

Finland Center Foundation
47 Fifth Avenue
New York, NY 10003
USA

www.finlandcenter.org

Annual Report 2008

Introduction

2008 was the first year that our organization had a physical address and an office of its own at the downtown artist club (the oldest in New York), the Salmagundi Club at 47 Fifth Avenue. Thanks to the cooperative spirit of the Club, we have been able to host several cultural events. As our business partnership with Sunborn International unraveled, and our long term plans had to be put on hold due to the general economic climate, we nonetheless continued to build our membership organization for Finns and friends of Finland.

Board Activity

The Board of Directors met 5 times in 2008. The volunteer Board is responsible for overseeing the general direction of development of the organization and involved in the practical execution of programs, as there is no paid staff. In this it is aided substantially by volunteers, which we have been lucky to attract. The Advisory Board has had a few actively involved members. At the end of 2008, *new bylaws* were approved to give our growing membership a larger voice in the organization by giving them voting rights. In preparation for the Annual Meeting, the composition of the Boards was reviewed to reflect the new reality.

Membership Organization

Begun in late 2007, membership recruitment continued and reached 210 members by the end of 2008. A plan for corporate membership was initiated but its implementation had to wait until the following year. Substantial effort was given to creating new web pages to support membership and to access member benefits. The web pages were professionally designed by Hanna Manninen and a membership portal included. The database is safely deposited in an account with Patronmail, and thus accessible to us from anywhere. It has been continually updated by our volunteers. Although it is possible to sign up on the mailing list online, the best incentive and occasion for members to join has been at the time of the events held at the Salmagundi Club or elsewhere.

Cultural activities, cooperation and networking

After moving into our office space in early January, we have, on average, been able to organize one event per month.

February: Raoul Bjorkenheim and Bill Buchen performed at a "Pea Soup and Punch" dinner at the Salmagundi Club restaurant.

March: Liisa Roberts gave a talk following the showing of her film “What’s the Time in Vyborg?”

April: Students from Packlab (the division of packaging design at Lahden Muotoiluinstituutti) gave a presentation of their work.

May: Two-week long exhibition : “Watercolors” : the work of two Finnish-American artists, Irene Aunio and Gustav Rosenlof . Participated in the annual Spring Cruise in New York Harbor organized by the American Scandinavian Society.

June: Trip to the Cloisters followed by Midsummer picnic in the Cloisters park. Accordion music by Ed Hendela.

August: get-together for Friends of New York in Helsinki, hosted by Vesa Kokkonen at the Terrace of the Palace Hotel.

September: Reception at the home of Mira Goldberg in Westport, CT, with music by Mika Pohjola, piano and Matt Renzi, saxophone

October: Kanerva Pasanen, singer and composer, performed at the Salmagundi Club; reception for the new Consul General of Finland, Ritva Jolkkonen, at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Ralph Weindling on upper Fifth Avenue.

November: Jazz duo Ira Kaspi and Peter Engberg performed at the Salmagundi Club.

Art exhibit : “Sea Change” by Rea Nurmi. Participated in the annual Christmas bazaar organized by the New York Finnish Lutheran Congregation and the Finnish School in New York.

December: no events of our own, as we encouraged everyone to participate in the traditional Finnish and Scandinavian Christmastime events in the city.

In addition, we have consistently promoted the events of other Finnish and Scandinavian organizations in New York: the American Scandinavian Foundation, the American Scandinavian Society, Finlandia Foundation New York Metropolitan Chapter, Finnish and American Women’s Network, the Finnish American Chamber of Commerce, the Finnish Department at Columbia University and the New York Finnish Lutheran Congregation. All the Finnish organizations have been invited to host their events at the Salmagundi Club at reduced rates through the FCF.

We also promote the efforts of individual Finnish artists in our email, on the website and the joint NorthernSpace.com calendar. We offer links on our website to other organizations and cultural institutions for free, as well as to all our business partners and advertisers.

Communications and Fundraising

Two Newsletters in print were produced in 2008. The first issue had a theme of Health; the second one was a Travel issue highlighting lesser-known destinations in Finland. The Newsletters were distributed to our members in print and to everyone else as a pdf file on our website. We also distributed them at all our events, as well as at large public gatherings, notably *Finn Fest*, held in July in Duluth, MN; as well as at the *Christmas bazaar* in New York.

In keeping with technological advancement, we have concentrated on communications by *email* and completely renewed our *website*. We have 1700 email addresses, 900 mailing addresses of individuals and families, 120 related organizations and 500 businesses. Our website has drawn up to 70 hits per day. At the end of the year, it was completely redesigned to reflect our increasing activities on different fronts: to make it easier to find upcoming events of cultural interest, and describe past ones; to find links to other organizations and resources; to give a chance for promotion of Finland as a travel destination, Finnish products, and corporate advertising ; and to highlight *member benefits*, which are then accessible by logging into the member pages. The latest addition is a *blog*.

We raised funds through membership dues, donations, Newsletter advertising, ticket sales to events and sales of donated items such as books and Holiday cards. We are grateful for two donations of stock, which are held for future growth towards an endowment. Finlandia Foundation National Trust gave a partial grant towards a textile art exhibit, which has not yet been possible to arrange for lack of further funding. Considerable effort has gone into grant applications to cultural foundations in Finland. Only Suomi-Seura responded by granting funds towards a new computer.

Thank you!

None of the above could have been done without the dedicated support of our members – thank you to all who show up at our events and have joined as members, and contributed time, money, skills and volunteer labor! Thank you also to the Board members, both to those who are continuing, and the ones who are leaving: Hanna Hemila, Juha Himanen and Katriina Paavola, all of whom have contributed in different ways and who we hope will stay involved in some capacity. Thank you also to several Advisory Board members, and also some of our paid consultants, who give us substantially discounted rates. In particular, we would like to express our appreciation to the following individuals, organizations and companies: Kathleen Arffmann and the Board of Directors and staff at the Salmagundi Club; Mira Goldberg, Ralph and France-Helene Weindling, Leonard Easter, Daniel Farrell, Joseph Townsend, Hanna Manninen, Sarianne Pennanen, Silja Havu , Laura Koski, Lisa Rinta-Tuuri, Anna Yletyinen, Laura Palotie, Thomas Riggs, Kristina Preussner, Paivi Bjorkenheim, Katri Saunders, Kanerva Pasanen, Ira Kaspi and Peter Engberg, Raoul Bjorkenheim, Liisa Roberts, Leena Lehtolainen, Anna-Kristiina Kaappola, Irene Aunio and Gustav Rosenlof, Heli Blum, John Austin, Esko Delamater, Naantali Spa, Smorgas Chef, Vesa Kokkonen and Palace Kamp Hotels, The Running Company, American Express Travelink, Klaus K Hotel/Helsinki, Budget, Lumene, Finlandia Cheese, Polar, Lapland Lake Cross Country Ski Resort/New York, Salisbury Hotel/New York, Finlandia Foundation National Trust, and Suomi-Seura.

*On behalf of the Board of Directors,
March 29, 2009*

*Jaana Rehnström
President*