

# Cas Cas

EXPERIMENT DIVERSITY WITH THE STREET ARTS AND CIRCUS



*An overview  
of circus and  
street arts in  
Finland*

CASCAS - EXPERIMENT DIVERSITY  
WITH THE STREET ARTS AND CIRCUS

# *An overview of circus and street arts in Finland*

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# *Street and circus art in Finland*

**THIS TEXT BRIEFLY** sums up the status of circus art in Finland as a part of the country's art field. Circus arrived in Finland in 1802 when a French circus group took the boat over from Stockholm to Turku on the west coast of Finland. Over the last 200 years circus has since become a familiar part of Finnish culture.

With regards to street art, Finland has not developed a distinct, recognisable group of performers. There is no public support for the genre, and the short summer places its own restric-

tions on performance space. It is however characteristic of Finland that almost every town and village has its own tradition of summer theatre. These light and entertaining shows are most often put together by amateurs and performed in the open air in parks and squares on permanent stages. The only demonstrations of street art are by and large the busking musicians that appear in the bigger cities in the summer, most of whom come from Russia and other Eastern European countries. There is no research available on this, nor are there any statistics.



*Kalle Lehto of Race Horse  
Company in "Petit Mal"*



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# *Government policies and budgets in Finland*

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## **THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND CULTURE**

The Finnish culture and art field has a great emphasis on central administration. The Ministry of Education and Culture centrally defines the policies for cultural development and it funds and directs the activities in the field.

Public funding and the copyright system also support the art field. Art and culture's share of the state budget in 2010 was around 385.5 million euros, of which 51% came from the state lottery fund. In 2010 approx. 68% of the funding went to national cultural institutions and municipalities as a statutory state grant. Discretionary state funding (approx 28%) is granted by the Ministry of Education to e.g. communities involved in culture. The rest of the total amount of funding (approx 4%) is channeled towards artists in the form of grants. In the state subsidy system for museums, theatres and orchestras, funding is determined for each institution by counting the scale of activities based on how many

people are annually employed and how much that costs. Discretionary funding is allocated to associations that represent the different art fields, art and cultural centres, and the information centres.

Arts creativity is promoted through support from the grant system for individual artists, which is comprised of funds that are distributed by the Arts Council and dues that are collected through the copyright system.

## **THE ARTS COUNCIL OF FINLAND**

The Arts Council is a department of the Ministry of Education and Culture. It is divided into nine genre-specific committees and five special departments, and it distributes grants for individual artists and groups and funding for freelance groups. In 2009 the Arts Council distributed a total of 28,3 million euros through different kinds of grants and project funding. Regional arts councils are responsible for developing the conditions for art to flourish in their respective provinces.

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## **CULTURAL ADMINISTRATION IN THE PROVINCES AND TOWNS & PRIVATE FOUNDATIONS**

Apart from the above-mentioned organisations, Finland also has a state-run provincial administration which mainly supports business that is based on art and culture. E.g. Helsinki Cultural Office offers performance and work space to artistic groups and supports cultural events and their production. The centre produces art pedagogy projects, children's cultural events and supports immigrants' and special groups' cultural activity.

In addition to the public funding circus art receives financial support from several private foundations annually. In 2010 circus artists, projects and organizations were granted by the funds with approximately 500 000 euros.

## **ON THE CULTURAL POLICY OF THE STATE**

The objectives of cultural policy are connected to creativity, cultural diversity and equity. The aim is to realise cultural rights and ensure



**Circo Aereo's outdoor performance "Rusty Road Circus"**

access for all residents in Finland to art and cultural services. Another aim is to secure a stable financial base for culture. Cultural policy is a significant factor in the implementation of welfare, regional and innovation policies.

## **CULTURAL POLICIES, PROGRAMS AND PROJECTS**

The aims set out for the cultural policy in various strategies and documents are implemented by means of action programmes and projects. The development of cultural exportation is one of the priorities in the government programme and the government's globalization strategy.

The development of the field is informed by the art and artist policy programme and the government decision-in-principle on art and artist policy. There is a separate programme for promoting children's culture. Players in the cultural field are encouraged to develop action and projects promoting sustainable development by cultural means. The state's total culture budget in 2010 is 385.5 million euros. Circus art received about 650 000 euros. Street art does not receive state support.

## **THE DEVELOPMENT AND CURRENT SITUATION OF CIRCUS POLITICS**

Finland became independent in 1917. The foundation of the fledgling state's identity and culture was also reflected in e.g. circus art. At the beginning of the 1920s "light" folk entertainment such as dances, films, cabaret and circus were deemed low culture, and they were hit with a special entertainment tax. At its height over 40% was levied on every ticket sold. This tax was in force until 1981, when it was



*Circo Aereo's "FUR!" with  
Vladimir Grinchenko*





*Agit-Cirk's "Newton Zeppelin"*

deemed too heavy for circus to bear. Changes to the state cultural policy in the 1970s began to increasingly emphasise the importance of making culture at grass-roots level. The first youth circuses were founded in Finland at that time. Circus schools for children and youths started to become increasingly popular at the same time as the city and state were increasing support for people's free-time activities.

An annual youth art event that was established at the beginning of the 1980s and run by the Ministry of Education was the first place that circus could take to the stage as an "art". The state also began to take an increasingly visible interest in cultural administration, which manifested as e.g. increased resources for circus.

In the 1990s the Ministry of Education and Culture founded art's basic education system,

and youth circuses joined this goal-oriented system in which the Ministry confirms the pedagogic programmes in children's art education. Apart from visual art, music, theatre and dance, it was now possible to receive structured education in circus too. The state has become increasingly interested in developing professional circus art since the turn of the millennium. A separate circus subcommittee was created in the Arts Council in 2000, putting circus on an equal footing with other genres. An important sign of increased state support was the fact that circus artists won four state prizes during the first decade of 2000's. The promotion of circus art got its own budget line in the state budget in 2009, and in 2010 the state supported professional circus art activities with around 500,000 euros. In addition there is a 5-year artistic grant for three circus artists and shorter-term bursaries and project grants. One of the Circus Information Centre's tasks is to collect the performance statistics for the field. In 2010 a total of 1187 performances were given in the circus field, attracting a total of 395,099 spectators. Of these, 829 contemporary circus performances pulled in nearly 150,000 spectators. It must be noted that two-thirds of contemporary circus performances took place abroad. There were 256 traditional circus performances in 2010, with a total of 200,000 spectators.



TESTIMONIAL

## Erik Söderblom

Director, Helsinki Festival

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»One of circus's biggest challenges is in my opinion the lack of suitable performance space, for example, which affects the larger productions most of all. The circumstances lead to pocket-sized performances. This brings up another challenge, which is the narrowness of the audience base. Even though circus (contemporary circus) has grown a lot in popularity in recent years, it is still a stranger to large audiences. Activity in the field is focused on the capital area and a few towns in southern Finland. Nationally speaking it is an unknown genre.«



TESTIMONIAL

## Petri Heikkilä

Circus artist, circus teacher/pedagogue

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»One challenge is that we have to develop continuity in the Finnish education system. Apparently we have more than 3,000 kids in amateur circus groups, yet only 7 out of 18 first-year students on Salpaus Further Education's vocational-level circus artist programme come from a circus background. Vocational-level graduates have no higher-level national education that they could reasonably progress towards.«



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# *Circus and street arts companies and artists currently working in Finland*

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**ACCORDING TO A** survey on education and labour in the circus field which was carried out by the Circus Information Centre in 2010, around 200 circus artists and teachers are working in the field. Most of these people are engaged in artistic work or are pedagogues in youth circuses around the country. Apart from the previously-mentioned people, an estimated 100 circus and variety artists mainly do corporate gigs.

Contemporary circus art began to develop in Finland in the 1990's, and around 20 full-time contemporary circus groups have been established since the turn of the century. Apart from these the field is also enriched by a number of smaller groups, work groups and shows by individual artists. The internationally best-known contemporary circus groups are the country's oldest company, Circo Aereo, together with WHS. Race Horse Company is an example of the next Finnish circus genera-

tion's break-through. Other distinctive and influential contemporary circus groups from around Finland include Taikateatteri 13, Kallo Collective, Jakob's Circus, ArtTeatro, Circus Supiainen, Agit-Cirk and Circus Aikamoinen.

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## **SOME EXAMPLES:**

### **CIRCO AEREO**

Circo Aereo is Finland's oldest contemporary circus group, and it is well known for its experimental and groundbreaking work. The group was formed by circus artists Maksim Komaro and Jani Nuutinen in 1996, and it is registered in Finland and France. Circo Aereo's artistic profile is based on a strong awareness of the traditions of circus and other art forms, and the freshest directions and free-flowing creativity. In Circo Aereo's works circus art is combined with other art fields in an unprejudiced and highly artistic way. Circo Aereo currently per-



*Circus teacher Lionel Lejeune and his students at Salpaus Further Education in Lahti*

forms mainly outside Finland. The 21st century has seen the group step into the front line of European contemporary circus, and it has performed in almost 30 European countries, as well as Syria and Hong Kong, and undertaken an extensive tour of the American east coast. It gives around 100-150 performances abroad annually. Circo Aereo was awarded the Ministry of Education's prize in 2009, and one of its artistic directors Jani Nuutinen, received the state Art Prize in 2005.

► [WWW.CIRCOAEREO.NET](http://WWW.CIRCOAEREO.NET)

### **WHS**

WHS's works show circus as a modern, independent and constantly changing form of expression which is complemented by other methods such as video footage. WHS's works have not just been at the cutting edge of contemporary circus, but they have also renewed the theatre field and played a vital role in improving the status of Finnish circus. Juggler Ville Walo, conjurer and video artist

Kalle Hakkarainen and costume designer and scenographer Anne Jämsä founded the group in 2001. It tours continuously abroad and has performed in around 30 countries in Europe, Asia and North and South America.

► [WWW.W-H-S.FI](http://WWW.W-H-S.FI)

### **RACE HORSE COMPANY**

Race Horse Company is a circus company that was founded in 2008 by three Finnish acrobats, Petri Tuominen, Rauli Kosonen and Kalle Lehto. The company is focused on finding new ways to see, produce and make circus art. They approach their work with intensity, raw movement and stunning acrobatic skills, without forgetting about laughter and simple, pure enthusiasm. Race Horse Company has toured extensively in Europe with their first production, *Petit Mal*, which was premiered 2010. In the near future they'll be performing in Australia, Asia and North America.

► [WWW.RACEHORSECOMPANY.FI](http://WWW.RACEHORSECOMPANY.FI)



*Sanna Silvennoinen and Jenni Kallo in Circo Aereo's children's performance "Trippo"*



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# *Festivals and venues programming circus*

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**THERE ARE CURRENTLY** three annual professional circus festivals in Finland whose programme focus on contemporary circus.

**SOME EXAMPLES:**

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***5-3-1 NEW JUGGLING FESTIVAL***

The oldest of these is the 5-3-1 New Juggling Festival, which was founded in Helsinki in 1998. In over ten years the festival has developed into an important 3-day event in the experimental juggling field.

▶ [WWW.531FESTIVAL.COM](http://WWW.531FESTIVAL.COM)

***THE RUSKA FESTIVAL***

The Ruska Festival, which began in 2005 in Tampere, is a weekend contemporary circus festival whose programme focuses mainly on domestic and Nordic juggling performances.

▶ [WWW.CIRCUSRUSKA.COM](http://WWW.CIRCUSRUSKA.COM)

***CIRKO***

Finland's biggest annual circus festival, Helsinki's contemporary circus festival CIRKO began in 2006. This one-week-long event presents new Finnish and international performances.

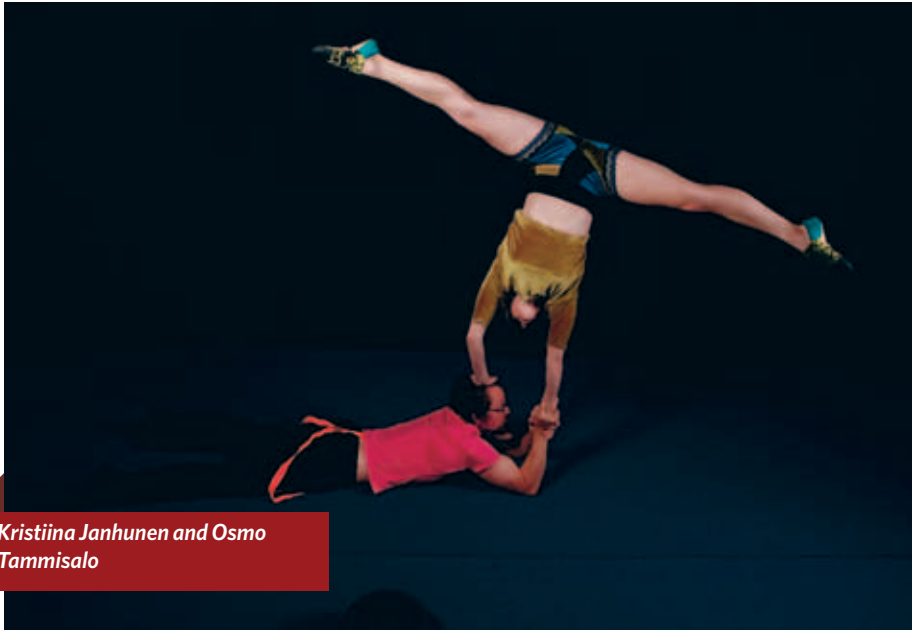
▶ [WWW.CIRKO.FI](http://WWW.CIRKO.FI)

***HELSINKI FESTIVAL AND JYVÄSKYLÄ FESTIVAL***

Of the general festivals, the ones that usually include circus in their programmes are Helsinki Festival and Jyväskylä Festival. Helsinki Festival has the most international outlook. Jyväskylä Festival's programme includes domestic groups and especially international clown performances.

▶ [WWW.HELSINKIFESTIVAL.FI](http://WWW.HELSINKIFESTIVAL.FI)

▶ [WWW.JYVASKYLANKESA.FI](http://WWW.JYVASKYLANKESA.FI)



*Kristiina Janhunen and Osmo Tammisalo*

### **WORK RELATED TO ARRANGING VENUES**

Contemporary circus venues in Finland are mainly in the capital area, e.g. the City of Helsinki's cultural centres and theatres. Circus is also performed regularly at the venues of the Finnish National Gallery. The national circus centre Circo organises performances all year round since its opening in spring 2011.

Outside the capital area contemporary circus can be seen especially in the larger cities such as Turku and Tampere. New venues have also sprung up in the north of the country, e.g. in Rovaniemi on the Arctic Circle.

### **TENTED CIRCUSES**

According to the Circus Information Centre's statistics the only touring contemporary circus group that performs in a tent is Jakobin Sirkus from Tampere. In 2009 the group performed 127 times to a total of around 13,000 spectators. Traditional circus's biggest representative Circus Finlandia makes an annual 7-month tour around the whole country and is watched by a total of 220,000 spectators.

In addition there are two small tented circuses, Caliba and Florentino and fun-fairs which also tour the country.

TESTIMONIAL

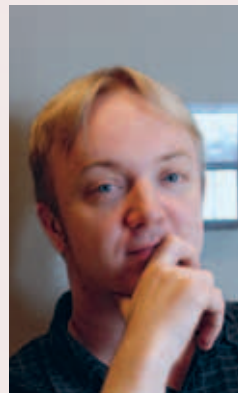
## **Maksim Komaro**

*Artistic director, Circo Aereo*

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»From Circo Aereo's point of view the biggest challenge facing circus art in Finland is the unequal cultural politics with regards to the performing arts. The prevailing understanding of performing art is narrow and circus art is marginal when it comes to funding. The other significant challenge is the lack of artistic education. The most important objective of circus is to question and change the prevailing understanding of the performing arts and replace old funding structures with new ones. «



TESTIMONIAL

## **Lotta Vaulo**

*International affairs, Finnish Circus Information Centre*

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»Our Information Centre's goal is to promote the artistic development as well as the cultural and social status of circus in Finland. We create and maintain international contacts with many circus networks and arts-related organisations abroad. My most important task is to offer advice and supportive services for both young and emerging artists as well as established companies and groups, in relation to our Centre's main goal. These services can vary from providing them with information about circus and related art forms in Finland and abroad, to arranging meetings, seminars and events in order to discuss and raise issues about

e.g. current political issues for arts and culture, circus arts education, funding of the arts or culture export systems. «







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# *Education*

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**FINNISH CIRCUS EDUCATION** can be divided into children's and youth amateur circus and professional circus education. Amateur activity usually costs money. Professional education on the other hand is free, and students also receive a monthly grant from the state.

Circus education in the amateur field is in the hands of youth circuses. The first youth circus was founded in Hamina in south-east Finland in 1972. There are now around 30 youth circuses in Finland with around 3,500 students. Students are aged between 4 and 18, and they practice 1-5 times per week. Five of the youth circuses provide higher basic art education which has been accepted by the Ministry of Education. The schools receive funding from student fees and from the cities – youth circuses that provide a basic arts education also receive permanent support from the Ministry of Education and Culture.

Secondary vocational circus education is provided at Salpaus Further Education in Hollola, which lies 100km north of Helsinki. Originally a one-year experiment in 1997, it became a permanent feature in 2006. Eight-

een students are admitted to the programme, which lasts 2-3 years, every second year.

Turku University of Applied Sciences' current circus training originally began as a one-year training for youth circus teachers in 1994. The current circus training is part of Turku University of Applied Sciences' Art Academy's performing arts training. In the 3-year programme the student chooses at the beginning if they are going to focus on circus pedagogy or performance.

Salpaus Further Education and Turku Art Academy currently have over 200 students.

University-level education in the performing arts (dance, theatre, lighting and sound design, performing arts) is provided by the Theatre Academy of Finland, and there is a plan to add circus to this list in the near future.

Around 20-30 Finnish circus artists have also studied in international schools since the end of the 1990s. Of the artists who have studied in e.g. CNAC and Lido in France, Circus Space in the UK and Montreal's national circus school, many have returned to work in Finland.



*Race Horse Company's international hit performance "Petit Mal"*



Rauli Kosonen in  
"Rusty Road Circus"



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## *Creation supporting centres*

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**FINLAND'S FIRST ORGANISATION** that supports the production of circus art was Cirko – Centre for New Circus, which was founded in Helsinki in 2002. It began working properly in 2004 after it received a 3-year project grant from a private foundation, the Finnish Cultural Foundation. Cirko has granted different kinds of production support annually to a number of groups and projects, offering them rehearsal space, marketing assistance and residence possibilities in Helsinki's city cultural centres. According to the agreement that was made with the City of Helsinki, Cirko has offered performance possibilities to productions in cultural centres. There have been over 100 different performances in Cirko's programme between 2004-2010 from Finland and abroad.

The national circus centre Cirko opened in spring 2011. It supports e.g. new productions by offering rehearsal, residency and performance possibilities in its 2,500 m<sup>2</sup> premises..

Apart from Cirko, production support has been provided in Helsinki by the National Gallery's two stages in Kiasma and Ateneum. They have annually joint-produced several new contemporary circus performances, providing rehearsal space and financial and marketing support. Espoo City Theatre and Dance Theatre Hurjaruuth have also jointly produced contemporary circus productions.

Elsewhere in Finland joint producers of contemporary circus have been Tampere's Circus Ruska, Hämeenlinna's Verkatehdas and Turku's Barker Theatre.



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# *Advocacy agencies*

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**THE FINNISH CIRCUS** Information Centre (FCIC) is an expert organization that was established in 2006 to serve the interests of the Finnish circus field. The FCIC contributes to the artistic development and promotes the cultural and social status of Finnish circus, and it also creates and maintains international contacts. The FCIC is supported by The Ministry of Education.

The FCIC's activities include service and advisory work, disseminating information about the circus field, and acting as an influential force in culture politics. The FCIC's main target groups are circus professionals, audiences, decision-makers and the media.

The FCIC organizes meetings and seminars for professionals in the field and public events

that promote circus activities. It collects and documents information about professional Finnish circus and publishes and translates material.

The FCIC compiles statistics and reports related to activity in the circus field which aids political decision-making. Sirkka is a comprehensive database of information on Finnish circus performances and artists. The FCIC coordinates the circus art export project as part of a broad-based Finnish cultural export strategy. The cultural export project supports the creation of international networks and furthers the promotion of professional circus art groups, and it is supported by the Ministry of Education and Culture and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.



*Lionel Lejeune*



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# *Research*

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**THE CIRCUS INFORMATION** centre is a partner in the New Nordic Circus Network, whose task is to improve the conditions for contemporary circus to flourish in the Nordic countries. NNCN began the Juggling the Arts project in 2008, which supports the development of young artists' artistic research by organizing experienced circus professionals to act as mentors in artistic laboratories. In Finland the Circo Aereo group began its own incubator project for young artists in 2010 to carry out artistic research in 2011. The national CIRKO centre will be developing its own artistic research support programme in the coming years.

Helsinki University accepted circus research as part of its optional theatre research studies in 2009. The first master's theses have already been completed – and the first doctoral dissertation, which deals with circus as a social tool, is also under way.

New books in Finnish about contemporary circus have also been published in recent years. An English translation of Tomi Purovaara's book on contemporary circus (*Contemporary Circus. Introduction to the Art Form*) will be published by Stockholm University at the end of 2011.





*Teaching circus students at Salpaus  
Further Education in Lahti*



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# *Case studies of three local artistic projects*

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## **INCUBATOR FOR CONTEMPORARY CIRCUS**

“Hautomo” is a project established by Circo Aereo, to support emerging and established professional circus artists by means of long-term artistic mentoring and production counselling.

### **THE OBJECTIVES OF THE PROJECT ARE**

- to produce high quality, export grade, long lifespan contemporary circus performances.
- to provide young circus artists with opportunities for employment and both national and international networking.
- to improve production conditions and establish new premium-level Nordic contemporary circus companies and performers with strong artistic identities using the so-called Nokia Model: mentoring of young, promising talents by experienced artists.
- to support established circus artists with long artistic careers.

Circo Aereo’s project partners include Nordic artist residence centres, networks, schools, information centres and other circus organisations. The partners also include the circus artists and companies selected to participate in the programme. With the aid of Circo Aereo’s existing structures and long-term co-production, processes with the artists become both profound and cost-effective.

► [WWW.CIRCOAEREO.NET/ENG/HANKKEET.HTML](http://WWW.CIRCOAEREO.NET/ENG/HANKKEET.HTML)

## **PERIPHERY**

“Periphery” is a two-part multi-arts-project that takes place in the North and East Finland areas. The first part of the project is to produce a performance that combines poetry, music and circus. The performances take place in small towns, coffee houses, gas stations and squares. After the show the performers talk with local people and learn about the local life, share feelings and thoughts. All performances, discussions and what happens on the road are documented well with photos, videos and sound. There is also a blog maintained about the project.

The second part of the project is collecting documentary material, and creating photo exhi-



*Rauli Kosonen on trampoline*

bitions and documentaries. The exhibition will be opened for the first time in Rovaniemi, but is also exported to the south of Finland.

► [WWW.AGITCIRK.COM/EN/PROJEKTIT/PERIFERIA-MONITAIDEPROJEKTI](http://WWW.AGITCIRK.COM/EN/PROJEKTIT/PERIFERIA-MONITAIDEPROJEKTI)

### **SOCIAL CIRCUS PROJECT**

The main goal of the Social Circus Project is to help circus organisations produce quality social circus for special groups, and give the organisations necessary marketing tools to turn social circus into a product for welfare services. This is aimed to help make social circus a permanent part of the Finnish circus scene and welfare services.

The Centre for Practise as Research in Theatre at the University of Tampere runs this nationwide project with ESF (European Social Fund) support. The project is funded by the Lapland

centre for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment. There have been pilot projects in 7 different circuses, teaching circus to different groups with special needs in Tampere, Helsinki, Vantaa, Espoo, Oulu, Lempäälä and Orivesi. The circus lessons were held from fall 2009 until the end of Spring 2011, after which all the material and reports gathered during the project is analyzed and organized.

The Social Circus Project also organizes three seminars in the field of social circus, where international experts on social circus are asked to explain and demonstrate the development of social circus in other countries. The first two seminars focus on the education and networking of social circus teachers from the pilot projects, and the last seminar presents social circus to municipalities and welfare services.

► [WWW.SOSIAALINENSIRKUS.FI/ENGLISH](http://WWW.SOSIAALINENSIRKUS.FI/ENGLISH)

## TESTIMONIAL

# **Mari Karikoski**

*Art secretary, Arts Council of Finland, Subcommittee of Circus Arts*

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»Finland should have higher-level professional training in the circus field, for both teachers and artists. Another topical problem is the need to renew the Arts Council of Finland and circus's status within it. Circus has grown powerfully in recent years both financially and with regards to the volume of the field and the size of audiences. As circus is an independent art form, circus experts must be represented in the Arts Council of Finland, both now and in the future so that circus's status is secured with regards to cultural, political and funding decisions.

One big challenge is increasing funding and developing it towards increasingly professional and organised activity. The ideal situation would be if circus would get a network of regional centres that would cover the country, and both domestic and international artists could use them as touring venues. This is a long-term plan which could begin with finding appropriate rehearsal and performing venues in larger towns that would be suitable for circus. The Cirko centre in Helsinki is a good start for a regional network.«



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Circo Aereo, photo by Heli Sorjonen

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THE PARTNERS OF CASCAS - EXPERIMENT DIVERSITY  
WITH THE STREET ARTS AND CIRCUS ARE:

Subtopia (Sweden) [www.subtopia.se](http://www.subtopia.se)

Circus Development Agency (UK) [www.circusarts.org.uk](http://www.circusarts.org.uk)

MiramirO (Belgium) [www.miramiro.be](http://www.miramiro.be)

Finnish Circus Information Centre (Finland) [www.sirkusinfo.fi](http://www.sirkusinfo.fi)

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EXPERIMENT DIVERSITY WITH THE STREET ARTS AND CIRCUS

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## **CASCAS - EXPERIMENT DIVERSITY WITH THE STREET ARTS AND CIRCUS**

CASCAS is a European project led by four partners, each of whom provide information and advice on the circus and street arts at a national level. By offering facilitated tours of the context within each of the four countries, CASCAS will encourage the exchange of ideas and expertise across Europe.

This brochure provides information to those who wish to work in or with circus and street arts professionals within each of the four partners countries, to facilitate reciprocal exchange of information with the aim of developing additional partnerships across Europe. It provides an overview of the cultural policy, infrastructure and local context of circus and street arts in Finland.

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