



Artist wins Finland's answer to Turner Prize

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A visual artist who was brought up in Caithness and studied at Glasgow School of Art has won Finland's equivalent of the Turner Prize.

Northumberland-born Charles Sandison is the 2010 winner of the Ars Fennica award.

The 41-year-old has lived in Finland since July 1995 when he was invited along with other artists to take part in an exhibition.

He received his award from Finland's president Tarja Halonen.

Born in Haltwhistle, his family moved to Wick in Caithness when he was six. His parents live near Cape Wrath, in Sutherland.

He worked at Glasgow School of Art for eight years following his studies when Turner Prize winners Douglas Gordon, Richard Wright and Simon Starling were also at the school.

Sandison is the first artist from the UK to win the Ars Fennica award.

He said: "I think there has been a move to make the award more international and I believe previous winners have included Swedes and Estonian artists.

"It is sort of Finland's answer to the Turner Prize."

Sandison added: "Growing up in Caithness gave me a lot of my inspiration for my work.



Haltwhistle-born Sandison works in visual arts

"When the other kids at school were going to Butlins I was being dragged across wide open spaces and up hills. It is a remarkable place."

Sandison arrived in Finland 15 years ago after he and other artists from Scotland tried to set up a studio in east Berlin.

He said: "Finland is an enigmatic and mysterious place.

"It has very defined seasons with a proper summer when, if you far enough north, the sun hardly goes down and its very beautiful and winters lasting six months long.

"The snow has been here since mid November and won't melt until May."

Sandison was aware of the problems with a long spell of bad winter weather back in Scotland.

He said: "Some how in Finland they manage, but I suppose they have had a millennia to adapt.

"I am on a train and there is a metre and a half of snow outside, but the train will leave on strictly on time.

"As part of the driving test learners must spend a few days doing what is called ice driving and a car's handbrake is part of the process of steering."

Sandison added: "Kids learn to ski and skate at kindergarten.

"It can be embarrassing when you are passed in the snow by a toddler on skis and skates. I've had to get used to a bruised ego and rear."