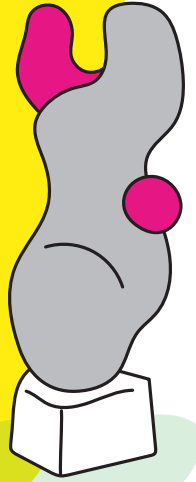
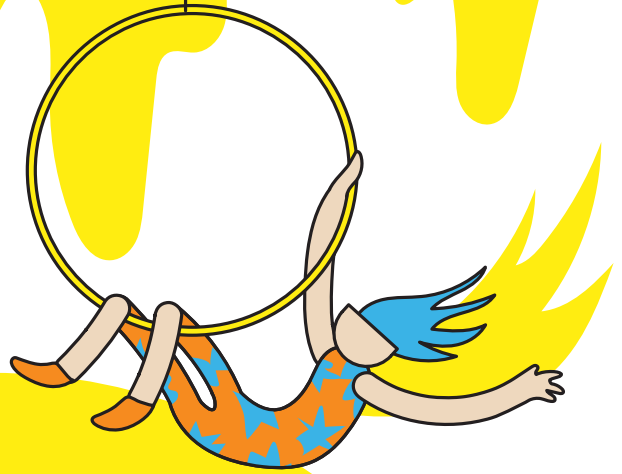


ART ★★★★★ TESTERS

LEARNINGS OF THE LARGEST
CULTURE EDUCATION
PROGRAM IN FINLAND



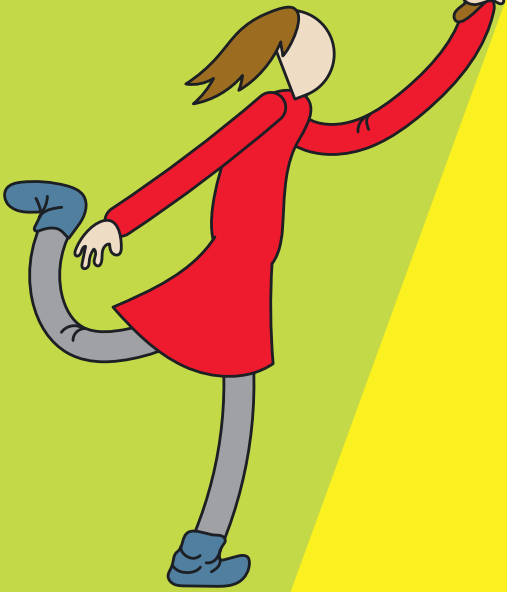


796 schools
65,000 participants
2,9 million km



THIS IS ART TESTERS

THE LARGEST CULTURE
EDUCATION PROGRAM
IN FINLAND



Art Testers is **the largest culture education program in Finland**, offering all eighth-graders (ages 13 to 14) and their teachers 1–2 annual visits in esteemed cultural institutions. Annually, the program reaches over 65,000 people in all Finnish municipalities. The visits are **part of schoolwork and therefore offered equally to every eighth-grader in Finland** – regardless of their socio-economic background, place of residence, special needs, wealth of their municipality, or their teacher’s interests. The Art Testers program is bilingual and offered in both official languages of Finland, Finnish and Swedish.

The core goal of the Art Testers concept is to offer young people equal, accessible, and unforgettable experiences in art and to **find them tools to form well-versed opinions on their experience.**

What did they think? Would they revisit?



After the visit, the students are asked to **review** their art experience with a browser-based app. The reviews are then published on the Art Testers website for everyone to see.

Based on the feedback, our program together with the cultural institutions learn how to better meet the needs of young people in terms of planning the art repertoire and increasing audience engagement.

From an educational viewpoint, we want to offer teachers opportunities and support on **how to utilize art in basic education.** The visits are well in line with the objectives of the national curriculum, enabling several school subjects to co-work, and offering students new learning environments outside the school. The teachers are offered ready-made tools for joining the art experience together with schoolwork and the curriculum.

HOW DOES IT WORK?

The Art Testers program was launched in 2017–2020 by the Finnish Cultural Foundation, our main financer, later followed by The Swedish Cultural Foundation in Finland. In fall 2020, the Ministry of Education and Culture joined in as funder by the decision of the Parliament. The program is being coordinated by a national team of 10–15 coordinators employed or subcontracted by the Association of Finnish Children’s Cultural Centers.

Every year, 50–100 attractions of various types are selected for the program. The number of annual visits for each group (usually 1–2) is based on the funding of the program. **School groups are provided with tickets and transportation** to the event, such as opera, dance, or theatre performance, a concert, or an arts exhibition.

The visits are accompanied with pedagogic materials provided by the art institutions. These pre- and post-visit materials include information about the event, the particular art form, and the individual artists behind the work. Usually, the visits include even some extra content, such as a tour behind the scenes or a Q&A meeting with the members of the artistic crew. All this makes it easier for young people to approach art and enjoy the visits, even if the art forms and their traditions were completely new to them.

At the art visits, the students learn many skills that will be important for them in the future, such as critical thinking, perspective taking, self-expression, empathy, and interaction with others. The experiences can also provoke the eighth-graders to reflect on the concepts of right and wrong, virtues and values, or what constitutes a good life.

For the students, the art visit is a **much awaited, special kind of school day**.

For many participants, traveling by a train, visiting a new town, or eating at a fast-food restaurant can be adventures equally as valuable as the art experience itself.



MOST IMPORTANT LEARNINGS

Two significant factors can be identified in making the young person's art experience successful. The first one is **the attitude and contribution of the teacher** towards the visit: positive attitude is contagious! The second factor is the quality of the pre- and post-visit assignments produced by the art institution, as well as the teachers' dedication in completing them with the students. Eighth-graders are often novices as audience, needing support for how to prepare for the art visit, follow the etiquette during the visit, and how to process their thoughts and feelings evoked by the visit.



Pre-work

The pre-work materials created by the art institutions help young people prepare for the art visit. During the pre-work phase, the students receive information about the art form, the particular work of art, and how it was composed and made. In the pre-work phase, it is also recommended to review **the Art Testers etiquette** that advises the students in practical matters, such as keeping their phones in silent mode during the visit or not taking pictures without permission.

At the visit

School groups expect support, guidance and advice also from the representatives of the art institution that welcomes them as audience. One of the main goals of the Art Testers program is to offer the students an unforgettable experience that could spark a life-long interest in art and culture. **How young people are received and treated during the visit plays an essential role** in achieving this goal. The art institutions in the program are required to carefully plan a hospitable and activating visit.

The students need to be introduced both to the art form and the particular work of art in order for them to be able to enjoy it and be moved by the experience. In addition, the cultural institution can provide the students with a tour behind the scenes to familiarize them with the workings of the institution, or even ask the students to join the creative process of the work of art they are going to experience during the visit. After the visit, the cultural institution can provide support for processing the experience, for instance, in the form of an audience discussion.



Post-work

Post-visit work is especially important if some elements during the art visit are somehow provocative or carry a challenging theme. **The thoughts and feelings evoked by the experience** can be discussed together with the representatives of the art institution or the teacher. The post-work phase provides an opportunity to learn to identify, name, process and control even difficult or conflicting emotions in a constructive manner.



Reviewing the experience

After the visit, the students will review and comment on their experience with a browser-based app created for this purpose. The app makes the students answer simple questions, such as “What’s your mood after the visit?”, “What kinds of feelings were aroused by the art?”, and “Would you go again?” The participants will also be asked to give a star rating for the work of art they experienced.

The task of reviewing is an important part of our concept: in addition to receiving an art experience, a young person has **a chance to practice how to form a well-reasoned opinion** on his/her experience. The ratings and reviews given by the students will be published on the Art Testers’ web page in real time for anyone to see, as well as promoted on the Art Testers social media channels and press releases. This emphasizes our strong message that **the opinions of the youth are valid**, valuable and sought after.

Through the anonymous reviews, the art institutions receive direct and honest feedback from young people, which they may use to their benefit when developing their content.





SO THAT EVERY 8TH GRADER
COULD EXPERIENCE ART.

ASSOCIATION OF
FINNISH
CHILDREN'S
CULTURAL
CENTERS




Svenska
kulturfonden


MINISTRY OF
EDUCATION AND CULTURE
FINLAND