whole museum field, but prompted severe criticism. (Museum 2000) Many of the suggestions presented in the programme have now been taken on board, ten years after its original launch date. One of the most important facilitators for this positive change has been the new professional approach adopted by the big national museums: traditionally, the National Museum and the National Gallery have not co-operated closely at all, but, since 2006, the field has changed thanks to new leadership and changes of attitude.

In 2010, the national museums have, for the first time ever, established a Director's forum, where general directors Juhani Kostet (NBA), Risto Ruohonen (FNG) and Leif Schulman (NHM) can openly discuss all the relevant issues and decide on matters of mutual interest. Bringing the fine arts, cultural heritage and natural history together around the same table helps highlight aims and objectives, such as better use of collection resources on a nationwide level, development of collection strategies, planning of collection centres, and mobility among professionals. Issues of a practical nature, such as cost-effective management of museum buildings and lack of storage space, have also been brought up.

Running the museums, developing the collections, funding the work and responding to the needs of the audience create ongoing debate. Questions to be pondered include the future role of the national museums in contemporary society. Should the national museums take even more responsibility for cultural services on a national level, and, for example, produce more touring exhibitions? Should the national museums encourage the smaller stakeholders to make more effective use of national collection resources by lending items on a long-term basis? Should the whole museum field jointly outline collection policies from now on, as the national-collection policy initiative TAKO suggests? Should museums document more, collect less, and concentrate on quality?

Such questions have implications for the museum profession, too. Members of the younger generations should be capable of taking over even the most marginal expert areas. A successful generation shift requires co-operation and planning by the museums and universities as educators of the future workforce. Thus, one of the real challenges is taking a holistic view of the future needs of both research and museum practice.

When analysing the requirements for the national museums' operations and operational environment a number of issues must be highlighted. It is essential to be aware of the other programme providers in the culture industry, to monitor the likes and dislikes of audiences, to use new methods, such as social media, when addressing specific target groups, to find new partnerships and networks both nationally and internationally, and to train staff to face the museum work and environment of the twenty-first century. The key issue, however, is still the same as in the nineteenth century: bringing the contents to the public.

From the viewpoint of their collections and the professional expertise of their staff, all the national museums are eminently poised to respond to the demand for cultural services. The development of the information society impacts on the operating environment. To fulfil the demands of accessibility to the culture heritage and collection resources, all the museums need to put the emphasis on the digital availability of their collections, secure the long-term safekeeping of digital resources, develop their databases, and provide targeted online services for various audience groups. International cooperation and EU projects in the culture sector anchor the national museums in European cultural cooperation. This means, among other things, an emphasis on the mobility of collections and of museum professionals. However, as indicated in the evaluation documents on the Finnish National Gallery (2010), limited State finances are also reflected in the budgets of cultural institutions and museums. The rise in fixed costs that are beyond the museums' control is diminishing the funds available for actual museum work.

According to the same analysis, more stringent State budget financing means that corporate sponsorship agreements concluded by museums take on even greater financial significance. A

tighter economic climate is conducive to a greater number of multi-actor collaborations and projects, both nationally and internationally. International collaborative and touring exhibitions present an opportunity, even though these undertakings have also become more expensive and access to them is subject to increasing competition.

In order to achieve maximum cultural and political impact, the big national museums need to be visible and to reinforce the significance of the visual arts and cultural heritage in debate in society. They act as a builder of the cultural information society and, through their activities, serve as an important supporter of culture and promoter of research, as well as a builder of citizens' identities. As the nation's central museums, they emphasize professional expertise and expertise in the museum sector.

The success of the big national museums depends not only on the contents of the collections, exhibitions and various programmes aimed at different audiences, but also on human resources. Thus, increasing attention should be paid to the skills and qualifications of staff and their professional development, as well as to wellbeing at work and enhancement of workplace communities. Opportunities for creative work must be maintained and reinforced, while also time seeking ways to cope with higher work volumes and work pressures.

One of the most fundamental questions, though, is what will be the role of the 'national' in the future. What kinds of organizations will be considered national in character? Will these consist of only the state-funded organizations with clear national responsibilities? Or will there be new national platforms that replace the traditional venues? Who will decide on the national narrative in the future... academics, scholars, and museum professionals? Or should people, the makers and consumers of culture?

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> In 2009: Natural History Museum had 151 staff members and a budget of 9,7 million euros; National Museum 174 staff members and 12,6 million euros; National Gallery 231 staff members and 26,7 million euros.
- <sup>2</sup> Within the Finnish legislation there are also other laws governing museums and their activities as well as ancient monuments and national cultural heritage, and laws touching on museum activities: Antiquities Act Museums; Act Museums Decree; Act on Restrictions to the Export of Cultural Goods; Act on the Protection of Buildings; Copyright Act; National Board of Antiquities Act; Finnish National Gallery Act on the Financing of Education and Culture; Act concerning State Indemnity for Art Exhibitions.

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## Appendices, Finland

### Regional Museums

Name of the museum, city	Founded	Regional status
Keski-Suomen museo, Jyväskylä	1931	1980
Kuopion kulttuurihistoriallinen museo, Kuopio	1883	1980
Lahden historiallinen museo	1924	1980
Pohjanmaan museo, Vaasa	1895	1980
Joensuun museot, Joensuu	1917	1980
Pohjois-Pohjanmaan museo, Oulu	1896	1980
Satakunnan museo, Pori	1888	1980
Tampereen museot Vapriikki, Tampere	1969	1980
Etelä-Karjalan museo, Lappeenranta	1909	1981
Etelä-Pohjanmaan maakuntamuseo, Seinäjoki	1962	1981
Helsingin kaupunginmuseo, Helsinki	1911	1981
Kainuun museo, Kajaani	1930	1981
Kymenlaakson museo, Kotka	1927	1981
Tornionlaakson maakuntamuseo, Tornio	1914	1981
Turun museokeskus, Turku	1958	1981
Hämeenlinnan kaupungin historiallinen museo, Hämeenlinna	1893	1982
Lapin maakuntamuseo, Rovaniemi	1975	1982
Porvoon museo, Porvoo	1896	1982
Savonlinnan maakuntamuseo, Savonlinna	1983	1985
Tammisaaren museo, Tammisaari	1906	1985

### Regional Art Museums

Name of the museum	Founded	Regional status
Helsinki Art Museum	1968	1993
Hämeenlinna Art Museum	1952	1983
Joensuu Art Museum	1962	1980
Jyväskylä Art Museum	1998	1981
Kemi Art Museum	1947	1981
Kuopio Art Museum	1980	1988
Lahti Art Museum	1950	1981
Lappeenranta Art Museum	1965	1986
Mikkeli Art Museum	1970	1981
Nelimarkka Art Museum	1960	1995
Oulu Art Museum	1963	1983
Pohjanmaa Museum	1895	1983
Pori Art Museum	1979	1982
Rovaniemi Art Museum	1986	1993
Tampere Art Museum	1927	1980
Turku Art Museum	1891	1981

## Specialized Museums

Name of the museum, city	Founded	National status
Suomen käsityön museo (handicraft), Jyväskylä	1888	1993
Suomen rakennustaiteen museo (architecture), Helsinki	1956	1993
Suomen Urheilumuseo (sports), Helsinki	1938	1993
Designmuseo (design), Helsinki	1875	1993
Tekniikan museo (technics), Helsinki	1969	1993
Suomen lasimuseo (glass), Riihimäki	1961	1994
Suomen valokuvataiteen museo (photography), Helsinki	1969	1994
Teatterimuseo (theater), Helsinki	1962	1994
Työväenmuseo Werstas (working class culture), Tampere	1988	1996
Suomen Rautatiemuseo (railways), Hyvinkää	1898	1997
Suomen Ilmailumuseo (aircraft), Vantaa	1972	1997
Mobilia auto- ja tiemuseo (vehicles), Kangasala	1986/1994	1997
Sámi Museum – Saamelaismuseo (Sámi culture), Inari	1959	1999
Forum Marinum, Turku	1936	2004
Metsämuseo Lusto (forest), Punkaharju	1988	2010
Maatalousmuseo Sarka (agriculture), Loimaa	1992	2010

## Visitor numbers, example

Today, the big nationals form a significant part of the cultural industry as the following statistics show. The top 10 sites in 2010 were:

<i>Ateneum Art Museum (FNG)</i>	225 000
Helsinki City Museum	172 640
<i>Kiasma (FNG)</i>	165 000
<i>Natural History Museum</i>	152 000
<i>National Museum (NBA)</i>	109 645
Turku Castle	108 054
Design Museum	101 504
Häme Castle	95 680
Merikeskus Vellamo (NBA)	88 315
Modern Art Museum Emma	82 200

(Finnish Museums Association, press release 14.1.2011)