



ARABIA ART DEPARTMENT  
society



Arabia Art Department Society

Deep Roots – Crafted Futures

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Photo by Chikako Harada

“It’s astonishing how a single building can hold such a rich concentration of artistic skill and expertise.”

- Juliet Burrows, Gallerist, Hostler Burrows Gallery,  
New York & Los Angeles

Arabia Art Department Society continues the unique tradition of the Arabia Art Department, founded in the 1930s, serving as a guardian and developer of Finnish ceramic art, promoting the visibility of ceramic art both in Finland and internationally.

The Arabian Art Department Society consists of ceramic artists of all ages and at various stages of their careers, each with a unique style and own way of working with the material. They are united by a deep love for clay and a relentless drive to craft art that resonates.



Photo by Ilkka Kärkkäinen

# 01 History of the Association

A National Treasure of Finnish Ceramic Art  
in Helsinki



Kim Simonsson's sculptures at Utopia art festival, 2022, Lille (France)

The Arabian Art Department Society was founded on November 4, 2003, to preserve and develop the legacy of the Arabia Art Department. The Society's goal is to safeguard the status of ceramic art as part of Finland's cultural heritage. At the Art Department, the tradition of ceramic art is passed from hand to hand, from senior artists to younger generations.

Finnish ceramic art has a distinguished and socially significant history, rooted strongly in the work of the legendary Art Department of The Arabia ceramics factory, originally founded in the 1930s. When the factory closed its Art Department, the artists decided to carry the legacy forward themselves.

The Society was founded by artists who had worked in the department: professors Heljä Liukko-Sundström (1938–2024) and Heikki Orvola, as well as Fujiwo Ishimoto, Inkeri Leivo (1944–2010), Kati Tuominen-Niittylä, Pekka Paikkari, Kristina Riska, and Heini Riitahuhta.

The significance of an independent association has become even more pronounced since the Arabia factory ceased operations entirely in Finland. Currently The Arabia Art Department Society consists of 12 artists at various stages of their careers: Heikki Orvola, Fujiwo Ishimoto, Kati Tuominen-Niittylä, Pekka Paikkari, Kristina Riska, Heini Riitahuhta, Kim Simonsson, Jasmin Anoschkin, Sakari Kannosto, Caroline Slotte, Marianne Huotari, and Veera Kulju.

The Society continues to operate in the culturally and historically significant premises of the former Arabia factory, on the 8th floor of the building, in the Arabia district of Helsinki.

# In the Footsteps of Kaj Franck and Birger Kaipiainen

The tangible and intangible heritage of the Arabia Art Department forms a crucial part of the history of Finnish ceramic art and design, as well as Finland's cultural history, which lives on in the very DNA of our Society.

The Arabia Art Department was established in the 1930s, when the ceramicist Kurt Ekholm was appointed artistic director of the factory. Ekholm was a leading figure in the applied arts of his time, who believed that major companies like Arabia also had a responsibility to promote cultural development.

The Art department has been home to numerous renowned Finnish ceramic artists, including Kaj Franck, who later also led the Art Department, as well as Kyllikki Salmenhaara, Toini Muona, Birger Kaipiainen, Michael Schilkin, Rikhard Lindh, Inkeri Leivo, Friedl Holzer-Kjellberg, and Rut Bryk.



Birger Kaipiainen in the 1940s.

# Ceramic Art and Design

From the very beginning, the dialogue between ceramic art and design has been an essential part of the department's approach. The open and creative atmosphere has made the department a unique place where Finland's leading ceramic artists can realize their own visions, exchange ideas, develop concepts, and experiment with new approaches.

Internationally award winning unique works as well as public sculptures and industrial tableware have been created in the studio spaces. The Art Department of the Arabia Porcelain Factory has always been a popular destination for those wishing to showcase the best of Finnish design.

The fundamental philosophy of the Arabia Art Department Society remains the same as in the 1930s: artists are free to focus on creating art, to be part of the valuable tradition, to inspire one another, and to promote the status of ceramic art both the nationally and internationally.

# 02 Mission, Vision and Values



# MISSION

The mission of the Arabia Art Department Society is to develop and preserve the heritage of Finnish ceramic art. The artists pass ceramic skills, technical expertise, and tacit knowledge from one generation to the next, while creating uncompromisingly high-quality ceramic art for national and international audiences.

# VISION

The Arabia Art Department Society aims to be a nationally and internationally respected authority, trailblazer, and guardian of Finland's ceramic art heritage. The Society makes ceramic art accessible to all, boldly innovates within the field, and strengthens its recognition and appreciation. It actively participates in public art discourse and ensures that Finland's cultural diversity is preserved at a high standard in the realm of ceramics.

# VALUES

Human values are at the heart of everything we do. Our work is grounded by openness, ethical integrity, and deep respect for artists, audiences, and the environment. For us, community means working together toward our shared vision.



“The wonders of the Milan Triennale were created in the Art Department in the mid-20th century. We carry and develop this legacy forward by presenting our work in international exhibitions. In doing so, we bring contemporary Finnish ceramic art to audiences around the world.”

- Ceramic Artist Marianne Huotari

Marianne Huotari - Ananasakäämä, 2021  
Photo by Anna Autio

# 03 Activities of the Arabian Art Department Society

# Visiting Artist Programme

The Visiting Artist Programme has been an integral part of the Arabia Art Department Society's activities since its early years. The programme aims to support the professional development of artists working in the field. The Society provides selected artists with studio space for a period of 6–12 months, allowing them to develop their expression and skills. Visiting artists may participate in the Society's activities and exhibitions, as well as network with professionals in the field. Working in shared spaces fosters dialogue and exchange between artists.

Through the programme, the following artists have been invited to become members of the Society: Kim Simonsson, Jasmin Anoschkin, Caroline Slotte, Sakari Kannosto, Marianne Huotari, and Veera Kulju.



Maisa Majakka's sculptures (visiting artist 2025)  
Photo by Vala Boucht



## Traineeship and Internship Programmes

Arabia Art Department Society supports the professional development of young artists and artisans by offering traineeship and internship opportunities to students and recent graduates in the field. Through this programme, emerging creators have an excellent opportunity to deepen their skills, build professional networks, and learn from experienced artists—expertise is passed from one generation to the next through pedagogically guided learning. Ny doing so the Society at the same time, strengthens the continuity and heritage of Finnish ceramic art.

# Art Collection

The Arabia Art Department Society's art collection preserves an important part of Finland's contemporary ceramic art. The collection includes works by both the Society's members and visiting artists. Through the collection, one can gain insights into the Society's activities as well as the history of Finnish applied arts and ceramic art.

Jasmin Anoschkin, Emma Helle, Tommi Toija - Fountain, 2019

Photo by Jefunne Gimpel



# National and International Exhibitions and Art Events

Artists of the Arabia Art Department Society actively take part in exhibitions and art events both in Finland and internationally. The Society organizes its own exhibitions and events to showcase contemporary ceramic art and honor the Art Department's legacy. Its artists participate annually in numerous international exhibitions and are represented by the renowned Hostler & Burrows gallery in New York and Los Angeles, enhancing the Society's presence on the global art stage.

Sakari Kannosto - Children of the flood -exhibition, 2022  
HB381, New York




# International Museum Collections




The Society's artists are represented in major Finnish and international museum collections, including the Finnish National Gallery, EMMA – Espoo Museum of Modern Art, the British Museum, the V&A, MoMA in New York, and the Shigaraki Ceramic Cultural Park in Japan.

# Nationally and Internationally Awarded Ceramic Art

Artists of the Arabia Art Department Society have received widespread recognition both nationally and internationally. Their accolades include, among others, Pro Finlandia medals, honorary professorships, major design awards such as the Kaj Franck Award, as well as distinctions in prestigious international art and design competitions, including the Premio Faenza International Ceramic Biennale in Faenza, the Mino International Ceramic Competition in Japan, and the Gualdo Tadino Ceramic Biennale in Italy.

A photograph of a blue ceramic vase with a textured, woven surface. The vase is positioned in a minimalist white room with a window in the background. The lighting is soft, highlighting the texture of the ceramic.

Kristina Riska - Kyoto, 2024  
Photo by Chikako Harada



“Our work is grounded in respect for Finnish cultural heritage. It is important to us to share knowledge of ceramic art with a broader international audience.”

- Sculptor Sakari Kannosto

# Art in the Community – Public Works

Through public art works, the Arabia Art Department Society and its artists have left a lasting mark on both Finnish and Japanese urban culture, while strengthening the role of ceramic art as an integral part of our shared environment.

The collaborative artwork Sirahviportti by Art Department's artists was completed in June 2025 in Helsinki's Arabianranta, 135-block. In Helsinki, at the Kamppi Shopping Centre, Kristina Riska, Pekka Paikkari, and Kati Tuominen-Niittylä's collaborative work, yellow Gecko, guides visitors to the metro platform, while Kim Simonsson's Temple stands at the edge of Kupittaa Park in Turku. Paikkari's Iglu has become a landmark at Puutori, and Simonsson's Moss Giants are rooted in the Örudden Sculpture Park in Kimitoön. Heini Riitahuhda's Black Mamba (2008) serves as the signature piece at Nagoya Children's Hospital. At Aalto University in Töölö, Kristina Riska's Inevitable Progress I & II (2020) and Sakari Kannosto's Kiertää (2020) delight viewers, while Jasmin Anoschkin's Birth of Random Varieties (2022) was commissioned for the Espoo Central Family Centre.

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Sirahviportti, 2025  
Photo by Jefunne Gimpel



# Arabia Art Department Collection – Collectible Sculpture Series

“Made in Arabia Finland”

The Collectible Sculpture Series consists of works by Art Department's own artists as well as visiting artists who have participated in the Visiting Artist Programme at the Art Department. Artists have created pieces for the collection, freely interpreting and varying their chosen themes. Handcrafted, cast and glazed by hand at the Art Department, each work is unique. The series is regularly expanded with new pieces.

Jasmin Anoschkin - Kissing Lips Hot Dog Duck  
Photo by Jefunne Gimpel



“The Arabia Art Department Society has extensive accumulated expertise, which we want to share beyond the walls of the Art Department.”

- Sculptor Pekka Paikkari



Pekka Paikkari - Haiku, 2024  
Photo by Chikako Harada

No other art form can replace ceramic art.  
That is why it is necessary to ensure that  
Finnish ceramic art remains of high quality  
and a vibrant part of both the national and  
international cultural scene.

Hämeentie 135 A, 8th floor, 00560 Helsinki  
[www.arabiaartdepartmentsociety.com](http://www.arabiaartdepartmentsociety.com)  
[info@arabiaartdepartmentsociety.com](mailto:info@arabiaartdepartmentsociety.com)  
[@arabiaartdepartment](https://www.instagram.com/arabiaartdepartment)

