

**ARS**  
FENNICA

HENNA AND PERTTI NIEMISTÖ  
ART FOUNDATION



# ARS FENNICA 2021

EIJA-LIISA AHTILA | ANNE-KARIN FURUNES | JESPER JUST |  
VIGGO WALLENSKÖLD | MAGNUS WALLIN

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### ARTICLES

Taru Elfving  
Maaretta Jaukkuri  
Svala Vagnsdatter Andersen  
Lars-Erik Hjertsröm-Lappalainen  
Kai Kartio

GRAPHIC DESIGN  
Sometek - sometek.fi



## JESPER JUST 26 DENMARK



## 36 VIGGO WALLENSKÖLD FINLAND



## MAGNUS WALLIN 46 SWEDEN



PHOTO: PETRA KOTRO

#### HISTORY & AWARD

# The Foundation

**T**he Henna and Pertti Niemistö Art Foundation – ARS FENNICA sr was established in 1990 to promote the arts by opening up new channels for Finnish visual art internationally, by providing artists with inspiration in their creative work, and by encouraging interest in and respect for the visual arts among the general public.

To achieve its goal, the Foundation awards the ARS FENNICA Prize in alternate years to one visual artist in recognition of individual artistic work of outstanding quality. The prize includes a cash prize of EUR 50,000, an exhibition presenting the nominees and an online catalogue, which can be freely downloaded from the Foundation's website.

The prize will be awarded in two stages. An award panel appointed by the Foundation's Board nominates the candidates and also an international art expert, who then chooses the prize winner. The candidate artists

have variously been from Finland, the Nordic countries, the Baltic States and the St Petersburg region. The permanent chairman of the panel is MD Leena Niemistö and the alternating members are Kai Kartio, Director of the Amos Rex Museum, Leevi Haapala, Director of the Kiasma Museum, and Kari Vehosalo, Visual Artist who won the 2017 award.

The candidates for 2021 are Eija-Liisa Ahtila and Anne-Karin Furunes from Norway, Jesper Just from Denmark, Viggo Wallensköld from Finland and Magnus Wallin from Sweden

The ARS FENNICA 2021 exhibition is in the Hämeenlinna Art Museum from 15 October 2021 to 3 April 2022.

The winner will be announced on February 10, 2022. Prior to that, the public has been able to get to know the nominees, select and vote for their favorite.

FROM EXHIBITION "GESTURE", 2018

Galerie Anhava, Helsinki

photo: Jussi Tainen



MAARETTA JAUKKURI

## SEEING BEYOND THE IMAGE

Portrait is and has been a long-time interest in **Anne-Karin Furunes'** art. We are not dealing with the traditional portrait where the artist observes a model and creates a likeness by drawing, painting, sculpting, or photographing. The models here are in pictures of persons discovered in various archives. They often tell stories of the tragic events of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and how these events affected individual people and their lives. Among these we find photographs of shockingly young German soldiers in Norway during the second world war, Jewish women sent to Nazi Germany, victims of eugenics in Sweden, women criminals in prison.

PHOTO: PETRA KOTRO



**PORTRAITS OF PICTURES VI, 2009**

acrylic on canvas, perforated 160x240cm

On the other hand, her art includes pictures of red insurgents in the civil war 1918 in Finland and also of the women volunteers fighting along with the men. She found these surprising pictures haphazardly categorized in the archive of the Military Museum in Finland.

The archival pictures are often small in size, and their technical quality is modest. Furunes concentrates on faces and crops the images in a way that leaves none of the attributes that could reveal the person's social position. It is surprising to see how much a bare face actually reveals about the person but also about the time, or the spirit of the time, when the picture was taken.

When looking at these portraits, the viewer surprisingly experiences an eye contact with the person in the image. There is a moment when we feel that the person is looking back at us. The perforation technique used by the artist makes the picture to resonate with the changing light of the room as well as with the viewer's movements. The image becomes an optical, kinetic experience.

It does not seem important to know who these people actually were as the effect of the images is dominantly visual. Their background can be traced on basis of the information of the reasons for their having been documented together with the information of where they are archived and why in a cer-

**PORTRAITS OF PICTURES VII, 2007**

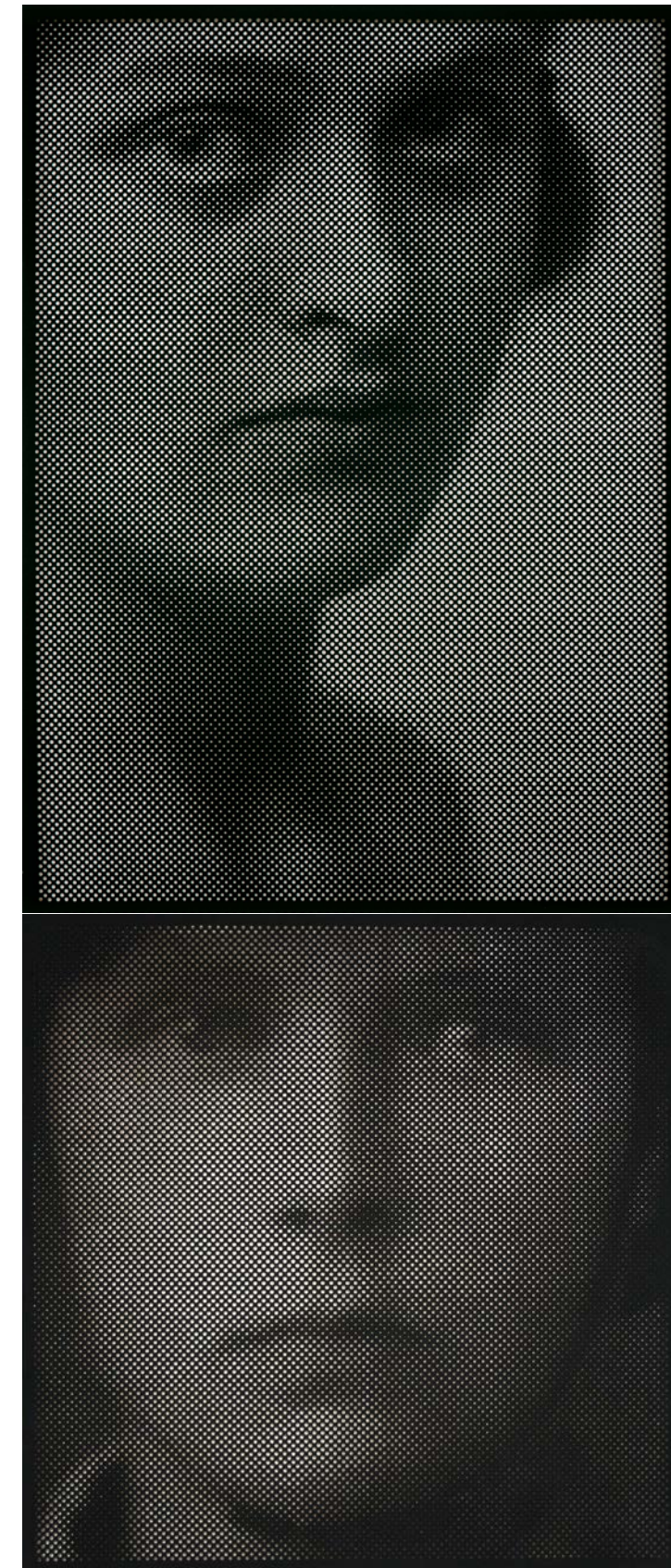
acrylic on canvas, perforated

tain category, or without any.

Photograph, however, is only the premise for Furunes' work. The technique she is applying is to pierce by hand different sizes of dot-shaped holes on a canvas or a sheet of paper. The sizes of the holes let light pass through them in varying degrees. When a work is to be shown outdoors the same technique is carried out on aluminium plates by machine. Anne-Karin Furunes has continued to experiment the qualities of the perforation technique by projecting light on a white paper with a figure pierced on it. The image appears as a half-tone photograph on the wall or other surface behind the paper.

The pictures that originally were used for bureaucratic ends of recognition and surveillance have been, through this process transformed into portraits. The purpose of this makeover is to see the portrayed person as a fellow human being, an individual, and a victim who has lived through tragic historical times.

While looking at the archival pictures, Anne-Karin Furunes seems to be accommodating the personal worlds of the portrayed persons. In a certain sense, she engages in "translating" these pictures into portraits. Nothing is actually changed, instead she delves into the background of their tragic fates, sees the individual with her reasons for acting the



**PICTURE OF PORTRAITS II, 2006**

acrylic on canvas, perforated



**PICTURE OF PORTRAITS II, 2006**  
acrylic on canvas, perforated

way she has done, or the ways different ideologies or politics have isolated unwanted people, or crushed their dignity and beauty. She transfers the pictures into another context by seeing and revealing the profound humanity that we all recognize when our eyes meet those of the portrayed persons.

***“She transfers the pictures into another context by revealing the profound humanity that we all recognize.”***

A document has been transfigured into art and the crucial aspect in this process has been the artist's ethical aspiration which, in art historical terms, echoes the tradition of the theme *Ecce homo-behold the man*.

A further aspect of this transformation can be traced to the new definition of aesthetics as presented at the time of the Enlightenment by the German

philosopher **Alexander Baumgarten**. **Hans-Georg Gadamer** has referred to Baumgarten's definition which sees aesthetics as the "art of thinking beautifully" (*ars bene dicendi*) and recognized how it resonates with the classic definition of rhetoric as the "art of speaking well" (*ars pulchre cogitandi*).<sup>1</sup>

Besides portraits Anne-Karin Furunes has used landscapes and pictures of plants and flowers. One of her public works is the aluminium façade relief at the house dedicated to the Norwegian poet and nationalist **Henrik Wergeland** (1808-1845) in Eidsvoll Norway. The house was inaugurated 2005 to mark the centenary of the dissolution of the Swedish-Norwegian Union.

**PORTRAITS OF PICTURES, 2007**

2 Murals, painted and perforated aluminium, 1075x714cm  
*Telenor, Bergen, Norja | photo: Øystein Klagegg*





**CALVING GLACIER IV, 2013**

acrylic on canvas, perforated

*based on photo by Geir Winge Gabrielsen / Norwegian Polar Institute Tromsø*

In the present Ars Fennica exhibition, the works shown are of glaciers as they are melting and breaking into free floating ice rafts. The metaphor used of these incidents is 'calving glacier' and it is met both in English and Norwegian. The documentary images come from the Norwegian Polar Institute in Tromsø where they have documented melting glaciers for over fifteen years.

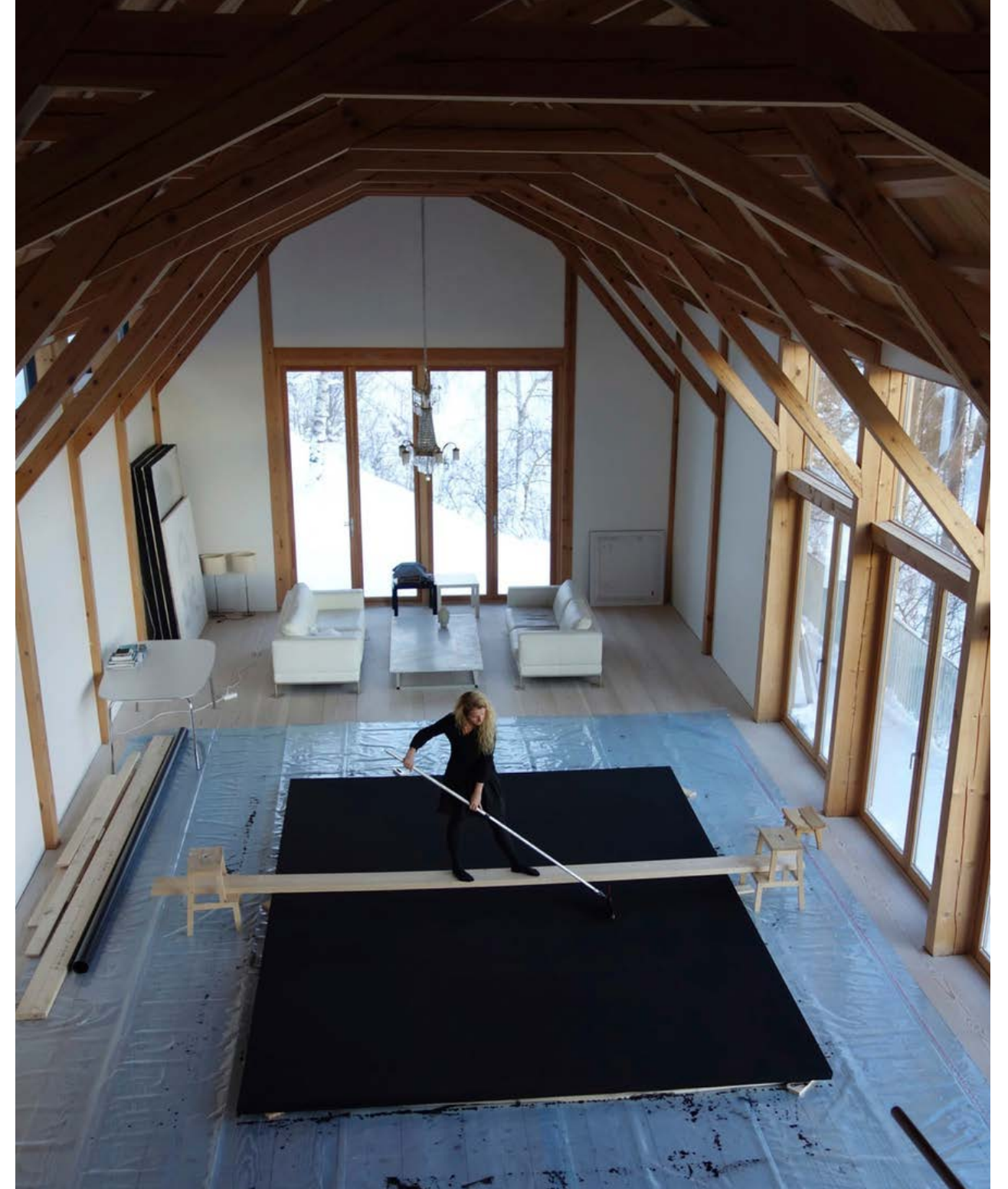
Glacier as a motif belongs to the category that in aesthetics is defined as that of the sublime signifying things that are limitless and beyond control. Their

beauty, however, can be admired at a safe distance. This is no longer the case. Melting glaciers is a global threat and concerns us all. We are causing shocking, irreplaceable damage to nature. In this case, the issue is further of the sensitive polar area.

**“Metaphor used of these incidents is calving glacier”**

We all are responsible. The offenders cannot be identified as we all are. We are living a collective nostra culpa moment, or actually an epoch. This, however, also includes an unprecedented responsibility for nature and for one another.

**ANNE KARIN-FURUNES**  
artist working in her studio



When looking at Anne-Karin Furunes' paintings, the experience is different from that of viewing traditional paintings. We see round holes of varying sizes, reflections, and changes of light. We are aggregating these in our minds into meaningful images. Indeed, the title of the artist's first solo show in 1994 was "It's All in your Head". The spectator takes an active role in perceiving the image and creating a

meaning. The experience is born and opens up by concentrating on the parts and the moments.

**REFERENCES**

<sup>1</sup> Gadamer, Hans-Georg, 1998, *The Relevance of the Beautiful and Other Essays*, toim. Robert Bernasconi, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK