

## **Kiasmatic tours**

### ***Architectural education in the temple of contemporary art***

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Architectural education at Kiasma, the Museum of Contemporary Art in Helsinki, is based on the architecturally important building the museum occupies and its position in the townscape right in the heart of Helsinki. The Kiasma building, which was opened in 1998, was designed by the respected American architect Steven Holl.

Although the Kiasma exhibition programme focuses on Finnish and foreign contemporary art, the museum also offers children and young people 'hands-on' activity tours of Kiasma's architecture and history. On these 'Kiasmatic tours' and under the guide's leadership, visitors can investigate the museum building using the senses on many levels; besides speech and discussion, the guided tours incorporate various activities which encourage the visitors to look at the space and experience it from different perspectives



Each activity tour lasts about one and a half hours and focuses in turn on the main elements of the museum's architecture, such as the sequences of exhibition galleries, stairways and materials or lighting, and on the smallest details, such as door handles or light fittings. Moreover, during the ninetyminute tour, the visitors are encouraged to think how the design of each of the exhibitions that is on show affects the way they experience the space and the art themselves.

Steven Holl's Kiasma is designed at the human scale: the dimensioning of the spaces is based on the human body and the most important building material is light. The building has plenty of translucent glass surfaces and windows giving different views over the capital, framed in surprising ways; so the visitors on a Kiasmatic tour also take a look out of the museum windows and think about the relationship of the building with the ideals of the surrounding town planning and architecture.

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