



Spirit of Emelia



The Spirit of Emelia project is an ongoing multimedia project by Swedish Australian artist Danelle Bergstrom, inspired by the building of the historical Galeas Emelia at the Mariehamn Sjökvarteret in the Åland Islands, Finland.

Culminating in a documentary film, book and exhibition of around 100 portraits and paintings, Spirit of Emelia will premiere at the Åland konstmuseum in 2026 with hopes to tour internationally, drawing attention to this extraordinary boat building community venture.









*'This generosity and cooperation of people coming together for a common cause, such as building a ship, is commonplace in Åland and Nordic cultures, and I am sure in many parts of the world.'*

*This TALKA, (in Swedish) is a time-honoured tradition steeped in historic and cultural significance.*

*When I first became aware of and witnessed it in 2019, I was so impressed, moved and inspired by the wonderful feeling of community involvement, I wanted to celebrate and commemorate the 'spirit'.*

*I see the ship Emelia as a perfect symbol of unity and community collaboration.'*

*'The ship Emelia, is being built with  
dedication and passion by skilful  
shipbuilders and volunteers  
and is being funded entirely by  
private and public financial support.'*



















*'Watching the development from the early stages  
and seeing how the massive oak timbers  
form the skeletal shape of the ship,  
is for me an amazing sight.'*

*'Her organic form develops in reverse to a  
carcass of a whale decaying on the edge of  
the sea.'*

*The frames of the ship appear like the bones  
of a whale and the planking like the skin.  
Slowly she is revealing herself with each  
stage of construction and capturing the  
imagination of all who see her.'*

*Included in the exhibition will be several paintings inspired by the landscapes telling the underlying story from land to sea. Paintings inspired from the giant oak forests of Denmark, where some timbers are used to form the frames, to paintings that suggest the foreordained seas, the ship's ultimate destination.*

*'This is the only ship of this scale currently being built in the Nordic region and indeed may be the last one built in our lifetime and most probably the last ship built in Åland. The craftsmanship, skill and dedication of these master shipbuilders and the enthusiasm with which the local community has supported the project perfectly demonstrates what can happen when people come together in unity to create something magical.'*





Danelle Bergstrom is a Swedish Australian artist living between her home and studio in the Åland Islands and the historic former gold mining town of Hill End in Australia. She creates multi-faceted portraits and wildly evocative landscapes that pictorialise the artist's lived experiences, personifying the human form and the land as a vessel for emotion.

Bergstrom has been the recipient of major residencies in Åland, Finland (2016), Konstepidemin, Gothenburg, Sweden (2016, 2011), Northern Territory Supreme Court, Darwin, Australia (2008) and Cill Rialaig in Ireland (2007). She has been a finalist in numerous prestigious Australian art prizes including the Archibald Prize, Portia Geach Memorial Award, Paddington Art Prize and Salon des Refusés and has painted over twenty public commissions. Her work is held in many important global collections, both public and private, including the National Portrait Gallery and National Library in Australia.

FOR ALL MEDIA ENQUIRIES

[www.danellebergstrom.com](http://www.danellebergstrom.com)

[media@danellebergstrom.com](mailto:media@danellebergstrom.com)



Please scan the QR code for further information about Danelle Bergstrom and Spirit of Emelia



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PHOTOGRAPHY

Danelle Bergstrom  
Michele Blake-Hermans  
Susie Johansson

DESIGN

Saskia Howard

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Cover Artwork: *Fortitude II* (detail), oil on linen, 122 x 122 cm

Inside Artwork: *Revive* (detail), oil on linen, 148 x 148 cm

Portrait of Kenneth Holmström, Emelia Master Shipwright (detail), oil on linen, 62.5 x 62.5 cm

