



F L O A
T I N G
P L A T
F O R M S

ENCOUNTERS
BETWEEN
PERFORMANCE ART
AND
SCIENCE



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T I N G
P L A T
F O R M S

Floating Platforms is a project by New Performance
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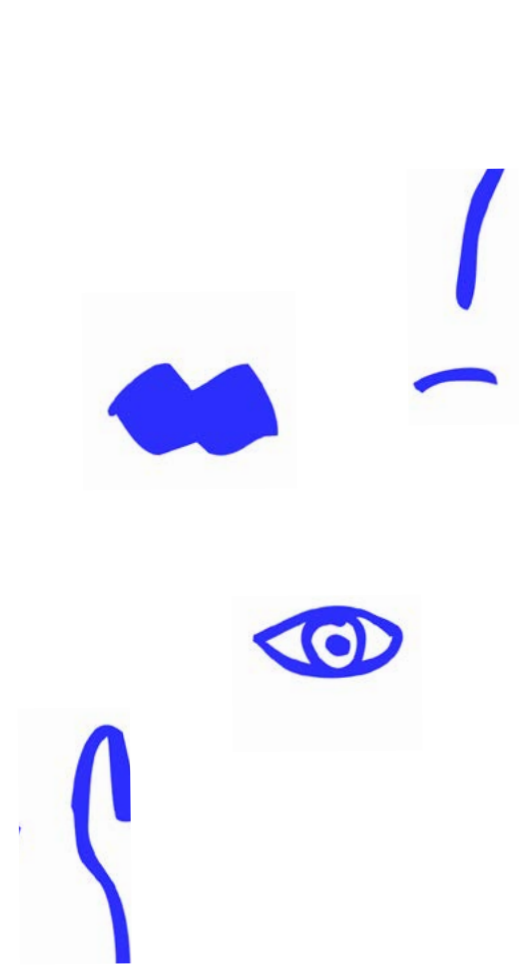
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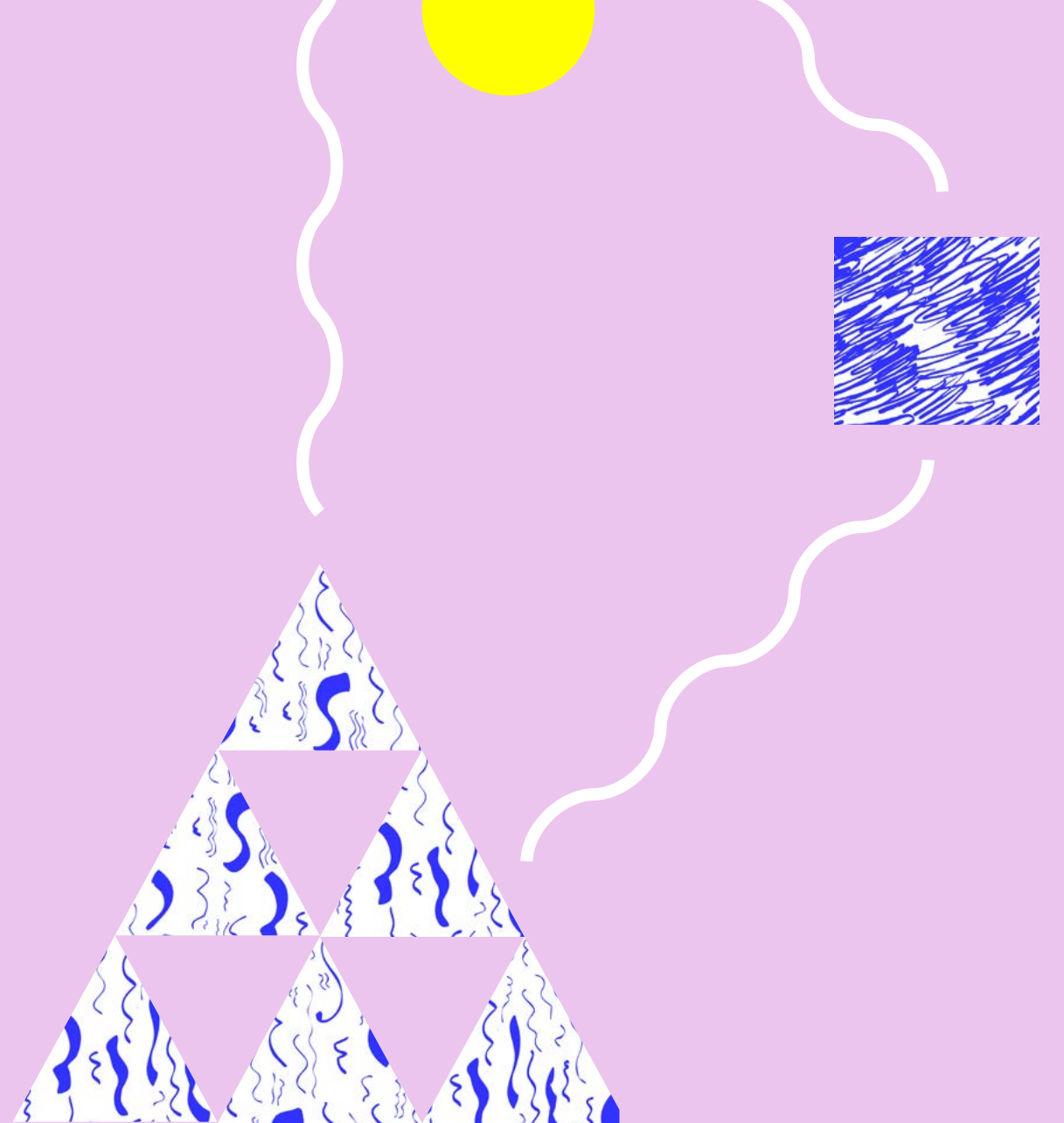
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1. INTRODUCTION DIALOGICAL APPROACH TO FLOATING PLATFORMS PROJECT

Text by Christopher Hewitt, Leena Kela and Anni Välimäki





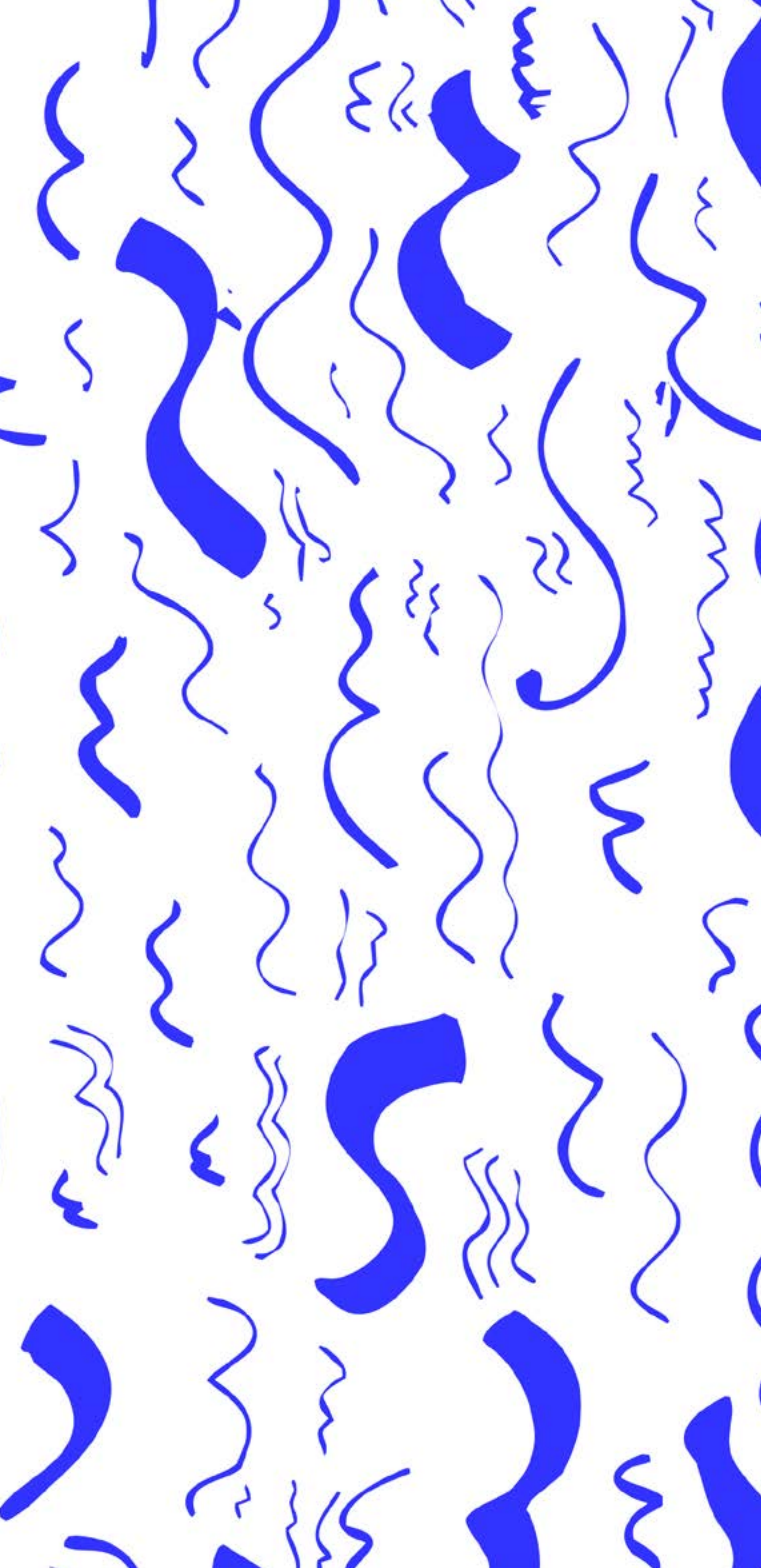
INTRODUCTION

The Floating Platforms – Encounters Between Performance Art and Science project was inspired by the need to generate new encounters between different fields of expertise and practice from the perspectives of performance art, science and research. The special focus in this project was to ensure an equality in the encounter between the two specialities: so that the art doesn't merely visualise the science and the science does not become passive content. We wanted to encourage experimentation with all methods and forms available.

Why performance art? In addition to the fact that we organise an international performance art festival, we wanted to focus in performance art because of its ability to present itself in variety of forms, from performance in a gallery or a theatre space to site-specific and installational performance, performance lectures, performance for video and so on. For us, the ability to engage with a variety of disciplines and contexts is a fundamental element of performance art.

During the matchmaking process we paired up six performance artists and six researchers from the fields of neuroscience, Assyriology, sound archaeology, ecology, international politics and cosmology. What had been at first just a list of artists and professionals from different disciplines became an impressive set of collaborations, finally resulting in work-in-progress presentations, open in form and content.

What was common among all the participants was their collective objective – whether it was personal, professional or artistic – of reaching beyond their usual methods of working. They were able to create a laboratory of possibilities, a space to which to play and explore.



And for us, as curators, the 2015 Floating Platforms project became a start point for further exploration. We started to implement a very useful term, borrowed from our interlocutor, Dr. Rob La Frenais: acclimatization. We realised that what actually had been developed during these six separate encounters was an acclimatization of not just art with science, but also of its makers with each other. What we discovered from our experience was, that yes, although it's possible to create fascinating discoveries in a very short time period, some fundamental elements are needed to develop these beginnings further: primarily time and space.

We specifically didn't ask for full formed and finalised results or complete works from our participants' processes, but rather wanted to create a space for liminal conditions – a so-called *third space* – outside of each participant's comfort zone (and ours as well). Now, looking back on the process we can see that we have initiated interesting new starting points which could potentially develop into new projects, and possibly, whole new ways of working.

Thank you for all who made this journey possible: our partner Aboagora-symposium, our supporters, mentors, project workers, volunteers and funders – and most of all, our twelve participants. This publication sheds light on some of the forms, results and findings developed during the twelve processes, and is intended for anyone interested in the field of performance art, science, or the spaces in between.

Turku, May 2016

*Anni Välimäki, Leena Kela & Christopher Hewitt
New Performance Turku*

2. SIX EPISODES

Text by Mari Krappala

Translation from Finnish by Kaisa Sivenius

Videos and editing by Christopher Hewitt

WHY NOT LOOK AT THE CYCLE OF NATURE FROM THE BIRD'S EYE VIEW?

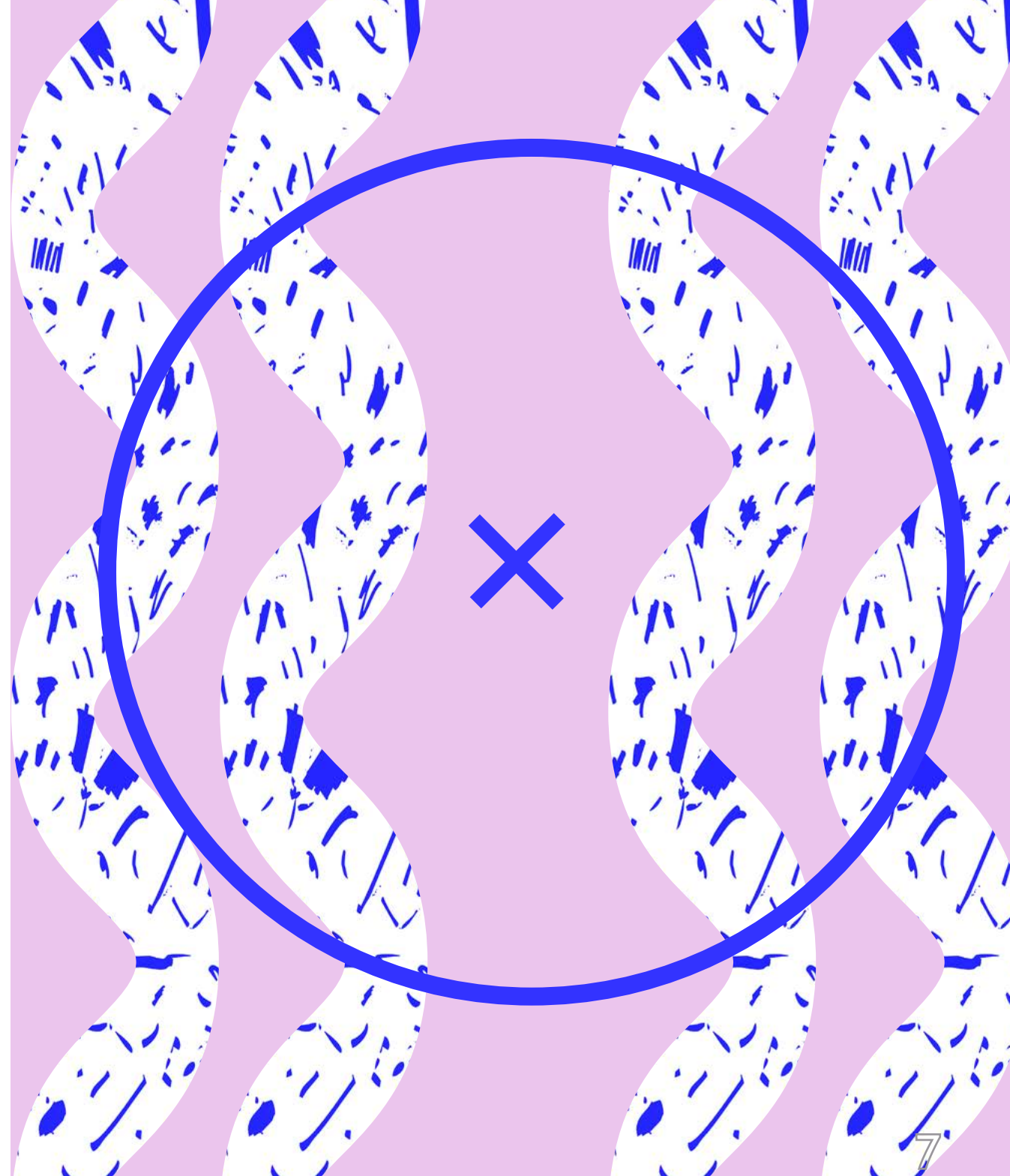
CROSSING BORDERS TO SPACES UNKNOWN

THE SENSE OF LOSS CAN CONNECT PEOPLE ACROSS TIMES AND PLACES

IMAGINE THERE IS NO EARTH

HEAR THAT? IT'S THE STONE AGE RATTLING

IS A THIRD WAY POSSIBLE?



WHY NOT LOOK AT THE CYCLE OF NATURE FROM THE BIRD'S EYE VIEW?

A process with a different way of understanding the concept of ecosystem

By performance artist Kurt Johannessen and biologist Mia Rönkä

Kurt and Mia had discussions over Skype and exchanged emails for a few months before their joint Floating Platforms residence. They found the working partnership which developed during the discussions fruitful. In the first discussion, they mused on the encounters between science and art and presented works of their own. In the second discussion, they already began to process the performance, considering possible working methods of science and art, ways of communication and how to present the results of the work. They also pondered the degrees of freedom on either side, and who would constitute the audience of the performance.

Kurt started from the organisation of time and space, the question how things move in time and how space surrounds us. Kurt had a taxidermy bird he had used in an earlier performance. He took an interest in Mia's research on birds. They thought about how Mia examines birds in her studies, how Kurt handles birds in his performance and also what working methods they might learn from each other.

'If we find a dead bird, it creates shared themes: is the bird dead, why is it dead, how to mourn a dead bird...'

In Kurt's scheme, cooperation might relate to living and how we enter time and move away from time. This is related to the extinction of species, which is also a theme in science: where do species come from and what do they die of? What is movement? Migratory birds come and go. There is both temporal and spatial movement. When the movement stops, we have dead birds, taxidermy birds, skins and feathers of birds as well as birds conserved in alcohol.

Kurt has found a form and a direction for time in his work. The form is round and the movement is into and out of us. We are right here, we all have our present moment. Otherwise, we only think about or imagine time, as ways of processing the past and the future. It is important to understand what the structure of time is and what "exists". Matter is not important, only time is essential. Kurt has read quantum theory and philosophy; biology is built on all this.



Sometimes it's enough if you just get a bit of a hold on an idea. What interests me in quantum theory is temporal duration'.

Kurt and Mia began to work together with birds. First they presented their work on birds to each other. After that they reflected on time and space as concepts: the past, the present, the future, and the fact that we are all merely visitors in time. Some species are here now and then disappear, and other species evolve. Climate change affects species even further.

Kurt and Mia also went through material that was available for their performance in the Zoological museum of the University of Turku: there were both birds and equipment. 'We get birds conserved in alcohol... and two old glass jars where we insert our hands, and there's going to be water and feathers in them, so when we pull out our hands, feathers will be sticking out of them.'

They plan different sections in their performance. They collect material, demonstrate biological laboratory work, give a lecture, and conduct a survey. In the sections, performance and a research situation are mingled. When the audience arrives in the space, they are asked to give one word that comes to mind when they think of birds. The words are collected and later projected on the wall. On the left is Kurt's lecture, on the right a projected circle consisting of photographs,

water, sky and parts of birds; mostly blue, as a whole.

As Kurt is delivering his lecture, Mia lets her hand linger in the blue reflection. 'The bird is part of everything. There is a bird, and then everything else. There are crocodiles, people and cars, which are not birds. But there is something that links some of these together. Something links a bird and a stone together. Which is more bird, a car or a stone? We have small pieces that join us together, and then there is movement which creates more circles. In ecology, everything is linked together. If one part collapses, something else will disappear, too. The connection may be one of genetics, material, movement or form.'

They talk about the concept of ecosystem services. It is an umbrella notion to everything we get from nature. Kurt has criticised the concept, because it places the human being in the middle. It leaves out a number of values nature would have even if there were no human beings. At some stage, we took nature in our possession and imagined we were in control of the situation, and yet we are in no way special in the ecosystem; but because the world today only asks questions of economy, we think that we are above everything. For administration, conservation purposes and politically, says Mia, economy is an important concept, because it can be used to say that if we lose this, for example, we will lose so and so much money.

'We both go to the water; we put our hands in the water among the feathers. The birds conserved in alcohol are right by.' Kurt moves in front of the blue projection and raises his feathered hand into the blue. Mia projects words collected from people on the front wall and they build into a comprehensive meaning of the bird. *'We have a round shape that we've worked with.'*

'At the onset of the performance there are sounds of birds in the space. At the end, we put on rubber gloves, take stuffed birds in our hands and tap the microphone with their beaks. We give the birds a voice again.'





Has this been a research process to you, Mia?

'We've talked about the concept of ecosystem services, how birds are connected to other species and materials, and the philosophy of similarity. We wondered how much we should explain the concept of ecosystem services. We decided not to explain. The explanation is made visible in the performance.' Kurt talks about the different things that can be associated with birds in his lecture: action, form, genetic link; a car can move, there's even a connection with an airplane, not biological, but based on movement. The bird is made a meeting point for all the connections. If we lose something, something else in the ecosystem will also collapse.

Performance and research are also mixed as the actors change roles. Kurt gives a lecture and Mia performs.

The question concerning working methods produces a deep sigh. *'We tried to meet in the field of birds and in ornithology, and see what happens.'* Kurt usually works alone. *'I'm used to analysing things when making books. It's been interesting to think about birds. I've been thinking how everything is at the same level in reality. It's just that some things are more complex.'*



'When I write books, I have to know a lot. When I perform, I don't. I don't know until later.' To Mia, to analyse the work before it is presented has been obvious and important. Kurt trusts that the performance situation will work its magic. During the performance, they conduct a study, Blue Inquiry, thus making research part of the presentation.

'If I did this performance alone, I'd let it go in a more absurd direction. It's going to be a highly visual work.' Kurt and Mia are both involved in the performance, with equal shares. There is no pedagogy involved. Science has been written into the script and is present in the artistic form and the collection of material, where words related to birds are collected. Otherwise, the performance has to do with visualising interdependence, the relationship between human beings and nature, and the transformation of metaphors into aesthetic acts. *'We compare or draw allegories between a hand and a dead or living bird, a hand in a blue picture with air and water. The feathered hand transfers certain avian characteristics to humans, the same as when we tap the microphone with the beaks of stuffed birds.'*





Kurt finds this an interesting scientific discussion. Mia is left wondering. We also imagined what would happen, if Mia did this performance in a scientific conference. According to her, they require material and analyses.

'If I took this performance to a conference, I'd have to accompany it with some theoretical background and statistics.'

'As a performance, in the context of art, this would work just as it is. Mia brings her own contribution to the performance, she's part of it. If I were alone, I'd fly higher. I think the performance would work in the same way in a scientific conference, because everybody knows what we're talking about, anyway. People might say to themselves: we might continue deeper from here.'

It is still difficult to say what change is possible in the process. Mia has enjoyed experiencing how Kurt has questioned the concept of ecosystem services, because the scientific community has done the same. It could be turned into an article – would it be possible to give a lecture on ecosystem services at the university by handling the concept so that the bird would take the central stage?



In the performance

Bird song is played

Research material is collected from the audience

A lab test is conducted by inserting a hand in a glass jar filled with feathers and water


A lecture is given

The results of the audience survey are presented

A slide show is projected on the wall

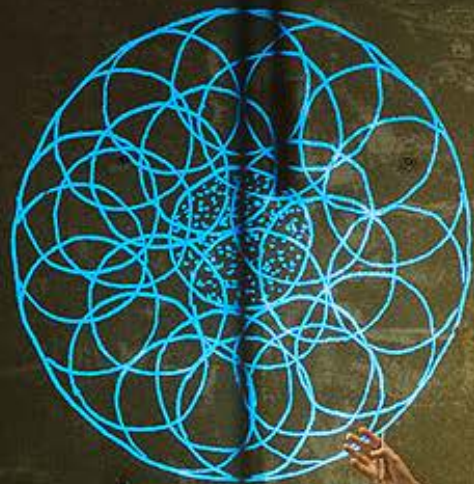
Hands are raised in a blue projection

Taxidermy birds are given a voice by tapping a microphone with their beaks

 Performance documentation
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Soito



CROSSING BORDERS TO SPACES UNKNOWN

A process constructing a collective narrative of asylum seekers and the inhabitants of a city

By performance artist and curator Márcio Carvalho and peace researcher Eeva Puumala

'We began to look at a story, rather than history, because history has always already left something out...'

'We have met in a place where there are other people as well, some of them physically present, some absent.'

'It's liberating not to have to worry about the aura of a scientist, although I'm also involved in this project specifically as a scientist.'

Eeva is delighted about the process that has swept her along. Márcio describes their cooperation as light bent through a prism. Both view the work from their own scales. The motifs of the work are related to memories and stories as well as their collection and editing. Márcio has worked with scientists before. He considers it an essential way of working. A scientist brings another layer to the project. It needs to be melted from time to time, as in the Brazilian anthropophagic movement which combines music, art and culture. The movement collects avant-garde material and melts inspirations from Europe, America and elsewhere in the world into Brazilian ones. It believes in cannibalism: when works borrowed from elsewhere are melted together, something new emerges.

In working together, a single maker loses the ownership of the production. The viewpoints on oneself and the work are transformed in co-authorship. Márcio and Eeva initially got to know each other by writing emails; Eeva sent Márcio articles, studied his earlier productions and read Nicolas Bourriaud's writings on relational aesthetics, which Márcio, too, reads. Later they also discussed Jean-Luc Nancy's philosophy of corporality, which Eeva uses in her work. Márcio and Eeva see interesting contact surfaces between philosophy and these two theories of art.

There were a number of confusing moments in their Skype talks, but conversation was also easy. That's why they were later able to examine the borders of both ways of thinking: what acquired models of interpretation, analysis and action they have, and how they can fit together. They were also interested in finding out whether it is possible to create something that neither has done in their earlier work touching on similar questions.

Eeva is interested in the political in her work, as well as the friction between individual and community or individual and structures. She studies the situations between an individual and the big picture, checking what structures can be found there and what things cannot be taken up in a community, although they exist as part of a person's life. Questions related to agency, an individual's possibilities of self-expression and their related restrictions are central to her work. Working together with Márcio has meant a study of the same things by means of different concepts. The cooperation has been an intuitive reapplication, reinterpretation and re-creation of the concepts.

Márcio and Eeva are also interested in acting at the level of praxis. They did not sit back and wait for research or interview permits, but set out to collect material from wherever it was available. They pursued the philosophical idea that in order to be able to think, a person must walk. This they applied during the residence stage. Moving began to modify the structure of the work. *'From the outset, the whole process was actually an attempt to understand and try out what Nancy means when he says that the body is "a sense in action". What happens to knowledge in this understanding, and what to science; what thoughts it gives rise to...'*





Their earlier work and objects of interest resonate to such an extent that rather than process either's existing material they decided to create something new. Eeva sent Márcio a story based on her grandmother's interview about war memories and how they affected the family. Márcio added some of the story of his own grandmother to Eeva's story. After that, one of them wrote something and the other continued it. Márcio calls these borrowed memories. He builds a landscape from the memories and places them in certain contexts. When one hears a memory, one remembers a place or a situation, and this builds into a memory of one's own.

The story continued with memories by the inmates of an old-age home which they felt were significant in relation to the memories or experiences of other people that had been presented to them. They often told about lost people. The asylum seekers whom Márcio and Eeva met talked about war and loved ones whom they had had to leave behind or who had gone lost. The story of the grandmothers was a shared, highly personal starting point which then led far away to the memories of complete strangers.

When reading Márcio's and Eeva's collectively built story, one understands that it involves the memories of several different people. But it is difficult to know where one story ends and another begins. There are people

who never actually meet, such as old people in a day care centre and asylum seekers in another part of the city. Márcio and Eeva were interested in the encounters and similarities that came up in the story and which can help us understand people coming from very different backgrounds. The story can also raise questions on how we should act, what kind of actions and relationships are possible, and what type of histories are acceptable in this particular time and space.

How were the stories collected?

Márcio and Eeva asked to hear things that people want to remember for the rest of their lives, memories that have left their imprint in their lives, something very happy, something they would like to bring back to life, and something they do not want to efface from their minds. Sometimes Márcio and Eeva asked about things that people do not want to tell others or recall. They also inquired about memories related to recent events: how life feels at the present moment, and what is important right now. According to Márcio, these were conversations where they also give something and are not in excessive control of the situation. Shared experience, they say, helps bring memories back to mind.

The artist–scientist couple were interested in what resonates with other people’s talk when they talk to certain people. When dealing with asylum seekers, for example, it may be difficult to ask for a happy memory. They might not wish to tell one. This is partly because their entire story has been constructed by others. Their stories are based on loss, threat and violence. Conversations with them require more time.

Márcio and Eeva talked to a Somali boy. He had a need to talk. There was no end to what he wanted to tell. Márcio promised that the boy’s face would not be photographed. Only his hands are visible in the video. When the boy cried, Márcio put the camera away. The moment was significant to Eeva, because it clearly showed how the encounter is more important than recording a powerful emotion for later use. The fact that this also held true to Márcio is according to Eeva strongly related to ethics and how, and in what light, people are going to be filmed and presented. *‘The construction of a victimising narrative is rarely any better as an alternative than incitement to fear and hatred. There, too, the other person is subjugated and made an object of aid and pity.’* In fact, the collection of material often involves the striking of a balance between interaction and documentation. The questions asked are not supposed to add to the damage.

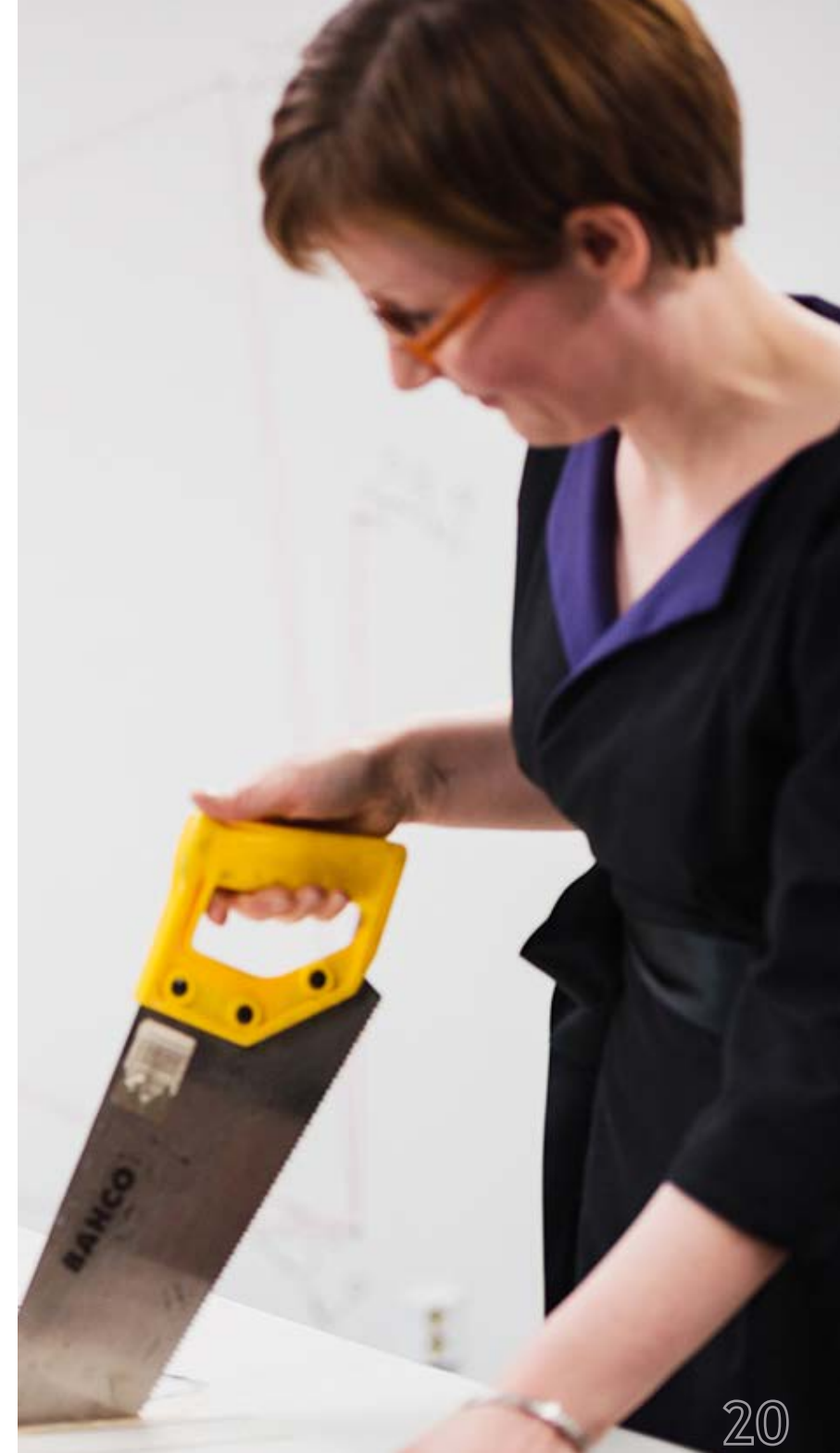




They talked to a Red Cross voluntary worker and a group of asylum seekers. They visited the police station and tried to find someone they could engage in a conversation. Some people were asked to write their memories into a story someone else had begun, while others were only engaged in talks. Márcio's and Eeva's way of working contains several experimental ways of collecting and processing material where experiences are shared and combined together.

Does the collection and interpretation of material differ from Eeva's usual working method?

What interests Eeva in the study of asylum seekers is the body, as well as the relationship between politics and ethics, or how we encounter the other person and how we go about to build a connection. She says that it has traditionally been held in political studies that the researcher should write him or herself out of the study, and not in. *'It has to do with the idea of objectivity, the transparency, repeatability and, consequently, validity of science.'* We are then dealing with a positivist conception of science, which is far from Eeva's own approach. As concerns the role of the researcher, she points out that subjective experience can never be repeated and is therefore often left in the background or written completely out of the research findings.





Eeva herself, by contrast, is interested in exposure and what possibilities it opens for research. What would be possible to learn about exposure to the other's presence in the study so that its meaning would be articulated and so that the idea of exposure is also extended further than to what takes place in the interaction between the researcher and the person researched?

She has had discussions with herself on how much she can write herself in and present findings in that light. In this process Eeva is interested in what happens when she does not need to worry about making science, but can nevertheless formulate similar questions as in research work.

Does something happen to the researcher's ethics?

Eeva doesn't think there is any difference there. In science, the ethics of the research is mostly weighed when applying for research permits and a statement from the ethical council. According to her, ethics is more how people are met, and the responsibility of doing right by people.

What about political reading?

According to Eeva what is crucial in the study is how one's own approach is placed in relation to existing traditions and discussions – the creation of either similarities or

differences. In this work, that placement was the underlying current that did not need to be specified, just like the interpretation could be left open, thus emphasising the importance of the audience's own brainwork.

In this work, things can be left more open and can then also be opened up for the audience, so that the spectators themselves can decide how to interpret the performance. There is no need to guide the process of interpretation. Márcio and Eeva also left the space open to the people they talked to and collected information from. The discussions proceeded in the space and on the conditions of the narrator.

Márcio refers to a friend and colleague who also studies memories. The friend had mentioned that his work must always be based on something that somebody else has already done, and that he needs to know everything that has happened in the field before. This can be very rewarding, but also very castrating. Art, too, has its own castrating systems, says Márcio with a laugh. When the researcher saw Márcio's performance, he commented by saying that Márcio explained in the performance how memory worked, and at the same time gave the recalled memory a bodily form.

The processes of science and art are just different. Is science safer, because it is more about truth and facts? *'When you go to see a doctor and get a drug, it helps, whereas art can take a lot more time, a lot longer before it takes effect on the body, compared with pills that have an immediate effect'*. To Márcio, art means long-term processes.

Social sciences, too, – like science all in all – are the result of lengthy processes. To be sure, its findings can be used to seek solutions to certain problems through the applications of the scientific research. That, however, takes time. *"It takes a tremendous amount of time to understand social processes and phenomena from different perspectives, such as the study of migratory movement, for example, in my own field. Applications, such as policy recommendations, are based on long-term research work, for any sustainable solutions to be achieved."* On the other hand, the functionality and viability of the applications must be reviewed critically and the developmental work continued at a long range. In other words, the process of science is time-consuming in two ways: first in developing the application and then following it up. From the scientist's viewpoint, art can react quickly to social phenomena, if need be, but its applications are often more open and the change desired through art therefore appears non-teleological, meaning that it is not used to aim at any specific goal.



In long processes, the researchers also go outside galleries and institutions, closer to people and problems – and also closer to things that are only just taking shape. The researcher will then be forced to cross the border into a space unknown to her or him. This makes openness possible, and real fragments begin to come up in the work.

In the performance:

A collective narrative on the wall


Dates and their significance are woven by threads

A story based on the memory of several people is read

Press headlines are rewritten

A number of people are carried from the audience one at a time to the middle of the floor, and their feet are photographed

A table at both sides of a wall refers to the interviews of asylum seekers by the authorities, where a wall between interviewer and interviewee prevents a true encounter

 Performance documentation
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THE SENSE OF LOSS CAN CONNECT PEOPLE ACROSS TIMES AND PLACES

A process where meaning is fragmented and the fragments build into a meaning

By performance artist Lynn Lu and Assyriologist Saana Svärd

Saana likes the idea that the presentation becomes performance art rather than a lecture. She feels, however, that getting into contact with people one to one in the middle of the performance is difficult.

Saana says that people often ask her if they found any evidence of the Arc or Eden.

We hear, to our disappointment, that they didn't.

I ask her about reality.

Saana says she builds narratives. Some people seem to think that historians seek the truth in the past, but Saana thinks that there is no objective history, only more probable and less probable opinions. And history can be written in many different ways, for various political purposes.

Lynn's work with performance is generally based on meaning which is chopped into fragments and presented in an unconventional way. Saana's work within Assyriology begins from fragments which she builds into meaningful structures. Lynn and Saana together reflect on the concept of meaning. They begin the collection of fragments as in the work of an Assyriologist and ponder how that could be turned into a performance. To Lynn, the working method this time is the reverse.

They have a piece of clay in the room. Clay is the most central material of the ancient Mesopotamia. Everything was made of clay then: houses, urns, the tablets for cuneiform writing. The whole writing system was based on the use of clay. Saana thought that they could begin by working with clay and reflect on it as both material and in its different uses in Mesopotamia. They began to model clay on the first morning of their residence. At first they modelled it into small clay tablets. Then they invented clay shells that hid a bit more inside. They discussed recording, libraries and fires. In later eras, when libraries were scavenged and destroyed, huge quantities of data were lost. When Mesopotamian libraries burned, the clay tablets survived, and fires only made the clay stronger.

The theme of loss emerged. Lynn and Saana wanted to arouse this idea in the audience, too. They collected people's stories of loss and added clay and fire to the process. The idea was that fire makes the memories and thus the people themselves stronger.

Saana had never worked with clay this concretely before. But she knows clay as material and documents inside out.

In the fire ritual, Lynn and Saana explain that they pay respect to the stories of loss and the people who tell them. They used small sheets of structure paper to jot down confessions, vanished things and lost people. The sheets were rolled up one at a time and covered with clay. On top of the clay tablet was written in cunei-form 'ḥalāqu', 'Loss.' During the performance, Saana and Lynn distributed the burnt clay tablets randomly to people who were asked to swap the clay tablets with a word or story about some precious thing. The paper rolls were placed on a white table, thereby laid full with happy things.





Saana and Lynn consider whether to take contact with their audience. Lynn usually establishes contact with the audience one at a time and at random. Her works are based on space, so that in a public space the flow of people is taken into account, how people pop up and leave as they please. Taking contact is consequently also rather unplanned. For Saana, contact with the audience takes the form of a lecture in a classroom. This time the performance deals with powerful emotions and memories arising from amidst the audience, making the situation simultaneously public and intimate. Taking contact becomes confidential, or reflective, as Lynn describes it, and the gestures of the performers are not supposed to be very spectacular, either. The spectator remains autonomous and retains the silence of secrecy and freedom of movement in the space.

Saana has in mind the simple idea of clay as material. Its three-thousand-year existence as a writing material can be reflected against our digital era, where we tend to be rather arrogant about recording and transferring information, even if we do that implicitly. *'Mesopotamian cultures have moulded western civilisation long before the times of Greek and Arab cultures, but nobody ever mentions it anywhere.'* One can travel to a far-away country by plane and try to understand what is going on in site. Far-away cultures have to be accessed via texts and objects. Saana has translated texts on clay tablets in her studies. *'Mesopotamian writing is polyvalent, and I enjoy explaining it to people.'*



The idea of the performance is to move between the Mesopotamian and personal contexts. The loss theme relates to the talk about a lost civilisation. It also refers to the millions of refugees fleeing from the war in Iraq and Syria. In the unassuming rituals of the performance, the mind of the spectator wanders among the asylum seekers, in feelings of helplessness and uncertainty. The feeling of loss can unite people across time and space. And of course we also have in mind what is happening in Mesopotamia right now – the systematic destruction of the monuments of an ancient culture. One wonders, did we all in the audience write down an identical sentence about what we would like to conserve?

The opening of the working process to the audience introduces a new dimension to subjective interpretation. We hear what it was like for a performance artist and an Assyriologist to work together. With Saana, Lynn built the work into an aesthetic experience. She hoped that the spectator would take something along of the fragmentation of meaning. The process is supposed to be transparent.



In the performance


The making of clay tablets is shown in a video
Another video presents the burning ritual of
the clay tablets

A polyphonic work about people's losses is
read out behind a wall

Lynn and Saana collect texts on precious
things from the audience

Lynn and Saana ask people to put their
rolled-up writings on the table and pick up a
clay tablet

Lynn and Saana read each other letters
describing their process

 Performance documentation
See the link on the next page





IMAGINE THERE IS NO EARTH

A process exercising active cosmology

By performance artist Leena Kela
and researcher of phenomenological
cosmology Kaisa Henttunen

'So you will have half of the portion of the universe on you.'
(Geologist Olav Eklund to performance artist Leena Kela)

A cosmologist grunts distantly at the idea of a performance artist trying to understand herself in relation to dark energy.

The performance artist considers the linguistic and functional melting together as well as the interpretation to be so difficult that she is ready to accept that there may be nothing else to present at the end of the residence than the process without the final outcome. 'Then the essential question will be the very attempt at understanding and how it was examined.'

In performance, failure is one possible working method.

Does science speak of the mistakes it has made and its failures too seldom?

It all began from an effort to understand the other person. Leena and Kaisa have discovered a place where the interests of both meet, from different perspectives, but on some sort of common ground. They laugh and explain their own and each other's ideas. Experimental methods are emerging into the community, with a shade of the implements of understanding from both fields.

They decided to present their work or phase of work in the old observatory of Tähtitorninmäki and underground in the old water tank under the hill. The observatory tower is on the highest spot of the capital city, which serves to determine the work and produces ideas for both its form and duration.



Leena and Kaisa examine linguistic processes. They jot down notes and texts using free association, 'first there's no end to the ideas, then doubt sets in'. Both are confident that the work can be framed in the end. Leena has been thinking how physical activity and working with concrete objects give rise to metaphors. Even Kaisa needs metaphors as she speaks of cosmology outside her own field, where calculations are not necessarily the thing. Mathematics often comes with the problem of verbalisation. *'It's translating in a way, talking through the mathematics under study. With complete accuracy, it can only be spoken of by using mathematics.'*

They both feel that metaphors fit their process well, because they are trying to bring together two different languages, those of cosmology and performance. In cosmology, we are dealing with adjustment to scale. When speaking about the universe, we no longer speak of human-sized things or something that should reflect to human beings. It moves somewhere where human beings in a way no longer exist. How, then, is a functional approach even possible?

The vocabulary of astrology is scanty in the Finnish language. It would, for example, have been impossible to do Kaisa's thesis in Finnish, because all the material is in

English. Only some of the concepts have been translated into Finnish. The English vocabulary is growing all the time, as some of the theory structures only emerged a few years ago. *'When there are mathematical equations that need to be talked about, we can invent names for them, and after that certain names are always used to mean certain things, such as scalar field or differential equation. They are words that people have at some moment in time decided to provide with a particular meaning. They are not metaphors, just agreed coinages, like a round cow, for example.'*

Leena's and Kaisa's performance is going to express models of dark energy, and the episodes constructed from them are 'formulas of understanding' to Leena. They might proceed towards an even more scantily explained model. 'It could be done with two noodles. We could show how we have tried first one and then the other branch, and no solution has been found and we are in a situation where we wonder what exactly we ought to do, and what to change. Two separate noodles would be a bimetric theory, where there are two metrics, two time-spaces, so the two noodles would be the time-spaces, and then we could mix them together somehow...'

They muse on what the language of performance is and what the language of mathematics. Their language is currently between the two, emerging, as it were. What does that mean? They try to grasp the other's concepts and sometimes give up, when they are unable to adopt the other's mode of operation. The new language contains both verbal and acting parts. They are a collection of language based on action and action based on theory. The language also collects surprising or reverse meanings between action and objects.

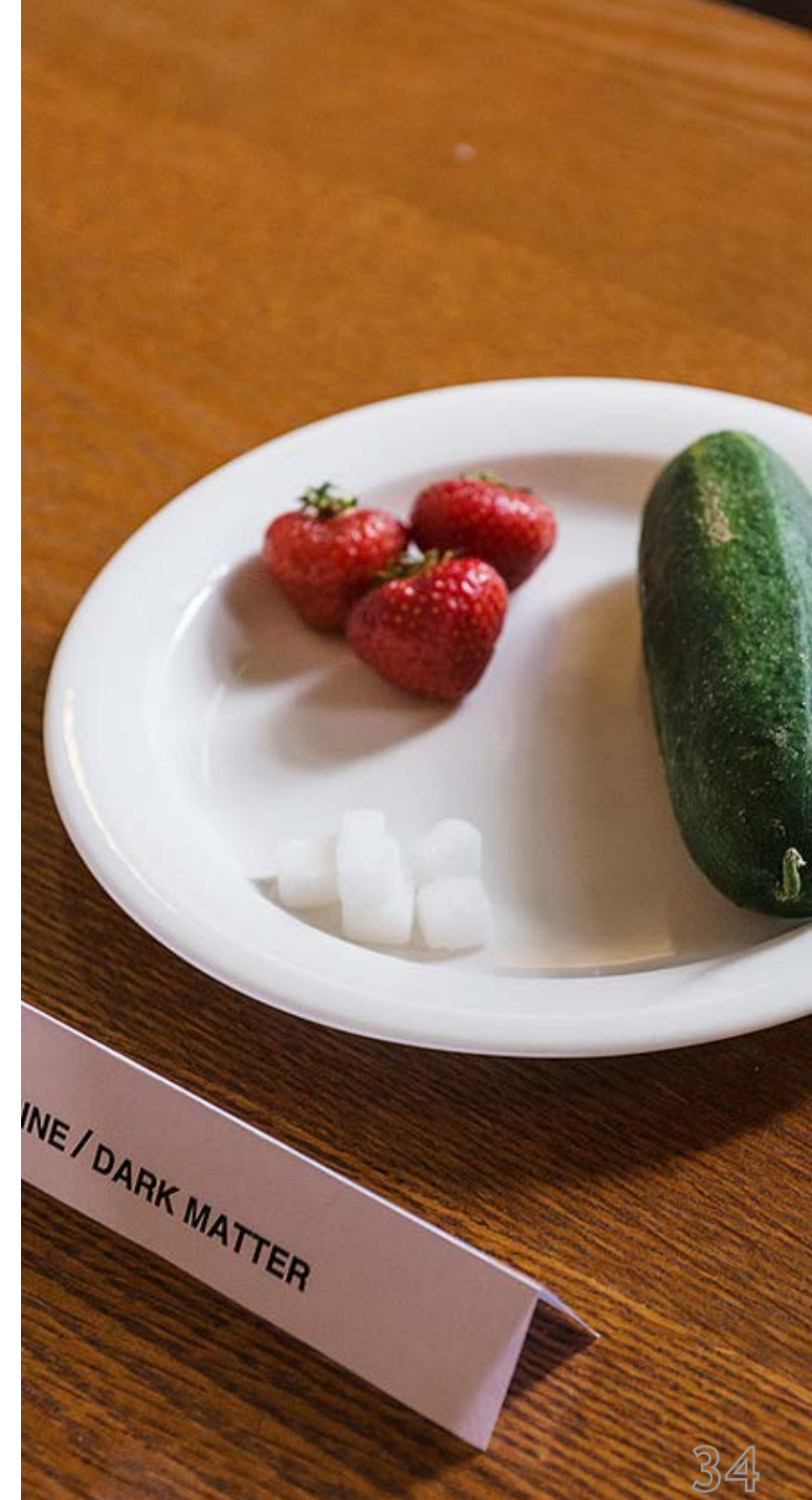
Leena said she had begun to understand cosmology, when she imagined the explosion Kaisa described as a balloon inflated by cigar smoke. But she also fears that they might be simplifying too much and that she taken in charge something that lies in someone else's research area. The process has also included bewilderment and doubt, but they actually seem to lead into confidence between the two actors. They play at combining things. Dark energy which Kaisa studies leaves ample room for imagination. In science, it is a problematic phenomenon: *'we have observed it but lack a final explanation for it.'* Researchers continue to create new theories for the different areas of dark energy. No single researcher can study dark energy in its entirety. Kaisa's research deals with the variation of the gravitation theory of dark energy and how it compares with scalar sensor theory.





In the performance, the audience's eyes are covered with eye masks. They are asked to *'imagine there are no other people, imagine there are no walls, imagine there is no Earth, and imagine there is no...'* – to be in this time-space and simultaneously in a world where everything has been effaced. They take the audience to cosmological concepts where observation is possible. At the round tables, Leena and Kaisa begin to test their recipes.

The authors explain that they are cooking basic masculine “hard-core food” in the kitchen. They take hold of cosmology, thus engaging in a feminist praxis. The situation resembles cooking shows on television, where a professional cook and a reporter discuss food, the world and the ways of preparing food, every now and then uncovering a steaming pot, adding spices, tasting and humming. *'When the action dialogue of cooking starts, we speak as little as possible.'* In the performance, Leena has notes on cosmological concepts behind food processors and bowls. The front sides of the tables display the mathematical formulas of the recipes. Their aim is to create a space-like space that has no essence. The few lines are exchanged by using the theoretical concepts, to which they add food ingredients. The kiwi becomes a metaphor of dark energy. They do not talk about it as a kiwi.





They use kitchen language, which they have modified together. The functions contained in the language deal with spatial space in moments when alien substances become attached to it. *'The curve of time-space, a cosmological constant, general relativity theory... I snatch this and that, small grains of sand from here and there... and now I think.'* Kaisa hopes that the performance opens up ways of thinking about different possibilities, how one could try to approach dark energy. Leena works with everyday life: *'When you tip it over a bit, into something different, your own activities and daily life itself acquire a different meaning.'* She hopes that they would open up a possibility to view and understand the world from new angles.

They have changed roles during the process, practised handling concepts, grasping with hands... They have peeked into each other's fields, entered into an imaginary universe, exercised theoretical negotiations and written minimalist dialogue. They have tried to grasp whole unities – plates and space.

In the performance

On the lower stories, a room is surrounded by television sets showing space documents

There is a fruit arrangement on one of the tables

Upstairs, people are given eye-masks

Leena and Kaisa look out of the observatory windows saying, 'Imagine there is no...

The eye-masks are removed

Leena and Kaisa put on aprons and start cooking according to the recipes on three round tables

The formulas of the recipes are:

LCDM Punch


Scalar Smoothie

Back Reaction Salad

Bimetric Noodle Soup

Curvature Coffee

Dark energy is experienced in the basement of the adjacent building.

 Performance documentation
See the link on the next page



HEAR THAT? IT'S THE STONE AGE RATTLING

A process working concretely with sound

By sound archaeology researcher Riitta Rainio and performance and sound artist Juha Valkeapää

Riitta discovered in her research that the bones found in the burial ground with holes drilled through had been sound-producing objects that can also be interpreted as musical instruments. *'One might think that the dead have danced in their graves and produced sounds in a protective sound field as they went along.'*

Riitta finds the room with rattlers and the installation startling. She wonders where it will tune the audience. Dental jewellery of this size has probably never been reconstructed and given to people to wear. Nor has an emotional space the like of a burial ground been built where tooth amulets rattle against the head, shells and bones scratch the feet and bird feathers tickle the skin.

The second visual part of the work is a pass to the Underworld. *'Paradoxically enough, people won't see very much of it at all in the dark.'* *If people saw the bones too clearly, they would begin to dodge them, and that would be at the expense of*

listening to the work. With the field of vision lined off, people have to rely on their other senses. The work is primarily based on the senses of hearing, touch and smell. There are stones and fragments of bones on the floor, making out the pass that the audience walks through.

'It seems strange now that sound archeology is studied without sounds. Normally, I have to transform sound to image. Articles are the scientific context. It's risky to take bone instruments through customs, so I usually present photographs.'

'Art does not justify what it shows by argument like science does, but the end result may still be the same. Both listen to findings.'

How do we proceed from here organically?



'This is the lower jaw of an elk. The teeth are removed, arranged in a row like a pendant and set in the skirt hem or worn round the arm or ankle; it rattles like the Stone Age.'

Riitta has studied the sound world of the Stone Age for several years. Sound archaeology is a rising discipline in the world, she says, there are now about one researcher per country. She is currently interested in getting to study the topic in an experimental setting, and as whole entities. *'Up till now, I've been measuring teeth and studying the traces of their use with a microscope, together with my colleagues. With Juha, we embark on the level of the sound world.'*

During the summer before the residence, Riitta has been removing teeth from the jaws of elks and wild boars and Juha has been going through his archives of bird sounds in case they should need the sounds of birds in their work. Riitta spent some time in a burial ground in Gotland, recording the sounds of the cemetery, the sea and the auks. Eighty-five graves were unearthed there from 1980 to the 2000s. They have been studied throughout. The bones have been subjected to animal analysis, so we know what types of animals were moving in the area. Plant and pollen analyses enable a reconstruction of the paleo plant environment of the area. Among others, objects than can be interpreted as musical instruments have been found in the burial ground. The sound world of

the burial ground is Riitta's research material. There might be 350 animal teeth in a single grave, each with a hole through the root. From that we knew that the teeth had been charms or pendants. Drawings of the graves show how the tooth jewellery is positioned in relation to the human body. They form rows or bundles on the neck, knees or arms. One can see that they have probably been hung on people's clothes. They make a light jingle. The use of pendants in festive rituals has been a wide-spread cultural phenomenon. They were not suitable for hunting or daily chores, because they are valuable and might break. Together with an osteologist and a use-wear analyst, Riitta has made use-wear microanalyses of the Gotland burial ground as well as similar jewels unearthed in Russia.

'They are incredibly worn out, when you look at them under a microscope. You can tell from the scratches and dents that they have made a particular sound. And it was only in the end that they were hung on the deceased, to jingle on the way to the Underworld, or so that, when they have arrived in the afterlife, the jewels will make a similar sound.' The sound has been experienced as magic, and in rituals it had a protective role.

Riitta says she now thinks about her research in a more relaxed and comprehensive way, musing on what the findings mean in practice and how they felt in their own environment. She has earlier done reconstructions, instruments to make sound samples with, and the latter she has presented in an appendix. This time the sound is transferred to a larger context; *'we get to know what the cemetery on the seashore sounded like, and how the sound world there was all in all.'*

Besides people, there are animal bones and waste, bones of wild boar and remains of seals in the graves and round them. *'The Stone Age cemetery on Gotland is a dunghill, a site for waste processing, where the sacred and the perfectly vulgar meet, and that's a completely marvellous and organic idea. We can even deduce from it what the Stone Age human being's soulscape or world view have been like, where everything is intertwined and linked together... whereas we are terribly analytic and in our own little boxes. What we have there is pure synthesis. A human being can be seen as waste exactly like the skinned and cut carcass of a seal. Or we can also think that the seal is equally valuable as the human being, laid out in the grave with all those fancy burial gifts.'*





The sound work will include a small part borrowed from another performance, where the audience played recorders. In Juha's view, the sound reflects the gaudy nature of the tomb, as there will have been an incredible smell, with food remains and dead corpses scattered together in the same place in a natural way. The recorders serve to emphasise the gaudiness. Riitta agrees with the interpretation of gaudiness. A burial ground is full of seagulls and carrion birds, with wild boars rooting about for waste. The site is right on the sea, making it too windy to be habitable. The roar of waves is tremendous. And one's imagination immediately adds the dead people dancing in their graves... Today, the sounds of cemeteries are very different. They are quiet places for the deceased to rest while waiting for Judgment Day. Only certain types of sounds are allowed there. Church bells toll sacred peace. Loud noises are forbidden, and it is preferable that no extra sounds are audible from the outside world. As far as sound is concerned, the place is restricted.

The sound work consists of one day: morning, day, evening and night. Cemetery, noise and screaming... *'It has understood how our being here is a journey. The body turns to dust, the journey goes on, and the jewellery offers protection during the trip.'* That gave the idea of the corridor in the installation, a kind of small journey in itself.

'How are we here? We should listen to the other person. We tend to forget that. Love and death are important to me.'

Juha makes performances both alone and together with others. He sees no major difference in this project as compared with his other work. He chooses different methods and objects for each of his works. In an installation you have to think of a person's movement concretely. People need to make an effort to move ahead in the corridor or make a sound with the bone jewels. With these activities, Riitta and Juha thought they would transfer the thought process to the spectators. *'Then it's no longer a question of our ideas, but what the space brought forth in an individual as such.'* It is a tangible method.

Riitta does not see any difference between this project or the work done with an osteologist, for instance. *'One is in charge of one thing and the other of another, there's no problem, as we continually feed the other person through discussions. Both can work on their own conditions and both have clear borders. In a scientific article I'm all the time inside my head, where I've imagined the sound world, the seagulls and the sea. In this work, we create a sensual world. We transfer ourselves from inside the head to the world of the senses. One can imagine that too, to be sure, but it takes a lot of effort and reading; I'm interested in the transfer.'* We speculate on a method where the movement is out from inside the head.



They discuss how our world is made for eyes and how we think about visual things far more than acoustic ones, even though there are sounds everywhere and the noise is disturbing everyone. Riitta's and Juha's working method is also listening. *'You have to know how to listen to burial finds.'*

They have worked together on a performance, not created an artwork out of Riitta's work. For them, the work is also science, for example in the study of the kind of movement musical instruments produce in people. One wonders if research findings could be presented like this in scientific contexts, too. The audience listening to the lecture would walk along a corridor, feeling the pebbles under their feet... Reconstructed spaces make understanding more comprehensive. Juha describes it as doing immersive performances: *'The work can grab you in its arms and envelop you altogether.'* Riitta has built instruments of bones before, but has never actually tried *'what kind of movement or dance the instruments tune people into'*.

Tiny hints and signs are used to build entire sound worlds. Riitta has not written about the sense of touch yet, *'but I have of combining smell and sound. And about the experience of space.'* This work is presented in old vaulted cellars. We descend to the Underworld, several layers down in history. Back in the street, we can still hear the echo of the rattlers rattling.




The Stone Age sound installation consists of three parts:

1. An immaterial part, with nothing but sound. (The sounds of seagulls, auks and swans, the scooping up of shells, the sound of waves, Riitta's bone instrument recordings, tooth rattlers, a bird pipe borrowed from an earlier performance work.)

2. A material part, with a corridor built of round pebbles, seaweed, animal bones and bird feathers, where the spectator produces sound by stepping on broken bones and stones and bumping into bones and feathers hanging from the ceiling.

3. An activity part, where people are decorated with tooth jewellery and rattlers. They are instructed to move according to an experimental Stone Age choreography.

 Performance documentation
See the link on the next page





IS A THIRD WAY POSSIBLE?

A process breaking loose of the division into art and science

By artist Joshua Sofaer and cognitive neuroscientist Mikko Sams

'We live in an era of neuro hype: neurocinematics, neuroeconomy, neuroaesthetics, and so on and so forth. People think that when the brain is measured, things become more real.'

'People have always been fascinated by how the brain works, because we locate the core of our activity in the brain.'

The artist and the neuroscientist explain that they are creating something genuinely new, with consequent artistic and scientific results. Yet even more than that, they are trying to create a third way by operating through the key methods and hypotheses of both. It means being in the Between and working together by searching for a new way of understanding.

'There are certain conventions for producing texts to be accepted for presentation and publication, so to produce an experimental text like this has not been an insignificant change for me.'

'What could be the final outcome? It might be awareness of selfhood, the self, which would be the broadest of all.'

'It's a question of understanding the world, rather than of science or art.'

They explain that they are working on neither's land, where there are more degrees of freedom - and perhaps possibilities, too.

Mikko visited Joshua in London. They got to know each other and clicked. *'Luckily, the contact was congruent.'* They presented their own works, links and essential texts, and engaged in cultural talks on a broad basis. They created a timetable for the work, wondering what could be achieved in ten days, and what it would be possible to perform as a result. They also began to be interested in working together deeper and at a longer term.



Three shared areas of interest became outlined between them: in-group bias, social self, and the concept of suspension of disbelief. In-group bias is one of the basic concepts of sociology and studies the way people form groups. Mikko speaks of people's need to form groups, with the family and loved ones as the base, a grouping you cannot discard, nor is there any need to. Our whole life is forming groups. We have groups we join and identify with. This leads to the creation of borders, too; we line ourselves out of something and line others out. This is where prejudices come along: we think we know what is going on in the other group. That's why we also have negative grouping. It is a mechanism constantly active in society. It is the reason for xenophobia and discrimination; racism stems from the grouping mechanisms. Everyone knows the concept, but not exactly yet what it is all about. It is a fundamental mechanism and a socially important theme that can have its own policy.

Social self was another concept where Joshua and Mikko found a problem field in common. They have both worked on the theme using their own methods. As a theme, social self is huge. It therefore also comes with the risk of producing nothing but commonplaces. The topic can also be vulnerable.

Suspension of disbelief was originally the poet and philosopher Samuel Taylor Coleridge's concept. It means plunging in or transferring to the imaginary, a space where we let go of reality. *'We are both nonbelievers in God. We wondered if this concept could be used to explain why people keep their childish faith. Cinema theory has used it ever since. We were thinking of the suspension of disbelief as something wider than literature and films.'* The concept is equally unfamiliar to both Joshua and Mikko.

They began to experiment how a paradigm could be transformed in cooperation between an artist and a scientist, what is sustainable there, what might get funding, and what might be fruitful in the work. Art can offer an alternative structure for making a scientific experiment. In science, the end result is a scientific paper, while in art the process, to induce the creation of something new is equally if not more important, alongside the end result. Joshua and Mikko say they had drafted impossible provocative plans for each other, which they then swapped. The summer before their residence, they worked and discussed within their own and others' work. They began the residence in Mikko's laboratory. *'I want Joshua to see the environment.'* They describe their cooperation as textual rather than action based.



'When I see Joshua's works, I think that I'd like to do that myself. They've made an impression on me. His way of working is systematic, too, and I guess that he too builds hypotheses.' Mikko refers to the experimental St Mathew Passion produced by Joshua for Folkoperan in Stockholm. In it, the opera singers tell about their own experiences, beautiful but also difficult. Their narratives were then combined to be performed by video in conjunction with the opera. Mikko had seen an experimental version of St Mathew Passion produced by the Berlin Philharmonics together with Peter Sellars. In it, people walked about and touched each other. By discussing these works, Joshua and Mikko searched for a joint storyline for their work.

'I don't want to illustrate Mikko's neuroscientific research. What interests me is if we can create something new together, and that's the reason why we drafted the four-year research plan.' Joshua explains how his attitude to the cooperation has changed. *'At first I thought that I was going to learn all sorts of things about how the brain works; now I'm thinking of what it is that I get back'. Art is going to be part of every stage of their planned research. Art practice is a mechanism they will study as well as a stimulant for the research. They also think they can study their theme by means of art from outside the material itself. According to Joshua, art can still manifest the research findings one way or the other, when the work is finished. 'I don't want to say that we do better research in this way, but we can perform art that knows the theme and is present every step of the research process.'*



Neuroscience tells us what happens in the human brain, what a human being's psychic abilities and mechanisms are, and what brain activities are related to the transfer from one reality to another, for example. What makes it possible for us to forget everything else and be capable of an emotional experience? Why is it so fascinating? How can it happen? 'I use all the theory areas of neuroscience, including sociology and social psychology.'

Psychological tools are easier and used to study moods for example. There is also the thermal imaging camera which can be used to measure facial temperatures that vary according to the autonomous nerve system; excitement, for instance, can be measured. If it were possible, they would also like to study the reactions of the audience, but the research is difficult to conduct. *'A lot of researchers are going in that direction, but we aren't. Yet.'*

REALITY CHECK MECHANISM
PARTICIPATORY RESPONSE
PROVOKED CONFABULATION
SUSCEPTIBILITY TO EMOTIONAL ATTACHMENT





Concerning their cooperation, Joshua and Mikko point out that there has been no field-based expertise between them that would have represented knowledge “closed” to the other. They have shared the will to communicate, mutual trust, the will to understand the other person carefully, what the other person is saying and how one should formulate one’s own questions. The methods in the cooperation have been reading, writing, discussions and also writing together. *‘We haven’t moved in space yet. We’ll need to do that.’* They see the Floating Platforms performance as an intermediary stage, perhaps slightly artificial – but simultaneously anticipating how art is going to show in the research and what will be the forms in which it is going to be done.

In their plan, parts of which are shown in the performance:

1. The research topic is articulated.
2. Joshua creates a stimulus to be used in the tests. There will be short films that he will produce together with artists. The tests will mostly use already existing material, or relatively elementary narratives will be made for a particular test, because this is not a cinema production - in this plan, the films will become small, independent works of art.
3. The research data is reported, and a few experimental performances will be made, if possible, so that they will work on the data or serve to analyse the data further onto the next stage. This could involve the development of reality checking mechanisms, for example.
4. Once the main material has been collected, the aim is to turn it into a performance where we have familiarised ourselves with the material. It may consist of manipulating the concept of suspension of disbelief, for instance, or interaction between a personal and an aesthetic experience.

'If we get the longer project started, I hope that Joshua can be present in the first tests, to see how we do them and also observe what the restrictions of research situations are. Our measuring instruments are extremely complex. There's plenty of arcane data, and a lot has been filtered off the final images, before we can see a picture in beautiful colours... We've also planned for Joshua to be there in the analysis of the findings, when artistic and psychological thinking merge.'

They go through the research plan during the performance. At the beginning, Joshua makes a speech.

In the second section, Mikko tells a story which begins in reality and slips into fiction.

In the third section, they offer their audience whisky and vodka and discuss mundane matters.

At the end, Mikko plays the guitar and Joshua sings and talks about Leonard Cohen's song Hallelujah with some of his own lyrics added. The words are true but, performed as a song, it becomes fiction.





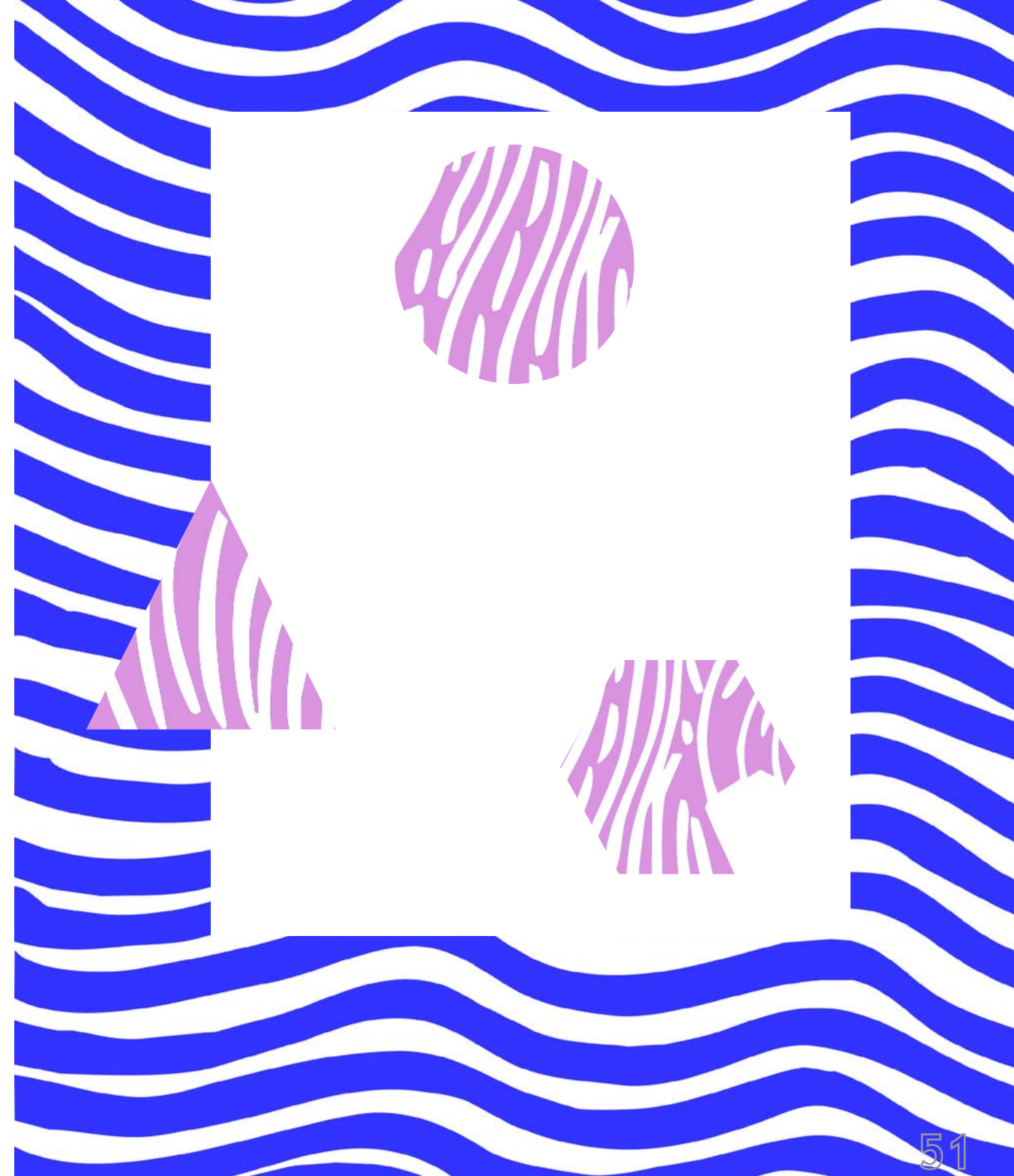
REALITY CHECK MECHANISM

PARTICIPATORY RESPONSE

3. DISCUSSIONS DURING THE RESIDENCY PERIODS

*Riitta Rainio & Juha Valkeapää
Kaisa Henttunen & Leena Kela
Mia Rönkä & Kurt Johannessen
Saana Svärd & Lynn Lu
Eeva Puumala & Márcio Carvalho
Mikko Sams & Joshua Sofaer*

The discussions open up different themes towards the processes and the working methods. The discussions took place in the middle of the residency periods while working in Turku.





DISCUSSION: Riitta Rainio & Juha Valkeapää



DISCUSSION: Kaisa Henttunen & Leena Kela



DISCUSSION: Mia Rönkä & Kurt Johannessen



DISCUSSION: Saana Svärd & Lynn Lu



DISCUSSION: Eeva Puumala & Márcio Carvalho



DISCUSSION: Mikko Sams & Joshua Sofaer

4. WHO WITH?

Text by Mari Krappala

Translation from Finnish by Kaisa Sivenius

The fusion of science and performance art

Did I know you from somewhere?

Navigation

Parallel ways of thinking

A space of ramifications



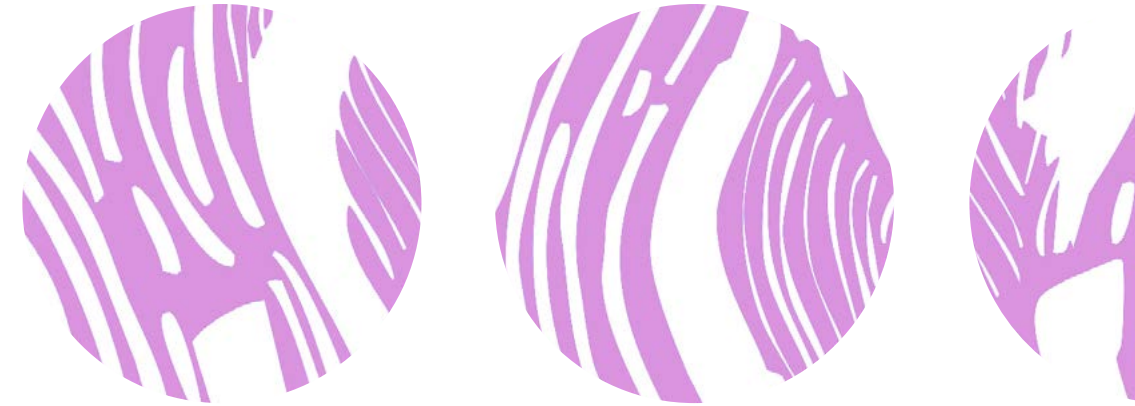
This section is based on the six art/science productions presented above and what I as a mentor and member of the planning team saw during the work process (and was permitted to disclose).

WHO WITH?

The fusion of science and performance art

When the institutions of art and science meet, the conventions of the fields cease to frame the work. New perspectives and approaches are invented and developed further. In this series of six productions, the work took place in an experimental space between two experts. The series was a start, the development of an idea and a small section of activity which still continues its organic process in the form of production performances on various fora and as new plans for work.

The history of art and science includes actors, works and working methods where science and art have met. The flow of flux and combination of different fields form the basic tone of the fusion. The flux subtly broke loose from stable constructions. John Cage's and Jonas Mekas's "attitude pro style" made an inviting intermedium out of the ideas of mobile working methods. Cinema combines document and drama, as in the brand new *Deadweight* directed by Axel Koenzen, where fact and fiction are linked together in both the working method of the shooting and in the completed film.



Science and art are not necessarily always very far from each other, though they are often thought of as opposites. Both search, and both develop and construct works and realities further. Both need imagination to find what they are seeking or to be able to move. Both set the goal of introducing something new, creating space, giving a voice to something hitherto unknown – and contribute to building a better world with an ethical attitude. Everyday life, too, combines science and art. We have daily activities where scientific knowledge and the artistic way overlap, such as in coding, preparing Paleo food, watching panorama videos, or in pre-sleep rituals. An organic movement between science and art is found in surprising places and sometimes in very mundane forms.

Universities, festivals, exhibitions, individual curators, scientists and artists combine science and art in individual tasks as well as collaborative projects between experts of different fields. The aim is to find alternative working methods, research methods and ways of representation – sometimes even completely novel forms of works.

Those may include immaterial events with no fixed time or place which are mobile and in a continuous process of transformation. Their purpose is also to leave traces, or make a statement, but in some other form than conservation.

The importance of feelings rose to the fore when art and science were processed simultaneously. Regardless of the discipline, the outlining of varying emotional scales was deemed important in the series of six productions, from the search for ancient feelings to future vistas opened up by neuroscience. Contact with audience was also more direct. The researchers found the presentation of the end result rewarding, because feedback was immediate – only a few days after the interviews, the material was already being presented in public. That was quite different from the process of preparing a scientific article, which with its research licences and peer reviews is months or years ahead.

Even some artistic productions last several years, so interventions of this kind are only one possible form of productions. A process may be light and yet send a weighty message. In summer 2015, the issues of refugees, immigration and mass movement in and to Europe were discussed everywhere, both in the media and in intercommunication between people. A sociologist and performance artist oriented to communal art only needed a short term of cooperation to bring significant questions of encountering another person at both social and personal levels for the audience to consider.

Artistic and scientific activity is both critical and inventive, and sometimes starts from and is based on entirely fictional reality. In 1999 Hans Ulrich Obrist invited the eminent Bruno Latour to actually curate a show within the show, and Latour came up with the idea of table top experiments. He curated a series of public lectures and demonstrations where scientists, artists and architects would publicly present either a new or an old experiment.¹ Their idea was to test what disseminating art and science broader than in the conventional way might effectuate.

We talk about "bridging the gap between disciplines". Interdisciplinarity and transdisciplinarity, dialogue and transparency are present everywhere. According to Homi Bhabha "in-betweenness is a fundamental condition of our time". We travel from one field of knowledge to the other. The movement involves an effort to create a "pool of knowledge".

What is the role of performance in cooperation with researchers and what types of contents in the different disciplines should be put to test in joint work? How does a performance artist master a situation described by a scientist from the outside as an attempt to embrace a half universe? Or how does a scientist feel when a verbal report of research material is transformed into a multisensory space? The series of six productions was born in cooperation within a scientific/artistic symposium of universities. In the Floating Platforms project, performance art was accompanied with Assyriology, sound archaeology, ecobiology, animal philosophy, human rights sociology, neuroscience and cosmology. The scientific themes were remodelled into bodily and action-based knowledge. An artistic working method was applied to think up an idea, collect research material, analyse and disseminate.

The working methods of the invited performance artists differed. Some concentrated on the conceptual or verbal process, others put together happenings with an orientation of communal art, and some performed immersively. There were also those who work fragmentarily and take contact with their audience at a very intimate, one-to-one level, and others who are aesthetically oriented and give their works a poetic form, and also more process-oriented authors for whom the external format remains insignificant in comparison to the activity itself and the atmosphere it creates.

1. <http://www.artfacts.net/index.php/pageType/newsInfo/newsID/3851/lang/1>

The scientist–artist pairs were arranged a joint time and space, but were otherwise free to come up with their own way of being. The planning team was interested in finding out what will happen when scientific knowledge, truth, theory or probability is transformed into action. What does knowledge become like when it is studied in a communal space and the process is allowed to continue with an audience? We also inquired into the metamorphoses of art when it is processed by partly scientific criteria. Is it possible to merge the two?

Some of the pairs started from a performance rehearsal, others from conceptual problems. One of the scientists suggested working on clay, another took the artist to his science laboratory. One artist presented their visual work to the researcher, with the researcher’s diagrams repeated in its form, another asked the researcher to lie by their side on the floor, and listen with eyes closed how it feels when the human scale is not required as the departure point for understanding. The pairs discussed, wrote and perambulated. All were keen on finding a phenomenon that would interest them both. There was a continuous shift between art and science. A hermeneutic circle, and how knowledge is transformed and accumulates came under discussion.

The rehearsals and the collection of research material did not seem to belong to either party’s field specifically. There was a tone of critical thinking in the activity, but simultaneously the awareness of opening up multiple realities; one researcher said she now thought of her research topic more broadly and freely. As the plan progressed, the artist’s responsibility for the form of the final production increased in almost all cases. All the performances took place either at art festivals or science/art happenings. Both had an audience that was open to experimental activity.

As in jazz, fusion refers to the approach rather than a particular style, so here, too, the work of the six pairs contained a number of experimental openings, improvisations and (instead of solos) duos. As in fusion jazz, the suffix jazz is left out altogether, so when the music no longer sounds like traditional jazz at all, one might also ask whether the time has come to leave out the prefixes science and art and only talk about fusion, with no particular emphasis on two different starting points at all, in *a silent way*.

Did I know you from somewhere?

The pairs began their work together almost as on a blind date. We used the same metaphor in our planning team when searching for suitable pairs. When the work began, many of the pairs said they had been working on the same theme individually before, but with different methods. At the end of the work, even the walking styles of some of the pairs seemed to be in synchrony. In all six cases, meeting a new person was involved. In many cases, performance art was not the most familiar art form to the scientist, nor had the artist necessarily ever visited the researcher’s field of study.

As always, it all began by greetings and introductions, descriptions of one’s own work and interests, shaking off one’s prejudices and fears and listening to a new person – as well as getting used to the other’s presence. The dynamic between two people was built by different means in the productions. To some, personal positioning was essential, the similarity of the other, or the relationship between you-and-me; similar preferences in tea ceremonies, sharing the reasons for concern over the world,

the ways of seeking "truths", and the wish to make a change or quite concretely discover the chores of living together (some of the pairs actually lived in the same flat or as each other's neighbours throughout the residence). Some made provocative plans for each other, while others embarked on a joint task-oriented process more single-mindedly – or simply did not disclose what had happened in their first encounter. In one case, sound brought the two actors together, and the production started from listening to audio material. One pair found a shared interest in studying birds. In some cases, several attempts at starting were required before the phenomenon to study was discovered. There were more performance artists wishing to work with neurology than the project had resources to arrange. A production related to geology was left to wait for a future time.

In questions of ethics and responsibility, consensus prevailed. This created perhaps the most significant space for a potential shared creative state. In one interview, both artist and researcher made the decision to stop filming at the same time; to both, to be with the person interviewed was more important than the collection of material, how they actually were in the situation and how the person interviewed was treated. In another case, surrealistically floating talk and analytical critique crossed in a tangible, concrete point of defending the rights of animals. Some also talked about compatible attitudes: "... we are responsible for the world and it's going to show in our work one way or the other."

We chose both scientists and artists whose work we considered sustainable or singular. During the mentoring, I repeatedly heard how the pairs felt the finding of a shared melody as a true opening, sometimes accompanied by the feeling of having known the other person already. *"We met in a place (in stories, material, or physically) where there were other people as well..."* *"We found the same meanings in the works."* *"I suppose that her/his way of working is similar to mine: systematic, based on building hypotheses..."* Someone saw their own family member in their pair.

Navigation

Stand straight.

Imagine you are in a space that is between looking backwards and hoping to find something you can explain, and looking forward, hoping to find something you cannot explain.²

Jump as high as you can.

Imagine that you are not the one jumping, but that you are the jump.

If you land,

imagine that you are not the one who is landing, but that you are the landing.³

Communities of experts in various fields have become such a common working method that it is difficult now to even imagine working alone. There is communality in both art and science. Nevertheless, each community or pair creates their own working methodology, because the context where the activity could be reduced sways between two or more – or only appears in the course of the process. The denominator in the working methods is navigation; all try to determine the place or direction, and consequently, search for a possible context.

The position of the navigator is outlined as distances and directions, in relation to existing places or by breaking loose from prevalent models. Motion and position change, when a new context begins to take shape.

2. Johannessen Kurt, 2015. Other Other Other Exercises. www.zeth.no

3. Johannessen Kurt, 2015. Other Other Other Exercises. www.zeth.no

How was navigation apparent in the six productions? Art was present at all stages of the interventions. The interventions might also have been furnished with scientific research dilemmas. Some of the pairs did in fact conceptualise their process in a scientific format from time to time.

Artistic activity became a mechanism for research: clay was modelled, a playful space was created for an interview, a poet's expression was chosen as a means of charting feelings, kitchen utensils were collected to materialise energy, bones were formed into jewellery, a scientific concept was fragmented into graphs, associations, metaphysical reality... Scientific thinking retained its own suspense in the activity: it questioned, reviewed critically and tested contexts; how would this work in a scientific community, what are we going to convey to the spectator, and what will happen to the processed data. Joint questions included those of the possibility of political change as well as the importance of an ethical attitude.

Art also became an object for study: the final presentations were more performances than scientific presentations – which of course does not mean that they would not work in science communities. Many of the presentations could have been a collection of material for a scientific study, (the main) part of a conference presentation or, why not, the start of a problem-solving panel discussion. Some also planned using existing art as material, something that had not been produced during the production. It would have been an interpretation of works, an analysis of the emotional scale they perhaps created, a discussion on the reactions of the audience... However, to introduce such intertexts into the process would have demanded a longer time of working, search, adaptation and trial.

cesses. For the scientists, this meant above all the processing stage of the production. Few had thought in advance that they would be part of the physically completed performance. In the end, however, they all performed together with the performance artists, some more in their role as researchers, others as co-performers. From the onset of the process, the pairs had two to five months' time. That included discussions by email and Skype, and to some pairs (depending on timetables) also a few days together in London or Helsinki before the residence. The residence lasted 10 days.

What kind of data-production mechanisms did the productions produce? In the beginning, the work consisted of reading texts that were important to both, associative, diary-like writing that described the work together, discussions on the theme under study and drafting a script. Art was brought into a research situation and science into artistic thinking and activity. If there was a group of people to be studied, the working pair considered how and in what light they wanted to show the people – "what else can I observe if I am exposed to the other's (the one who is studied) presence".

How do connections and differences between two units get blurred or intensify? In the processes, various models of cooperativeness emerged; in some, the distribution of labour was discernible, while in others, even the process was shared. In fact, the final productions can be studied as joint works of two makers. The scripts of the performances were mostly the responsibility of the artists. The end result and its form were modulated by the performance time and place, and the latter the pairs could only choose within limits. When the overall end result of art is scientific, art may also mean the end result as a process or the process as an end result. In many of the productions, the joint end result took the form of a collage, in motion – and in some performances was even left open.

The productions studied the phenomena on different scales: some were more interested in linguistic, others in action-based processes. The freedom to change the direction was inbuilt in the navigation. Some also brought out and analysed their failures. The project gave rise to methods for the collection and processing of material, both straightforward and unencumbered; in one experiment a poet's turn of phrase became the nominator for the reactions to be studied, while in another, thousands of years old handicraft was used to ponder on losses felt in the 2000s. One of the pairs engaged in discussions with people – interviews that usually require lengthy processes of applications for permits. In one production, sounds were studied as an audio work and experimental installation by an artist and a researcher. We also heard a work where birds "were singing" while the audience was reflecting on the injustice induced by speciesism. More often than not, the main question raised was how to see differently, dismantle hierarchies, mix and intertwine, or integrate otherness to a collage of first person narratives – the question, "what if I/people were not all that superior to other creatures after all".

The navigation methods included swaying, shaking up, careful understanding of the other, trust, listening to the material, disturbances, participatory working methods, combining things, odd and unexpected references, and discovering phenomena by handicraft. The pairs had room to let possibility become part of the process and situate their activity during the process to perhaps another paradigm. When the pairs discussed their joint work with me, I often wondered whose reality was closer to socially shareable reality. Both have developed their thought and action patterns by using methods accepted by their own profession or based on previous knowledge. But both also create something new, fill the holes between the things studied by concepts or probabilities, or apply findings to a bodily, spatial and auditory form.

Knowledge was transformed both in the cooperation between the pairs and in the performances. In some cases, the transformation process led into an idea of continuation, even a four-year research plan. In some cases, a smaller new draft emerged.

Were new joint working methods discovered, such as would last and produce new things? How did the paradigm transform in the cooperation between an artist and a scientist? How did the working methods relate to the content of the work?

Parallel ways of thinking

What did the works tell us? A similar exchange of meanings and contents continued in the finished works as the pairs had set out to build during the work process. In Grant Kester's words, it is an "*indeterminate, collectively authored exchange among multiple interlocutors*".⁴ Because the performance took place between two, sometimes even activating the audience, there was a continuous exchange of information and the weaving of a texture of parallel ways of thought. As a consequence, the knowledge produced by the space with its events was unprotected. Rather than final answers or "research findings", the works depicted the movement and the process, where no final form is attainable.

In Nicolas Bourriaud's relational aesthetics, the role of artworks is no longer to form imaginary and utopian realities, but actually to be ways of living and models of action within the existing real, whatever the scale the artist has chosen.⁵ Knowledge is produced by parallel ways, moving from one way and level to another and expanding understanding ever further. It may be a new aesthetic understanding or the transfer of knowledge from one interpretative scale to another, a "*movement out from inside the head*", as one of the participating researchers described it. The form of the knowledge varied from material to immaterial or experimental. In several cases, the space was an installation, which gave rise to individual interpretations by those who moved in it. Knowledge processing is then tangible.

4. Grant Kester, 2009. Questionnaire on 'The Contemporary'. ed. Hal Foster et al. *October*, no 130, 2009, 7–9.

5. Bourriaud, Nicolas. *Relational Aesthetics*. Dijon: Les presses du réel, 2002.

In the performances, visual and at times also auditory elements were brought alongside text and talk: *"we hear sounds everywhere, and yet make a far greater share of our interpretations based on what we see"*. The embodiment of knowledge takes us to yet another level, from fragments to wholes, and back again from wholes to fragments.

Although art does not justify its results, the end result may still be the same as in science. A neurologist is interested in what happens when we move from one reality to another. An archaeologist tells us about a journey to the Underworld and a protective sound that still rings in the life beyond. A sociologist asks what will happen in an interview if the interviewer exposes her or himself to the interview situation. A cosmologist wanted us to understand the existence of dark energy, an Assyriologist promoted Mesopotamian culture and a biologist ecology. The performances varied from illustrative to absurd, from scientifically critical to sincere.

The works manifested how the study of the same themes can be conducted with different concepts, so that the findings of sociological field studies and things brought up by communal art projects, for example, can correspond to each other. The methodology of performance art in the field of bodily knowledge opened the possibility for the researchers to put theoretical or philosophical concepts to test by means of the body. In the dissemination, the message was stronger because of the presence of art. In the production that dealt with memories, a collage of borrowed memories was created, with the idea of writing the memories of many different people into a single narrative. What is not essential disappears, central knowledge accumulates and what is shared communally rises to the fore.

Floating Platforms produced six experimental productions where in a short time the bodily experience of invisible energy was charted, a human-centred concept of ecosystem service was dismantled, art was introduced to neurological research of emotions and social reactions, and sounds of the Stone Age were heard. Many productions began to transform in the hands of the makers into new chapters, passages, performances or ways of applying the working method to other kinds of communities.

A space of ramifications

What happens when the results are put to practice, returned to the different disciplines or made into new artistic productions? When the transdisciplinary productions are presented for the first time, we have but reached the first stage. Rob Le Frenais called it "getting acquainted". Two or more fields of science or art find a common language and working method. After that, the work groups have reached an awareness of what might be possible in cooperation. In the words of performance artist Márcio Carvalho, *"in long processes, we get closer to things that are but in the process of being born"*.

How do we define the context of the work or artwork that is on a novel ground, in no-man's-land, as it were? What if the present institutions were no longer containers that determine the contents and framework of the works, science as science and art as art, but we spoke instead of contents that determine the identity of a new institution?

The works could be reduced; they would be immaterial knowledge to a large degree, based on situational research as well as connective, social and relational aesthetics. Once the foundation of the working methodology has been cast, the works can be used to react to social questions very rapidly, if need be.

What if we thought of displacements as biological terms in their evolution and growth in the course of time? Then we could study the rhythms, waves and intervals, pauses and silences of nature's culture. We see things that continue, although their forms change. The idea is that instead of one-off productions, sustainable projects might emerge, to be developed in the course of a prolonged time. What is essential is the interconnectivity of people, the relationships between what is done and what could be done. Production processes and performances that engage audiences and communities would then take centre stage. It would carry the operation far beyond the traditional scenes of art and science, thus also expanding attainability and the possibilities of making a difference.



5. INSIDE THE JOURNEYS

Mia Rönkä & Kurt Johannessen: Realizing Blue Inquiry

Juha Valkeapää & Riitta Rainio: Bird Audio - Bone Garden

Saana Svärd: Letter to Lynn from Saana

Lynn Lu: Letter to Saana from Lynn

Joshua Sofaer & Mikko Sams: From My Brain To Yours

Leena Kela: Scenes from spatial, temporary
and corporeal thinking in performance art
and cosmology

Kaisa Henttunen: A cosmological experiment
in performance art

Eeva Puumala: Improvised Research

REALIZING BLUE INQUIRY

By Mia Rönkä and Kurt Johannessen

As a performance artist and a nature science researcher, we pondered the relationship between art and science in the project Floating Platforms. In the resulting performance Blue Inquiry, we performed an investigation and mixed and merged the roles and methods of an artist and a scientist.

The starting point of the whole process leading to this article was curiosity – an essential feature common to both art and science. As contacted by the Floating Platforms project and asked to participate in an encounter between art and science, the driving force for both of us was curiosity: a will to create, learn and experience something new and to see where it would take us.

Setting targets

We stepped into the Floating Platforms process with no earlier experience of similar projects and as complete strangers. As we live in different countries, before the two-week residence period preceding the performance we started the discussion and planning in Skype meetings, a practical but as a first encounter strange way of meeting and still not meeting in person. In the Skype

meetings, we tackled the work with a determination that seemed common to both of us, quickly trying to find common ground and interests and even starting to plan the concrete work already before the actual residence period.

Conscious of the aim of the project to assess the contact surface of art and science, we noted the tendency of the researcher to set targets and the more prospecting character of the performance artist, but of course no wider inferences can be drawn here. However, an open mind is required also in science in order not to be too pre-determined and miss alternative approaches and outcomes. Similarly, planning a performance requires clear conceptualization and practical planning even though the targets as such might not be as concretely formulated as in a scientific study and too strict target-setting might even restrict and diminish the outcome.



Communication means

In the beginning of the two-week residence period we quickly proceeded from the abstract Skype discussions to concrete planning and preparation. The process took form as sketches, objects, texts, drawings and photos. Also the preparation of a scientific study and field work in particular can be very concrete, including the production of equipment, utilization of different technologies, and physical work, but here the difference was visibility that was present from the very beginning. Every idea had to be given a visual form.

Visibility also took an important role as a means of communication, instead of verbal communication that is the default in the dissemination of science results. The outcome of our process became more verbal than most of Kurt Johannessen's earlier performances but with very few defining and explaining elements characteristic to science papers and talks. We also decided to mix our roles as a performance artist and a researcher, building into the performance a "lecture" for the performance artist to give and leaving the researcher silent, communicating during the performance through action and visibility. In order to serve the international audience, the language of the performance was English.

In the preparation of the performance, however, we felt natural to omit English, the common language of science, and use Scandinavian languages with a stronger emotional connection, Norwegian being Kurt Johannessen's mother tongue and a part of the family of Rönkä being Swedish-speaking.

Freedom and impact

In some aspects, we find that art has more freedom in its processes and outcomes than science. The working methods in art are in some terms more varied, the format of the outcome is more flexible and the aims and conclusions need not or even should not be determined and verbalized by the authors as clearly as in scientific studies. Both art and science have, however, a common need for logic, conceptualization, meaning, and truth. In addition, even if a researcher discusses and concludes the results of a study, the recipients have the freedom to take a critical stand and make their own conclusions. In our process, we found the artist perhaps longing for even more freedom and space between the lines and the researcher having to consciously let go of a very explicit presentation.

How are then the works of art or scientific outcomes perceived and taken in by the audience? In some cases works of art can be regarded as more prone to creating experiences and invoking feelings among the audience than science papers and presentations. Art has therefore a great potential to activate and support thought processes and learning, alike science but by slightly different means. Similarly, visuality and experiences have also been used to popularize science.

When aiming at an equal encounter and interaction between art and science, it would be a too easy solution to use science as the information content and art as the visualization or popularization. Our performance was based on a scientific concept with the visual elements of both performance arts and science, and we argue that the outcome can be regarded as a study as well, yielding information about the meaning of birds to people.

Both art and science have the possibility to take a stand and the power to affect opinions, possibly changing public opinion and affecting the society. However, stating very clear tendencies might be regarded as compromising the artistic value of a piece of art or the objectivity of a study. Still, in science, management and policy implications are in many cases seen as increasing the value of a study.





Time and persistence

During the hectic residence period, we were very much aware of the time span of our working process. Even though practically building on years of experience, thinking processes and work in our respective fields, the working process of creating the concrete outcome was in principle condensed into two weeks. The outcome as such was presented in about an hour on one day.

In art and science, the time spans can seemingly differ a lot, between performance art and science in particular. A science paper may require years of field work, a thorough writing process and a time-consuming review and publication process, resulting in several years passing before the idea gets the form of an outcome. In performance art, the processes can be very rapid, but in a similar way delays can be caused by funding processes, timing of events where the performances are given, and preparations of performances, some of which can include very slow processes. Furthermore, if one should regard the whole education and learning process of an artist or a researcher, it becomes more difficult to identify any single time lapses for different pieces of work.

Performances can in some respects be regarded as ephemeral, leaving no concrete outcomes such as research papers. Videos or photographs of the performance are only representations, and the performance as such can not be repeated as exactly the same. However, also very concrete and seemingly stable outcomes such as science papers can be regarded as versatile, as the world around them changes – the context of the hypotheses, methods and results alters as science advances, and so does the relevance and novelty of research questions.

Participation and valuation

It seems that in both science and art, passion and dedication to the work at hand also create communality within the working group. In the Floating Platforms project, we really enjoyed the cooperation with the project staff and the mentors, as well as the collegiality with the other working pairs.

Who then belongs to the audience and target group of such cross-sectoral projects? The audiences of art and science can be argued to differ in such a way that art can readily be available to everyone, for instance in public spaces, whereas science is still developing into that direction.



However, popularization of science can be regarded as an integral part of science along with the actual studies and publication, which changes the assessment of its audience. Our performance was given in the Aboagora Symposium, and therefore the audience consisted of symposium participants interested in the encounter between art and science.

Performances are often given in front of a live audience, which implies that at least to some extent, the audience participates in the situation. In some performances, the audience has a very active role, not only experiencing or commenting but actually affecting the outcome. In science, the participation of the public is mainly restricted to the popularization stage, unless the public is used as the sample group of a study. In our performance, the audience participated in creating the performance: each participant wrote on an overhead film one word describing the meaning of birds to themselves, and the films were used in the performance. The films thus functioned as a visual element, while they can also be regarded as an ethnographic data set collected during the performance.

Both art and science are subject to critique. However, in science the outcomes are peer-reviewed already before publication, while in art the critics assess the work when it has been presented. For our performance, we mainly got feedback from the audience and the project staff. Unlike for a scientific study, the comments addressed the beauty,

presence, communication and equality in the performance. We were also happy to hear that according to the audience, we had succeeded in our endeavour to mix and merge our roles: it was stated that the inputs could not be separated and that the performance was given by two equal performance artists. Also the scientific content was addressed by a symposium participant in the discussion part following the performance. No written critiques on our performance came to our attention, so we do unfortunately not know how a professional critic would have perceived it.

Merging and unifying art and science

To what an extent can the methods and outcomes of art and science be unified? A similar categorization could be utilized here as for research projects merging different disciplines that can be classified as multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary, and crossdisciplinary or transdisciplinary. Applying this categorization to projects combining art and science, we can create the following definitions: in multisectoral projects the themes and issues would be addressed from both art and science points of view, intersectoral projects would be joint processes utilizing the theories, concepts and methods of both art and science, and cross-sectoral or transsectoral projects would unify the theories and methods of art and science to new shared ones.



Our process, resulting in the performance Blue Inquiry, might according to the categorization above be the most readily classified as intersectoral. We did not only create separate art and science approaches that were unified finally in the outcome but used methods from both art and science along the whole process. However, the art and science parts can in our opinion still be identified in the process and outcome and were not completely unified, which prevents the categorization of the process as cross-sectoral.

The existence and development of projects combining art and science is contingent on art and science policy frameworks, such as meriting and funding. Which parties fund such projects? Do such projects merit artists and researchers? In truly intersectoral or transsectoral projects, the art and science parts can not be teased apart, which means that the outcome should be evaluated as an entity, with applicable and relevant criteria. In the case of our performance, it seems that it falls outside the merit categories of at least traditional scientific achievements. Even the categorization of this article at hand is challenging: is it a piece of art, a science paper, a popular article or something else? It seems that the categories of traditional meriting of works of art or science should be developed or widened to include cross-sectoral work.

Future prospects

How can we apply our experience from the Blue Inquiry process to our future work? As in scientific research, the outcomes will develop in the minds of the audience and in the art field or scientific discipline, as well as in the thinking and work of us authors. However, the impacts as a whole remain to be seen – as for now, they are difficult to assess.

As in scientific studies, the methods adopted in this process can be used in further projects as well, if methods are thought of as the wider concept of the process: discussion, conceptualization, and visualization. In contrast to the outcomes of scientific studies, such as scientific articles, the performance as the outcome of this process could in principle be repeated as such. However, it must also be noted that even if we gave the same performance several times, it would never be the same. Therefore, a performance could be compared to sampling in a scientific study, yielding a different outcome depending on the circumstances, which include for instance audience, venue, time of day, as well as weather and light conditions if the performance is given outdoors.

In many processes, one of the main outcomes, even an aim itself, is networking. In Floating Platforms, the interviews, discussions and performances created communality and networks not only within working pairs but among all the project participants as a whole. These networks nurture further ideas and cooperation. Within our working pair, we have already brainstormed and applied for funding for future cooperation and will continue to do so, either as part of the Floating Platforms group, in cooperation with the other working pairs or in the context of projects following the Floating Platforms.

**The performance
Blue Inquiry was
given 13.8.2015
in the Sibelius
Museum as part
of the Aboagora
Symposium.**

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JUHA VALKEAPÄÄ & RIITTA RAINIO
Bird Audio - Bone Garden



LETTER TO LYNN FROM SAANA

Dear Lynn,

When I got an invitation to participate in Floating Platforms project last April, I was surprised, to say the least. I had no background in art, and had never collaborated with an artist before. Thus, I had very little idea what to expect. The commitment that was suggested to me was not insignificant in time and energy. Furthermore, the Floating Platforms project was not directly connected with my research. I thought about it and talked it over with some colleagues in Helsinki and finally I decided to accept. I figured that this was a once-in-a-lifetime kind of opportunity to explore my subject from a whole different perspective, with a professional artist. It could be challenging and even uncomfortable, but it would certainly be something to remember and I was convinced it would make me think about my research in new ways.

My collaboration started actually with another artist but she had to cancel her participation in the project in August. I was worried about how things would work out, when I got you as my working partner so late. But already the first skype meeting was very promising. You told me about your work and I told you about mine. We were trying to find possible interesting themes that would connect with both our works. We had the Floating Platforms guidelines which helped our discussions, but I think that both of us mostly played it by ear.

I sent you lots of information regarding the people that I had learned to know through my research. Among them were the exceptional queen Na-qi'a who ruled a large administrative office in Assyrian Empire in the 8th century BCE and her son King Esarhaddon, who was chronically ill but governed the largest Empire that the world had ever seen! I explained about my passion to learn more of these people; dead for thousands of years but still so very much present, so well preserved in the hundreds of thousands of text fragments of cuneiform tablets. I sent you my translations of Mesopotamian letters, like the one written to the king Esarhaddon by his closest counsellor:

The counsellor wrote to the king: "You the king, my lord, wrote to me as follows: "I am feeling very sad; I am thinking that there was maybe something more that we could have done? I have become so depressed over this little one of mine?" O my king, had it been curable, you would have given away half of your kingdom to have it cured! But what can we do? O king, my lord, there was nothing to be done."¹

I talked about the amazing writing system that had preserved such texts to us and I probably bored you to tears by extolling the virtues of that multipurpose material, ever present Mesopotamian clay. Strength and endurance are its hallmarks, and the elegant wedges on clay's surface record the very first words of humankind that were ever immortalized in writing. The papyri of Egypt are mostly gone, the parchments of Middle Ages broken and mouldy-- and never mind the electronic knowledge of modern ages that lasts only an eye-blink. But clay survives, even under the rule of madmen who are blowing things apart; as unseen by them, still thousands of clay tablets sleep under the ruins in Iraq.

1. "For the whole letter, see Simo Parpola (1993) "Letters from Assyrian and Babylonian Scholars," text no. 187."

I feel like this is typical for our co-operation: both of us enthusiastic and passionate in our chosen professions, and eager to combine our talents to do something new. At the end we found a common focus in our shared interest in "meaning." Your work had explored on many levels the idea that meaning can be fragmented in many different ways. In many ways, my work has been opposite of that: always trying to construct meaning from the myriad small pieces of texts that is all that is left of Mesopotamian people.

We met in the flesh only about a week ago, although it seems longer than that. We knew we had a limited time frame to move from general ideas into a concrete plan for action. You suggested that we start by checking out the Gallery space and talking with our mentor. Me, with my obsession for clay, had asked the organizers to deliver some clay to our shared apartment. So, on the very first day we started making clay tablets. Next day, when we were enveloping the clay tablets in clay, creating Mesopotamian envelopes for them, we got another bright idea of something, something that we definitely wanted to include in our presentation. This is when the idea of using fire entered into our discussions. Luckily, our apartment had a fireplace, so I got to refresh my memories from girl scouts and built a fire for us. Both of us loved the idea that fired clay tablets would be a part of our presentation.

However, without writing, a clay tablet is meaningless but it would make little sense to write in cuneiform. Although it appealed to me as a teacher, I did not want to use our hour to teach the basics of cuneiform writing to the audience. So; how to write messages in clay tablets without writing them in cuneiform? And what kind of messages should they be, anyway?

You came up with a brilliant idea that we could gather some precious memories from people before our moment in the spotlight. These precious memories, these short stories of treasured things that have been lost, could be written on pieces of parchment, and hidden inside clay envelopes. Then the envelopes could be fired, making them hard and durable. The content could be inscribed on the envelope by writing on clay the cuneiform sign which had signified “Loss” in ancient Mesopotamia.

This became the foundation of our work. You suggested, that these precious lost things should be traded for something, and I suggested a kind of counterpoint to the messages of loss that reside inside clay envelopes. Therefore we decided to gather from the audience tonight stories of precious things that were not lost—things that people want to keep. For my part, this co-operation is certainly one such story.

LETTER TO SAANA FROM LYNN

Dear Saana,

I've always wanted to collaborate with a scientist, but somehow never got around to making it happen. So I was really delighted when Christopher Hewitt invited me - quite at the last moment - to take the place of an artist who unexpectedly dropped out, and to collaborate with you.

Having had no prior experience with anything Mesopotamian, I at first wondered what connections we could possibly have. But Christopher explained that whereas Assyriologists make meaning from found fragments of text, my work often presents texts or narratives in a way that only fragments can be perceived and new subjective meanings are created. Which made sense!

And so we were introduced and met for the first time on Skype in August. From our conversations and the documents you sent, I was amazed and intrigued, that we are actually able access the internal lives of humans who lived five millennia ago via a plethora of clay writing tablets. These tablets survived not only the ravages of time, but recurrent pillage and plunder.

Important administrative or official tablets were kiln-fired for permanence, but many personal correspondences were inadvertently preserved by invading armies that burned entire cities to the ground. Whereas immeasurable quantities of human knowledge has been lost forever in the destruction of great libraries of Alexandria and others, we still have today a five thousand-year-old letter from a mother-in-law to her son-in-law essentially telling him off for being a dick. I loved the idea of these unassuming objects being accidentally transformed into indestructible artifacts.

Meanwhile, I researched what I could of Assyria, and came back to you with questions and notes about the things that struck me most. I was particularly drawn to references of the cultic practice of human sacrifice as a way to appease the Gods and protect the King.

I was also intrigued by the practice of “sacred prostitution”. Parents would offer their virgin daughters to temples along with their dowry. And after serving in this “honorable profession” for a few years, a “temple prostitute” could leave, take her dowry with her and marry if she wished. This, to my great disappointment, turned out to be a myth.

On our first day together in Turku, you mentioned that the Great Fire of Turku is very much a loss that is still felt by people here. Because Turku was - at that time - the most important city in Finland, nearly all of Finnish archives were lost in the blaze. As a result, the Imperial Academy of Turku was transferred to Helsinki and Turku’s significance waned considerably.

I wondered if we could somehow give resilience to, or symbolically resurrect the losses of Turku citizens. We came up with the idea of collecting anonymous stories, of significant personal loss. At the same time, we were experimenting with clay making cuneiform tablets of our own and marveling at what satisfying objects they turned out to be. These hand-sized sculptures had a hefty weight and girth to them. And when carefully smoothed and fired, they resembled river pebbles.

We carried out detailed experiments with our clay tablets, placing them on an open fire, in the kitchen oven, and even in Mari’s sauna. Some tablets exploded while others turned into stone. We transcribed stories of people’s losses onto parchment then embedded the scrolls in clay envelopes. We laid these out to dry for a day then baked them in fire. In this way, these precious memories now gained a sort of resilience.

It was clear from the start that we wanted to give these ceramic tablets to our audience - possibly in return for the stories they contributed. But for ages could not quite work out what sort of exchange should take place. We finally decided that we will ask everyone here tonight to think about what they cherish most, write it on a piece of parchment, then offer this scroll in exchange for a ceramic envelope containing someone’s significant loss.

It was important for us to try to create a work that will resonate with our audience in a meaningful way. One approach was to make the piece specific to site and context, so that it is wholly relevant to those encountering it. Another strategy was to use widely-shared human experiences as material in order to create empathy and a vicarious bond between all those present.

The line between fiction and reality is tenuous and mutable. In this performance/installation, we use the real-life narratives of Turku citizens as our content. These accounts of personal loss are “real” in that they actually happened. But they are also “fiction” or “constructed” in the way that human memory functions. The work suggests a metaphoric “strengthening” or “resurrection” of these losses. At the same time, it also has the potential to perhaps catalyze psychological closure.

It has been very exciting to learn about the ancient Near East, but most of all, to realize that there can be significant links between seemingly unrelated fields. And that the potential for interdisciplinary partnerships is far greater than one might imagine.

Considering neither of us had any prior experience in each other’s disciplines, I think we worked exceptionally well together.

To be honest, I was more nervous about living for 10 days - in such close quarters - with a virtual stranger. But it has turned out that on top of our collaboration being tremendously fruitful and pleasurable, we also make excellent housemates!

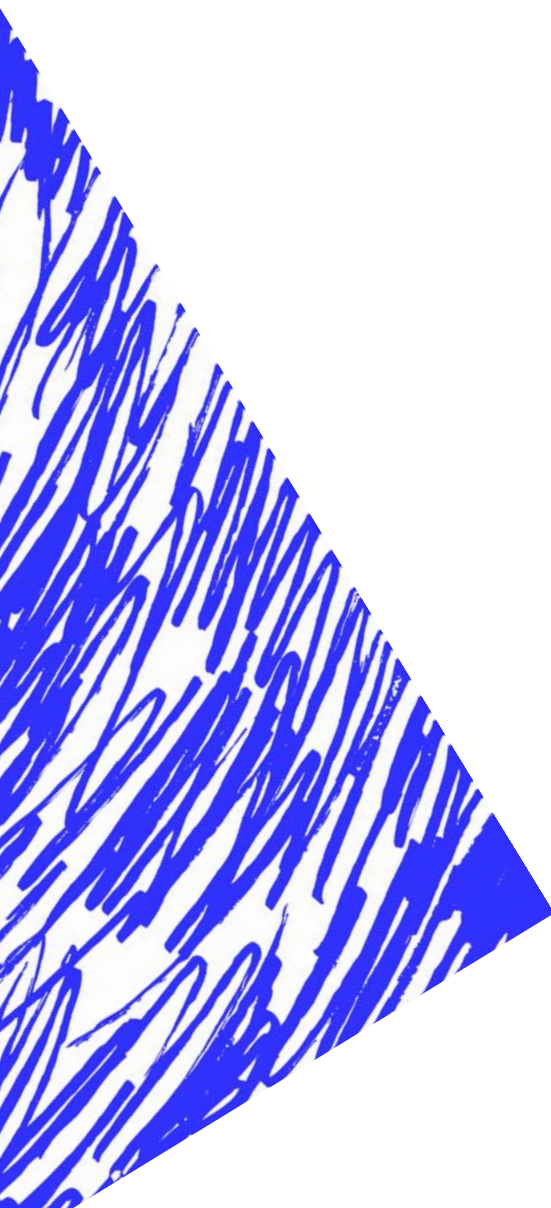
Saana and Lynn’s
letters were
presented during
their work in
Titanik Gallery,
Turku,
September
29th 2015.

FROM MY BRAIN TO YOURS

By Joshua Sofaer and Mikko Sams

JOSHUA

Hello. I'm Joshua Sofaer. This is Mikko Sams. I am an artist. Mikko is a neuroscientist. Floating Platforms matched us together to collaborate to see where it took us. We met for 4 days in June and again for the past week here in Turku.



As an artist, I have become preoccupied with trying to find ways of deepening the aesthetic experience for an audience and in understanding how they might form an engagement or attachment to the content of the work that I make. This has led to a number of performance works where I have tried to trigger emotional response from the audience.

Mikko has also been interested in neurocognition and how human emotions work, both in individuals and between groups.

What often happens, from my observation, when artists and scientists meet, is that artists illustrate, describe or demonstrate the science. This is useful for scientists as a form of public dissemination and a way of rethinking the science discovered. I was determined in my collaboration with Mikko to see if we could work collaboratively on new investigations and experiments rather than simply to attempt to understand and reformulate the results of his existing research. Mikko was up for this.

When we met in June we discussed a number of phenomena. Of particular interest to Mikko was the idea of in group/out group dynamics, which when I reflected on it, seemed to be at the heart of what my

practice as an artist was about: how communities are created and formed. And yet I wanted to think that it might be possible to imagine that art itself would be the mechanism that we investigated. And it was from that imperative, that we agreed to explore the idea of 'suspension of disbelief'.

The 'willing suspension of disbelief' was a term coined by the Romantic poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge, who in an essay about poetic form was trying to articulate what happens when the reader encounters the fantastical. Coleridge also described 'the willing suspension of disbelief' as 'poetic faith'.

So this is the moment when we enter into the flow of a fictional narrative and in many ways we perceive it in our imaginations as we do reality. The term 'suspension of disbelief' has been critiqued because belief isn't really suspended. We hold together both belief and disbelief. And it is this phenomenon, the phenomenon of being a reader, or auditor, or viewer of narrative fiction that is at the heart of what it means to be human, and the mechanism that we want to explore.

There is in fact very little neuroscientific data on this phenomenon.

Now, it's extremely expensive and time consuming and takes a lot of preparation to conduct brain experiments and it was absolutely out of the question that we would be able to do that in just a week and then interpret the data. What we have done instead is to write a 4 year research proposal which articulates our thinking so far, and for which we will now seek funding.

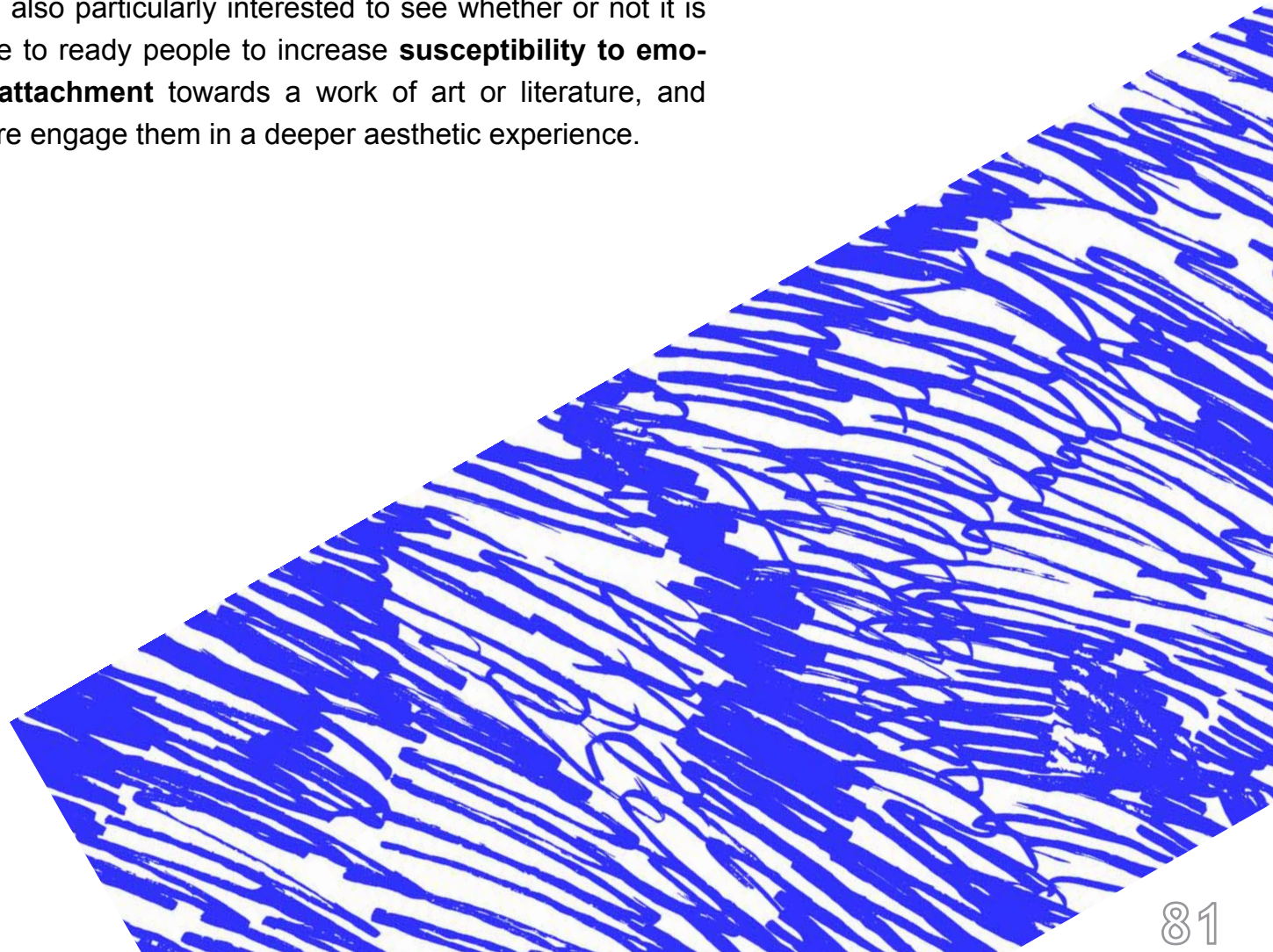
Specifically, some of the experiments that we may seek to conduct, include:

Trying to understand **the reality check mechanism** that is dialled up or dialled down when we enter and exit fictional narratives. We propose that there is a mechanism or interaction in the brain that is responsible for determining whether or not something is 'real' or 'fiction'.

Another interest, would be to try and measure **participatory response**, which is to say how individual readers (in the widest possible sense of that term) might bring their own personal history to inform the narrative of a fiction and to become emotionally affected by analogous events in their own life.

A third element to investigate, might be the notion of **provoked confabulation**, whereby individuals fill the gaps of a narrative and essentially re-write the fiction. To 'confabulate' means to invent imaginary experiences.

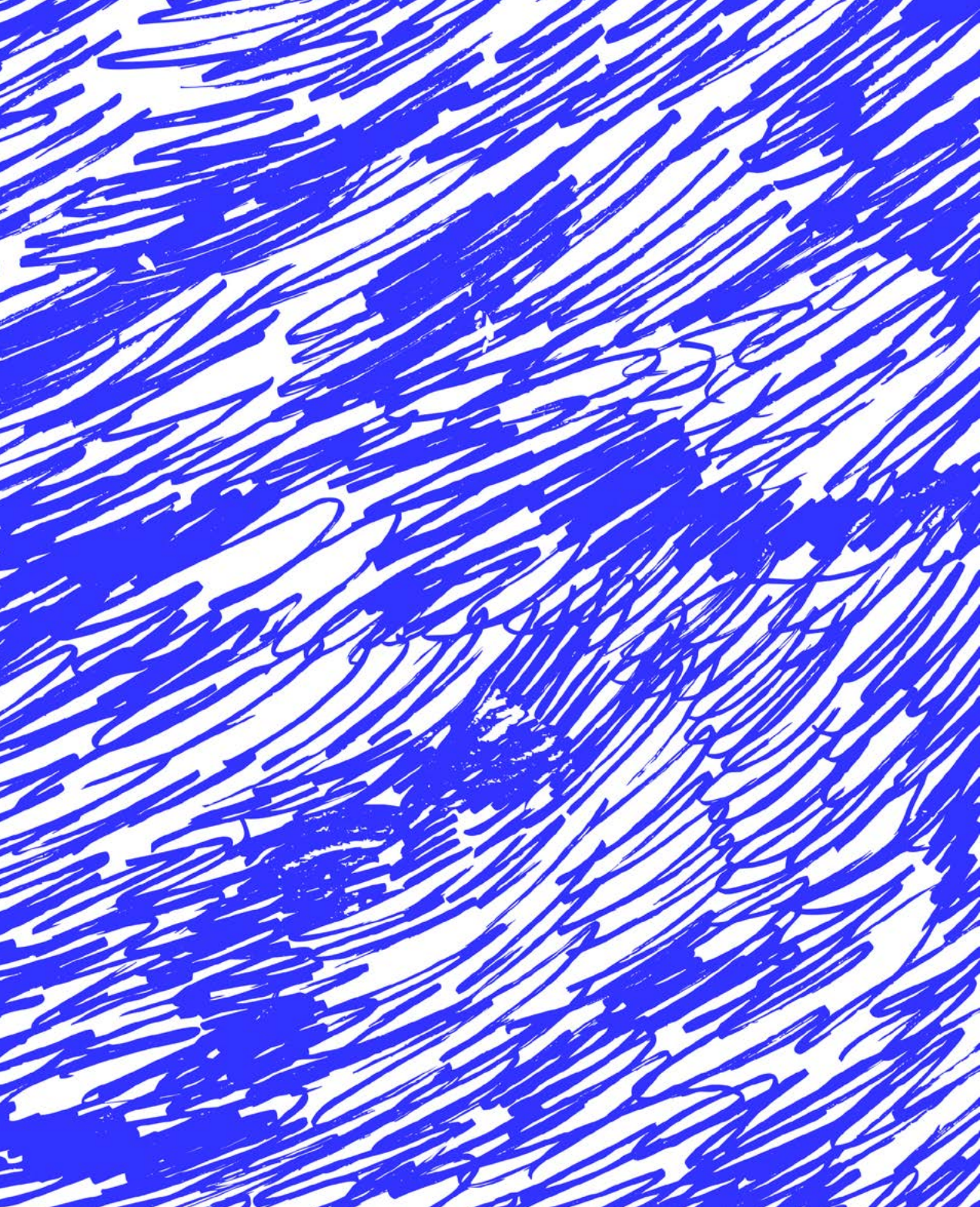
We are also particularly interested to see whether or not it is possible to ready people to increase **susceptibility to emotional attachment** towards a work of art or literature, and therefore engage them in a deeper aesthetic experience.





MIKKO

I am Mikko Sams, Professor of Cognitive Neuroscience at Aalto University in Helsinki. When I stepped off the plane in Heathrow airport in June, I was in very high spirits. I only had hand luggage so in just a couple of minutes I was sitting in a good old London cab and on my way to meet with Joshua in his apartment, located in Soho. When we came to Piccadilly Circus, we were stuck in the middle of huge crowd. The cab driver told me it was better for me to continue on foot. I went out, and tried to find out what was causing the gathering. Soon I saw a fellow standing on a box talking very seriously and wisely of the topic of embarrassment. To my great surprise the fellow looked like Joshua Sofaer. We had not yet met, but I had seen his picture. I tried to get closer by going round him, and oh my good, this fellow had a round hole at the back of his trousers, which revealed his naked buttocks. *“Okay, this is London”*, I thought.



I left the crowd and walked to Joshua's apartment. I immediately told him about this curious incident, and we laughed at that together. We decided that I had seen a doppelgänger. Then we had tea and started to discuss, to learn to know each other better. Interestingly, we soon realized that we are very similar. We like the same teas, same biscuits, same wines, similar music, same books, same poetry, same movies. We even wore very similar clothes and had similar worries. As a small detail, when visiting a loo, I saw there my favourite after-shave, Weekend by Burberry! We realized that this cannot be by chance; we have a mission somehow given to us.

After three days of very intensive discussions on what we should do together, our brains and minds literally ticked together. We were like a single super mind and brain contemplating many interesting problems.

On one occasion after very intensive late night discussion, we needed a brake and decided to have fresh air on the roof of Joshua's house. We took ladders and entered the terrace through a skylight. The evening was very warm, no wind, a full super-moon, all the hustle down on the street was far away. All of a sudden I felt a strange and strong urge and went to the edge of the roof, raised my both hands, and simply glided to the sky. I had never done anything like that! Joshua could not believe his eyes, he told me afterwards. How fantastic it was to fly over the rooftops, to see people busily walking far below me. I was literally in heaven! After landing and going back to Joshua's apartment I told him that I have good vibrations of our project.



SCENES FROM SPATIAL, TEMPORAL AND CORPOREAL THINKING IN PERFORMANCE ART AND COSMOLOGY

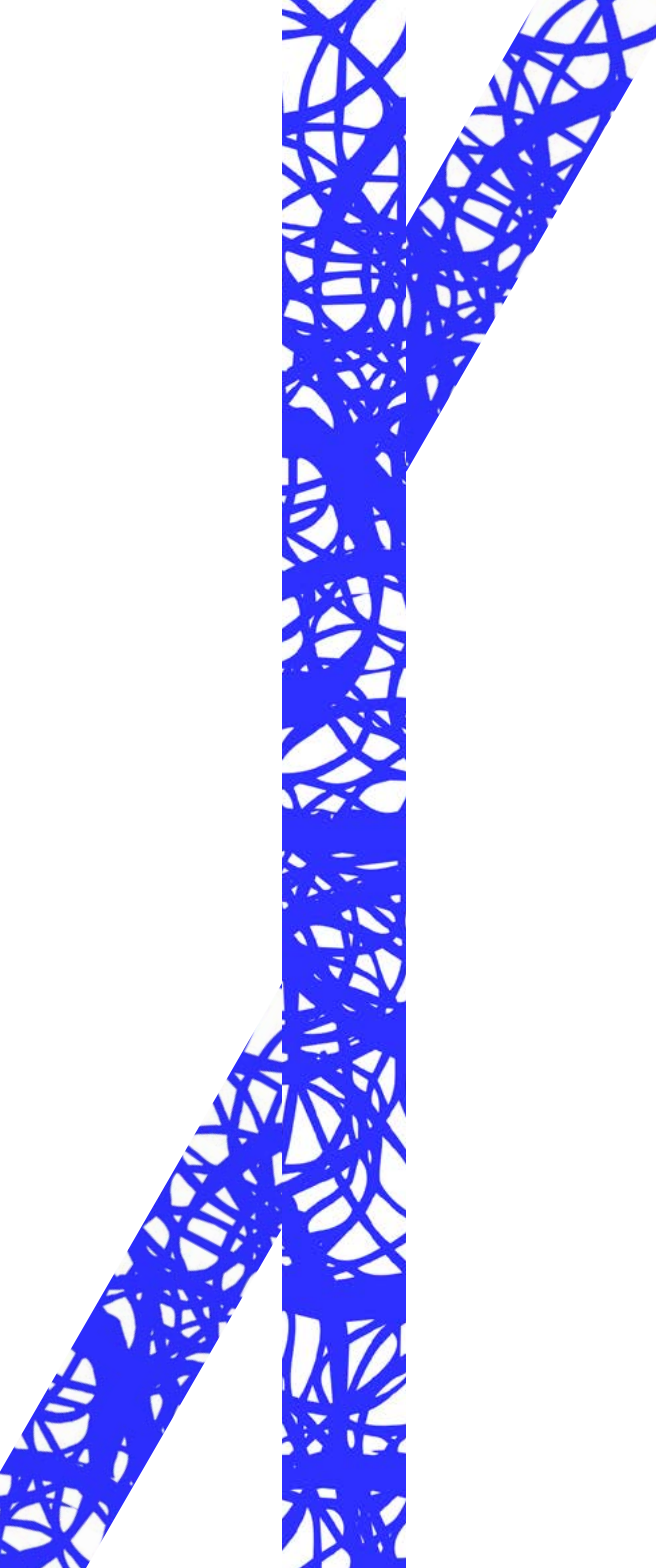
By Leena Kela

Proofreading Jamie McDonald

Scene 1: unexpected stagnation

It is late Saturday afternoon in August 2015, in a black rehearsal space at Turku University. The windows are closed, the space is darkened, and the only visible light comes from the screen, which is displaying complex mathematical formulas. I have asked my work mate, cosmologist Kaisa Henttunen, to explain her doctoral thesis on dark matter and dark energy to me, a performance artist. We work together in the Floating Platforms project, exploring dialogue between performance art and science. In order to make it possible for me to understand anything about the theories of dark energy, Kaisa first needs to explain some basic cosmological concepts such as the Theory of General Relativity, gravity models, space-time curvature, and accelerating expansion of the universe.

Kaisa walks around the space. She uses her hands—her whole body, actually—to demonstrate the directions and relationships of matter she is talking about. She's constantly moving. Occasionally she drops to the floor and does push-ups, stretches herself, and draws figures in the air with her legs and arms. I am lying down on my yoga mat, totally paralyzed. My head is spinning and my thoughts are crashing in on each other. I have no ready category or box in my mind in which to place this new information. I remember the occasional lesson from high school physics, but that's about it. My head is super heavy. My body is super heavy. I feel I can't even move any part of my body; I just feel that I will either burst out crying or fall asleep. Or both at the same time. I haven't faced this kind of a state of confusion and intellectual challenge for a while and I don't know how to deal with the situation.

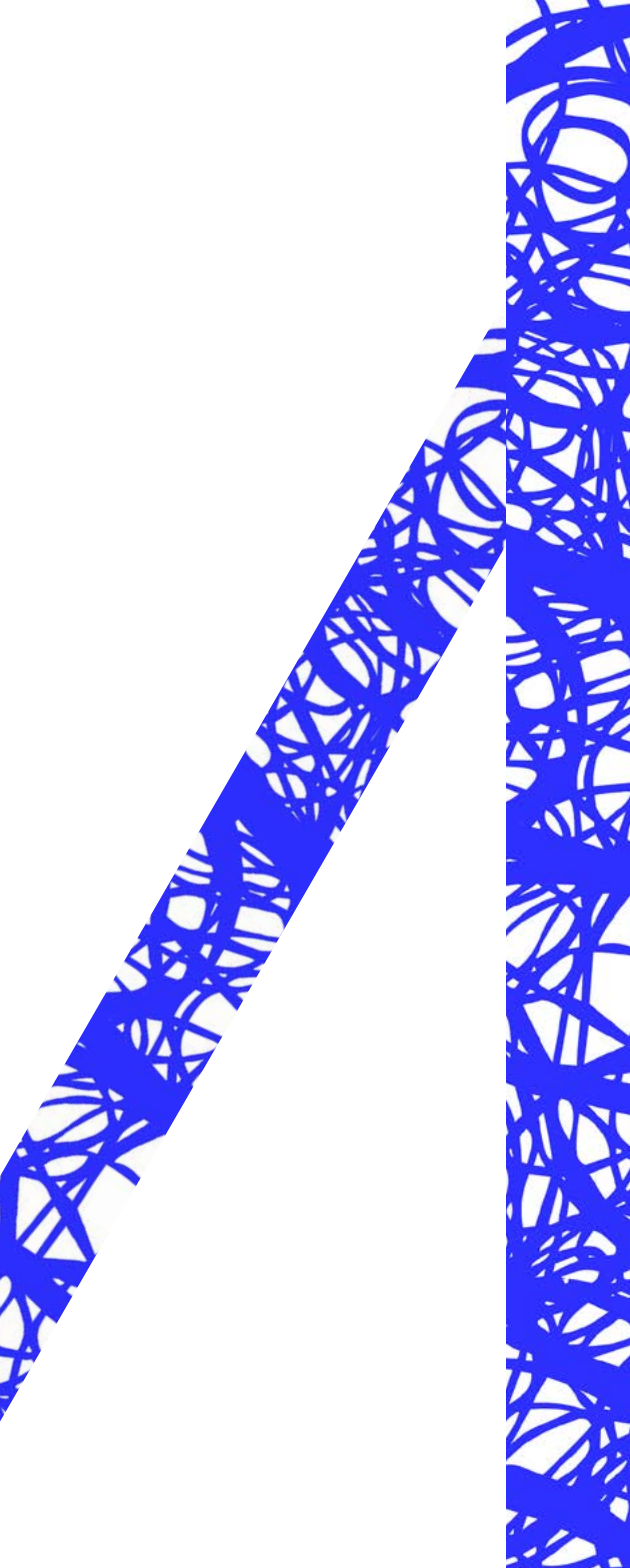


I am repeating to myself that it is OK, and it's even supposed to be challenging. It has to be difficult and I just have to accept it. Kaisa has worked with theoretical physics and researched cosmology for 10 years, and on top of that the things that she is researching are particularly complex. Seventy percent of the universe consists of dark energy, and no one yet knows what it is. There are just plenty of different theories about dark energy; some of them highly contradictory. In this situation, I am encountering my own incapability to understand. I am trying to accept that I will never understand even a part of the things my collaborator is working with. But we are making a performance piece about dark energy. How can one make a performance about such a complex topic; a topic that only physicists specialized in dark energy can understand? How should we accept that our topic is almost unthinkable, and still try to deal with it in the form of a performance? And I am the performance artist. I am supposed to be the one moving around the space and doing things with my body and materials around us. Here I am, on the floor, incapable of moving while my collaborator, theoretical physicist and cosmologist Kaisa, takes over the space with her movements and performs in front of me. I am stuck. My mind is blocked and my body has stopped moving.

Scene 2: Empty space

*Imagine there are no other people around you.
Imagine there are no walls in this room.
Imagine there is no building.
Imagine there is no place called Turku, no Finland,
no Europe, no Earth.
Imagine there are no planets, no stars, no galaxies,
no stardust, no radiation, no dark matter.
Now that all the stuff is taken away,
is there anything left?
There is empty space; empty space is something.*

In order to be able to understand things in the scale of the universe, one needs to relinquish any thinking that is based on human-scale observations. One cannot conceive of the universe locally. In the scale of the universe, humans have no role or meaning—nor does Earth. Earth is just one planet amongst others; even in the Milky Way galaxy there are approximately 100 billion planets. And in the universe there are 100 billion galaxies. In this big entity Earth is just a little piece of rock, and a human is smaller than a grain of sand. It doesn't matter what we human beings know and think about the universe. The universe is and operates the way it does, whether we are here thinking about it or not. For a humanistically-oriented artist like me, this thought is at the same time liberating and a bit distressing. One needs to get used to those big scales. One needs to learn new ways of understanding. Every night I read astronomical magazines in bed and try to learn to think in new ways, from the perspective of the universe.



Space is one of the central elements defining the work of performance art. Space is part of the performance, and in that particular space, the work becomes what it is. During our work process Kaisa and I moved from our safe black rehearsal space to the Vartiovuori observatory. The old observatory is round and has plenty of windows. It is located on one of the highest hills of the city and from there one can see over Turku in every direction. The space is very bright and beautiful. And round, which makes its acoustics terrible. We've got this chance to work in the most beautiful space in Turku, but we can't talk. We try to have regular conversations in the space and it feels like the sounds in our ears are merging into one echoing mess.

In space, in the universe, one can't hear any sounds, because there is no air or other matter that could transmit sound. Here, in Finland's first observatory, one can see, but not talk. Acoustic problems are now starting to define our performance, which is still in the manuscript stage and we begin to strip down spoken text to the bare minimum. We are desperately trying to rehearse the text parts of the performance and Kaisa wonders whether our performance is going to become some kind of theatre play. I am also bit worried that the schedule is too tight to learn the lines, and the dark energy contents of our performance are still too difficult for me to assimilate. Our performance space has lured us with its beauty and scared us with its resonance.

We ask a small group of test audience to watch the first run of our Dark Energy Kitchen performance. In the performance we use plain language and try to remember our lines but check the script constantly. We realize that the performance is in danger of becoming stiff, like badly acted amateur theatre. We have to tear down the tight script that we created, based on problems with acoustics in the space, and create room for spontaneous speech and interaction. Our test audience encourages us to move in that direction. The decision feels like a relief, even though we know that it will cause an earache for the most sensitive spectators. The performance starts to re-take its own nature as a performance here and now. For me a work of performance art is at its best when it is based on reactivity: just a performer reacting in interactions between space, materials, and spectators in the present moment. In cosmology the notion of a present moment has no meaning, because all the observations in space science are from the past. We can't observe the present moment in space, because our gaze is always directed towards history.





Scene 3: past, present, future

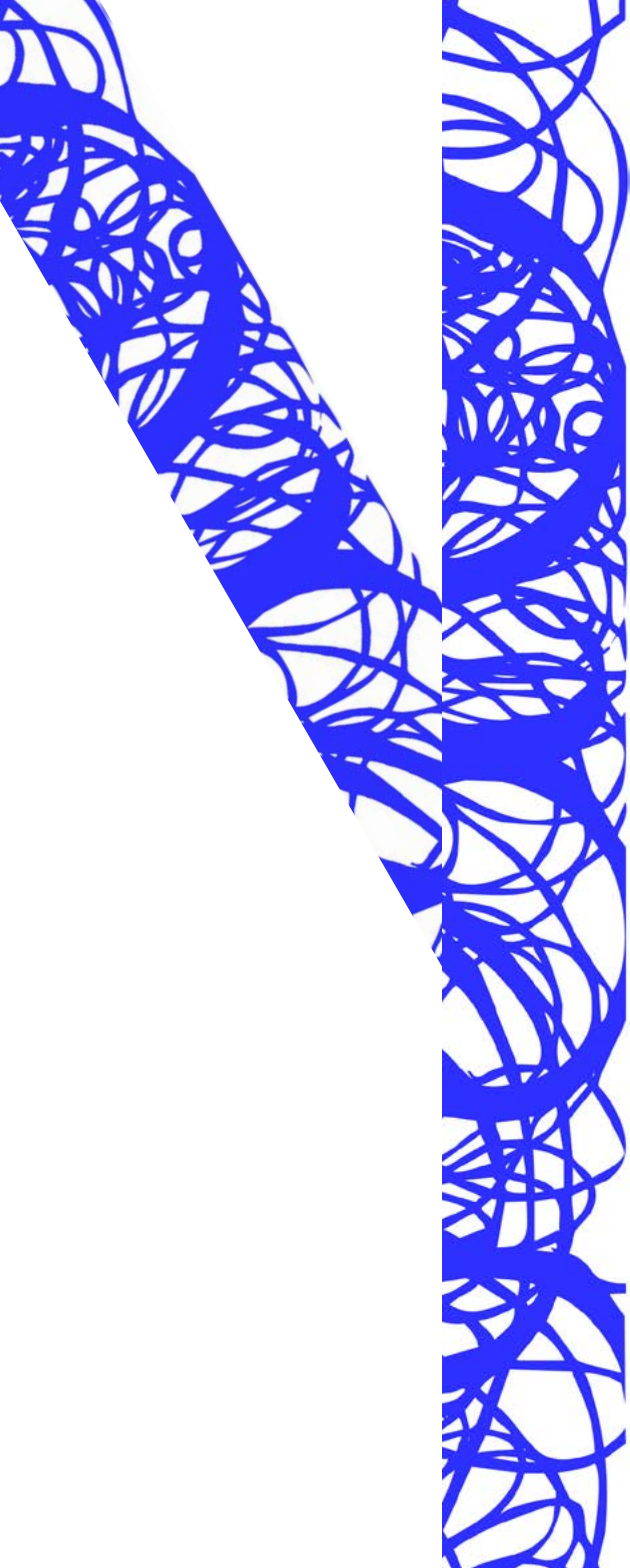
I am again lying on my back, but this time in my garden. An evening in August has darkened into night and a starry sky is visible; the white summer nights are giving space for darkness. It is the night of the Perseid. Or actually, the month, when the Earth travels through the dust and gravel that has broken away from the Swift-Tuttle comet. This dust and gravel are now called the Perseid Meteor Shower. When the meteor shower hits the Earth's atmosphere, the particles catch fire and we see the light streaks as shooting stars. There are writings witnessing that humans have been observing the Perseid at least for 2000 years; the meteor shower takes place every year.

When watching the calm night sky interrupted by rapid shooting stars, I think about how long has it taken for the light to travel from those stars and planets that I see now. The meteor shower happens right here and now, in Earth's atmosphere, in our time, but the light from the stars and planets might have travelled here for hundreds of years. The play of the starry sky in front of my eyes is happening at the same time in the present moment and in history. For example, the distance between the Earth and the different stars of Ursa Major is 78-112 light years, so the light coming from there is equally old.

In performance art, a work of art happens in the present moment. Usually, performance art avoids creating illusions, which are more typical for traditional theatre, as pretending that this is not now and we are not here, but we all are in the

world of the play. In theatre the experiences of spectators are manipulated aesthetically, rhythmically, and by creating twists in the plot. Performance art highlights its own nature as an art happening here and now. The duration of a work of performance art is often determined by how long it takes to carry out the actions. For example, if a performer boils water, and then pours water in a wok pan, which is heating on an electric kitchen stove, it takes about 2 to 3 minutes to perform depending on technical features of the equipment. When one adds noodles and frozen vegetables into the boiling water, it takes another couple of minutes for them to cook. In the same way, a scene in the Dark Energy Kitchen performance, where we cook Bimetric Noodle Soup, requires a duration defined by the functions of our ingredients and technical equipment.

A work of performance art operates in the present moment and the sense of time is often related to everyday rhythms. But in performances, time never feels the same. Sometimes time goes very slowly, even for the performer herself, and sometimes it just flies. Sometimes five minutes in a dentist's chair feels as long as five minutes on uncomfortable chairs in a darkened cinema watching a boring show. On the other hand five minutes in the company of your good friend can feel as short as the same time watching a very interesting performance. The typical duration of my performances is 25 minutes. For some reason it feels like a natural duration for me. The duration of my shortest performance has been 1 minute and the longest has been 1 month.



In the special theory of relativity time and space form an entity called spacetime. Spacetime is curved and the universe is expanding in an increasing rate. The spacetime in the special theory of relativity is divided in zones of past and future, which is combined together by the present moment. In spacetime there are causal zones, which follow the everyday logics and non-causal zones, where the causality doesn't apply anymore.

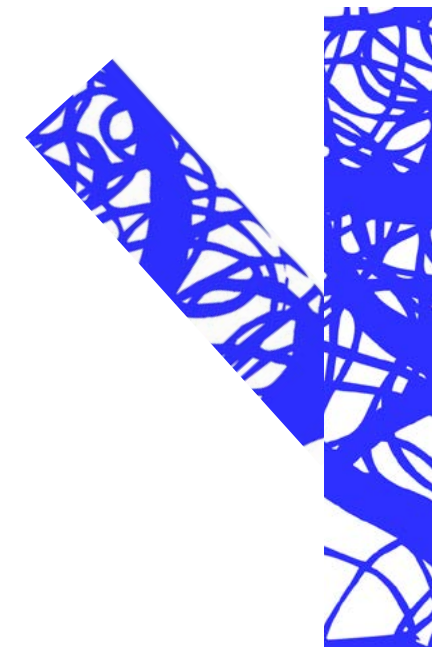
It is very hard to understand space-time based on your everyday notion of time. Is it possible to modify time in the same way as it is possible to modify space? What is the present moment, anyway? Even based on our notion of reality, the present moment is not an attribute of time, but a line, which divides past and future. If I say "now" now, it is in the past in the next moment. Also, the scientific nature of time is very hard to understand, because the notions of time vary in contemporary quantum mechanics, as well as in the notion of space-time.

Final scene: the universe in a black balloon

I am blowing air into a big black balloon. I am holding the balloon with my hand while Kaisa is spraying canola oil on top of it. We sprinkle colourful nonpareils on top of the balloon. They stick on the now-greasy balloon, forming different kinds of clusters. We spray more canola oil on the balloon and add more nonpareils until there are only a few black areas visible on its surface. We move to a gas bottle, and start to slowly fill in the balloon with air. This exemplifies the history of the universe, when the universe was

expanding at a constant rate. When we reach the present moment, the expansion starts to accelerate; the air rushes into the balloon and the balloon fills up, expanding in acceleration. When the balloon reaches its maximum we suddenly notice that there is a hole in the balloon. Air is escaping. I hold the balloon and Kaisa presses her finger on top of the hole in order to prevent our universe from deflating. The image is simultaneously comical and hopeless.

On the day of the performance we read the news: scientists claim that the universe is dying, going towards its own end. What happens to the universe doesn't depend on us, and we will not be there to witness the moment when the universe dies of old age. But this performance, in this time and space, is ending here.



A COSMOLOGICAL EXPERIMENT IN PERFORMANCE ART

By Kaisa Henttunen

Proofreading Jamie McDonald

Cosmology is complex

Information, at its best, is informative. However, when allowed to deviate from the path of education, even cosmology can be a source of awe and inspiration like any art. In the Floating Platforms co-operation with Leena Kela, as the main focus I wanted to keep the complex theories as correct as possible; deliberately serving the audience a plate of new ingredients without chopping up the constituents into bite-sized comprehensible bits. The purpose was to let the audience peek in to a complex topic by overwhelming them with new concepts, so that the overall impression would be more of an exciting experience, rather than a collection of details to remember.

Cosmological dark energy theories would be hard to explain to any audience with little or no experience in the subject within half an hour. Also, this would not even be desirable as an artistic concept. The methods we chose arose mainly from free association, and formed our way of grasping these issues via metaphorical language.



Complexity with performance art

The meetings with performance artist Kela were inspiring and fruitful. The co-operation produced a metaphorical study about complex cosmological concepts—and their use in the kitchen.

As a work pair, we aimed at capturing concepts and working methods from each other's fields of expertise. We also wanted to let the audience have a glimpse at the inspiring working landscape we thrived on when making this piece, and to enjoy the mixed cosmological kitchen language. At its best, this kind of atmosphere opens up a window into the complex, even slightly chaotic, ambiance that is present in the forefront of scientific theory research, before the models are singled out and standardized into descriptions of new laws of nature. If one didn't know better, the huge amount of interconnected theories could seem like arbitrary cooking. The possibility of succeeding or failing by experimenting with imaginary dark energy ingredients is the heart of the performance, not the informational components, teaching, or learning. This reveals the innovative process ongoing in real-life research: cooking and testing.

As with art, here the spectator has many possibilities to interpret the show, and there is hopefully something for everybody, even for the enthusiast. Complexity is often feared as the precursor to a severe headache, and not so much seen as something fun and inspirational. Participating in this performance was a chance for me to try to push these limits, but without taking the path of peeling the complexity off layer by layer, until what is left doesn't resemble the original concept at all.

IMPROVISED RESEARCH¹

By Eeva Puumala
Tampere Peace Research Institute
University of Tampere

When I was asked to participate in the project Floating Platforms, I promised to come with an open mind. I had not anticipated to actually bring such a heavy package with me to the project. I had not realised that I was rooted so tightly within the frames of thought that I had learned during my training to become a researcher, in the discipline of International Relations.

When we, the participants, were asked about our expectations for the project, I told that I had no specific ones, but that I was eager to learn new perspectives to the topics of agency and the body, for instance. This interest derived from my academic work, where I explore the ways in which the body matters in politics, or, the political that the body is. My thinking on these themes is largely based on the French post-foundationalist philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy, for whom the body and its truth concern “the intervallic space between two senses – amongst which the intervals between the right and left, high and low, before and behind, phallus and cephalé, male and female, inside and outside, sensory sense and intelligible sense, merely

inter-express each other” (Nancy 2008: 65). The connection between sense and the body that Nancy arises in the citation puzzles me deeply. How can we think of the body as sense – a sense that moves and acts? It is a question that concerns nothing less than existence that exceeds the idea of a single, sovereign subject.

Over the years, instead of thinking through abstract categories and generalisations, I have become more and more interested in the actual body and the ways in which our being is, on the one hand, constructed from outside, and on the other, defined by ourselves. Furthermore, I find the possible gap and friction between the two fascinating (see also Puumala 2013; Kynsilehto & Puumala 2015). Yet, identities are not stable. They are situational, emerging; our being and identities take place in the interval that exists between two senses. This makes the idea of the interval that Nancy puts forward in his book *Corpus* immensely interesting. It entices to explore its political potential.

Still, Nancy’s idea is vague and abstract. The lived body is material, carnal and concrete.

1. I would like to thank the team behind Floating Platforms for the possibility to be a part of the project. I am especially grateful to our mentor Mari Krappala for facilitating this process and presenting difficult questions at right moments to us. For all the interesting discussions, I wish to thank my collaborator, Márcio Carvalho, together with the other participants in the project. Finally, I am indebted to Saara Särnä who was kind enough to comment this text and made valuable comments to improve it. All shortcomings, however, remain my own.



I saw my collaboration with performance artists, curator Márcio Carvalho as a chance to explore how the interval between the self and other, sensory sense and the processes of making sense could be put to operation. But I could not anticipate in how many aspects that would actually happen and that the process would not be all pleasant.

True learning experiences seldom are.

The process behind (im)possible (hi)stories

We started the process by getting to know one another's work and discussed that before deciding what to do in our Floating Platforms project. Quite soon it became clear that, if I had a philosophical and normative basis on which I founded my work, so did Márcio. The philosophical – and in my interpretation also political – consideration and sophistication behind Márcio's work was impressive. This, in my view, had to mean that I did not claim a position in the project as a scientist who has established a pool of knowledge in a particular field and that our collaboration would be focused in examining and presenting that particular field through artistic methods. We needed to establish a more equal point of departure. In other words, genuine dialogue between art and science was our goal.

My research has circled around the topic of asylum seeking and agency for several years, while Márcio was interested in the selectivity of history, memory and counter-narratives. The notion of relationality was central for both of us. In order to develop our collaboration in practice, we started looking for points of contact between our previous works. We discovered our professional interest in the stories of past generations within our families and the way these stories have shaped what, why and how we work (see Väyrynen & Puumala 2015).

The topics on which we decided to focus – histories, identities and presences – emerged as a result of the collaboration during which we invested deeply personal and intimate stories in the project. This, later on, was perhaps a factor in both of us being so ambitious with the work and in our willingness to do the best that we could. It was also clear that the selected themes were far too big and abstract to tackle even somewhat comprehensively within the timeframe that we had, so we decided to focus on a topical societal phenomenon: polarisation.

Our project took place at a time when growing number of asylum seekers had started to arrive in Finland and polarisation between those who have adopted a critical stance towards humanitarian forms of migration and those who see these movements more favourably increased rapidly.



Hence, we wanted to see what kind of (im)possible (hi)stories could be formed between people who inhabit the same urban environment, but who might not ever meet otherwise than through our project. Was there a way to find space for a dialogue in the heated atmosphere? Could we think of presence and relationality in a way that would not succumb to predefined categorisations and positions?

Creating (im)possible (hi)stories

Asylum seekers formed a group among which we wanted to work during our project. But with whom we should try to make their stories meet? We wanted to test the relations that could begin to emerge between different kinds of stories that belonged to different kinds of people who lived in different phases of their lives and in different conditions. Because both of us had worked previously with our grandmothers and thus acknowledged the richness of experiences and insight that arises with age, we decided to begin the process by meeting with elderly people living in Turku. Furthermore, we assumed that the elderly and asylum seekers might face similar challenges and experiences of isolation and vulnerability in their daily lives. Issues with health, rich – and potentially difficult – life experiences and uncertainty about the future were also possible points of contact, and among both groups it is rather common to live in institutional circumstances.

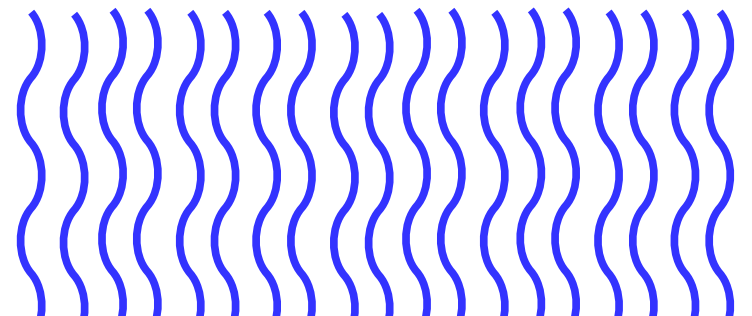
Instead of asking what people thought about particular issues, we decided to work with memories. They seemed as a neutral enough topic that did not invite any specific questions to be addressed. Inquiring after memories was also a way not to position people in particular categories with our questions and yet they were something that all people have.


To what events is the most cherished memory of your life related?

What is the most painful memory in your life?

What do you think of your present condition?

These were the three questions that we asked from two elderly people and one asylum seeker. We did not ask for their names, nor any other personal information. We presented ourselves, the project that we were carrying out and their willingness to participate in it. We were flabbergasted by their answers. People shared their memories of extremely intimate moments and events willingly, travelled back and forth in time with a concentrated face, and did not shy away from raising sensitive and even painful topics.





We edited the stories in short narratives by deleting our questions, but kept everything else as it was brought up by the narrator. We then took these short stories to other people: lay Finns that we met by chance, volunteers working with asylum seekers, other old people and asylum seekers. The short stories were read to people without telling whose story it was and not giving out any other background information than what came up in the stories. Then, we asked the listener to continue the story that they just heard on the basis of their life experiences either by finding similarities or differences – or both. In the third round of story collection, the stories to which we asked people to relate, consisted of the memories of two people. Otherwise the process was the same.

From the researcher's perspective, the value of this kind of data collection was in letting people decide what they told and the themes that they addressed. The process was characterised by intuition. However, working on the basis of intuition does not mean being unprepared or not knowing anything. There needs to be an understanding of the things that can be addressed through the selected approach, but yet it leaves space for the unexpected or surprising and requires capacity to improvise if the approach fails (see also Cerwonka & Malkki 2007). In this sense, the dialogic effort between art and science was different from a 'normal' research project. Here, the 'research' questions were formed only after the data col-

lection (see also Enloe 2013). We had to think through doing and in a sense reverse the 'research' process.

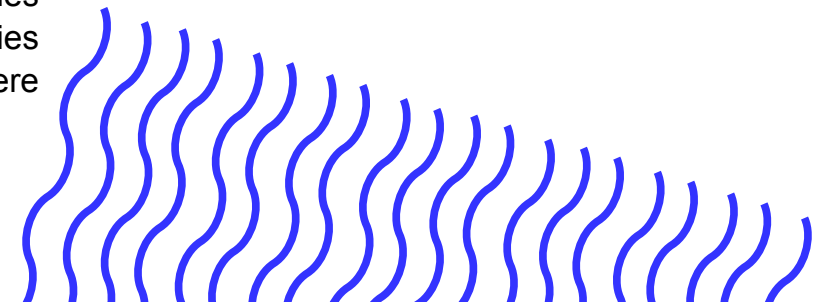
During data collection it became quite soon obvious that surprising connections between the stories began to emerge. For example, we read the story of a young asylum seeker boy to a volunteer of the Finnish Red Cross, but as it turned out, the boy's story intersected much more with the story of a 90-year old Finnish woman. The story of the volunteer, in turn, had more points of contact with a lay Finnish man than with the stories of asylum seekers. And the stories of the asylum seekers whom we met had very little in common besides the experience of dependency and displacement. These connections that we did not anticipate and those we had assumed but that did not really materialise, forced me to think about the complexity with which we position ourselves and how multiple our belongings and identities are.

This emergence of the 'unexpected' taught us a lot about our own assumptions and the ways in which our perception of things shapes the way we address people and the lines in which we think of their presence in the society. This, again relates to the fact that – as Michael J. Shapiro has put it – “disciplines discipline”, our training among other positionalities affect the way in which we make connections. There is nothing surprising in this.

And yet, without my collaboration with Márcio, I might have not realised so clearly what it actually means. Moreover, I would have not known how to overcome the bias and how to teach the eye to see, ear to hear and brain to form unconventional connections.

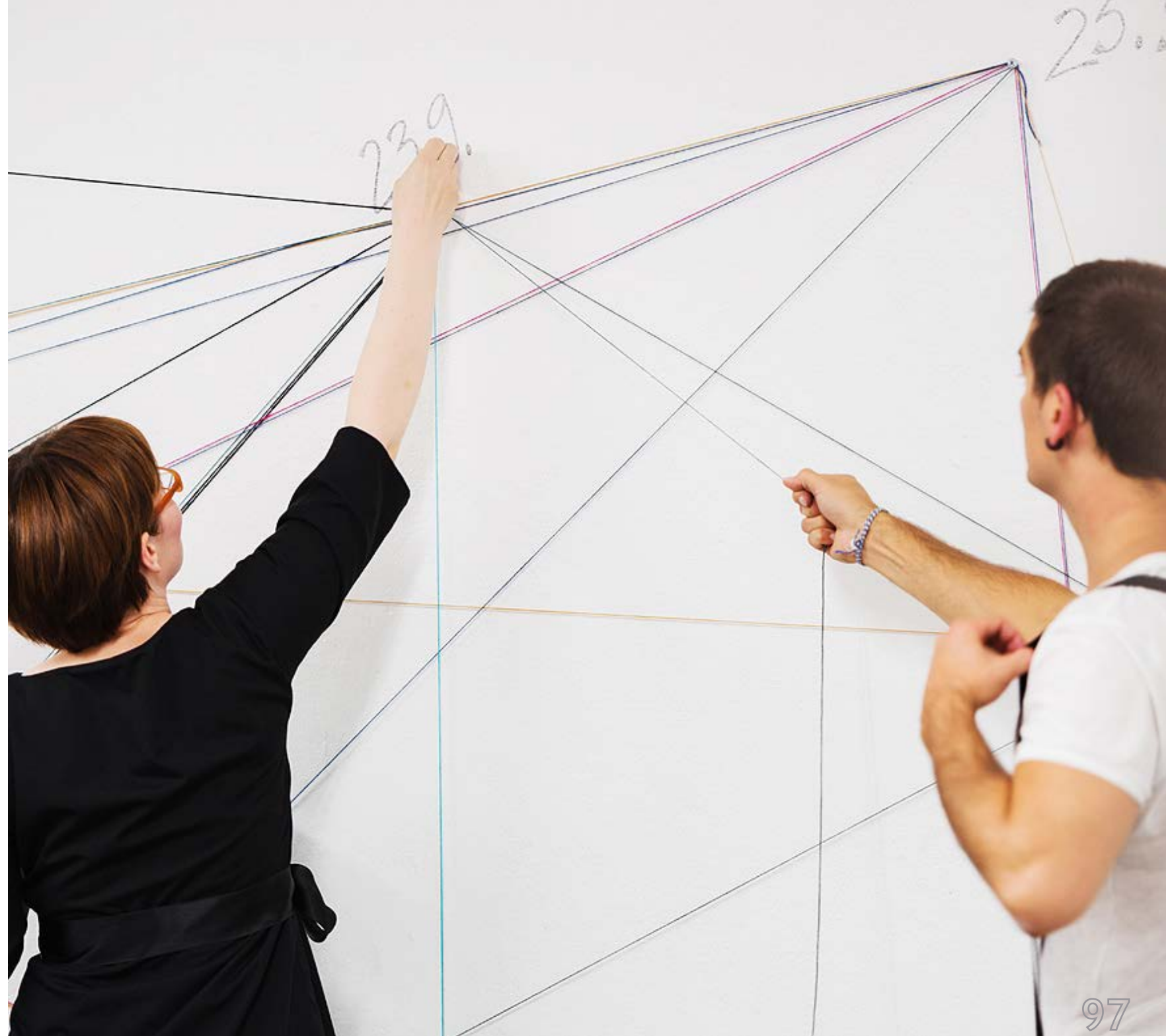
From the stories that we were told, we drafted thematic letters on longing, anxiety, dependency, displacement, hope, hospitality, persistence and stability. These were the eight themes that arose in many stories. In order to avoid “conceptually incarcerating” (see Soguk 1999) people's experiences and memories, one story can appear in more than one letter on the basis of the themes the narrator has included in his/her story. Thus, nodes and points of connection began to emerge among the stories. In addition to the thematic letters, we also drafted a single long letter, which comprised the stories of all twelve people. In the letters it is impossible for the reader to tell where one story ends and another begins, yet it is clear that there are many people 'writing' the letter.

Retrospectively, I have come to understand that the method that we developed could be used to examine how polarisation can un-happen.



In practice, the method enabled us to trace the mobility of experience, the ways in which we – without prior assumptions, categorisations or perceptions – position ourselves towards or against others. The positioning happens only as we hear the other person and try to understand to whom we are exposed. Research-wise that meant creating a space – perhaps a Nancian interval to which I referred in the beginning – between art and science, their practices and methodologies. Perhaps the method that we coined does not quite fit to either of the fields. It is an intervallic method that was shaped by both art and science, with neither having priority.

On the basis of the letters, we started working on the presentation. We agreed quite fast that we wanted to question the self-evidence of identities and the selectivity with which histories, societies and people are often described and presented. We wanted to address the question of history as a stable construction and illustrate the multiplicity of connections that bodies that inhabit the same city space have, even though apparently there is no connection. To describe this connectivity and to describe the process of story collection, the performance was called (im)possible (hi)stories – a title that can be read in four different ways.





Experiencing collisions and debates

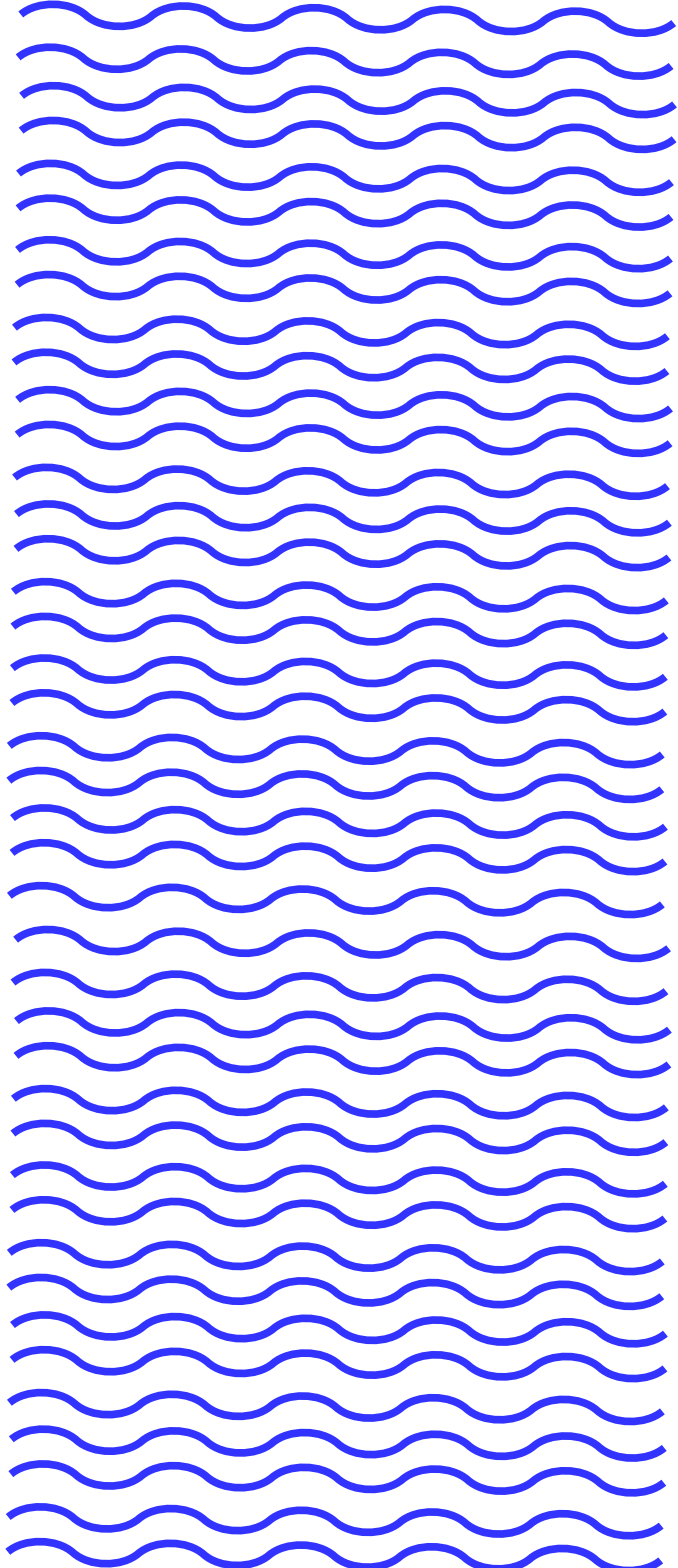
At the stage of looking for means to present the project, however, our collaboration was challenged. At first, we began to do so through the concepts and lines of thinking that both of us had learned and developed over the years. Quite soon it was obvious that there were big differences that needed to be addressed, if we were to continue in the spirit of an equal dialogue.

In my thinking questions related to communicating knowledge through the body started to emerge. I felt that there was a strong sense of separation at work: the body is what all people have in common, but it also separates us from one another. The other and his/her inner life will always remain a mystery. Thus, the question of knowledge cannot concern one body alone. Knowledge is formed in the intervallic space between bodies (also Nancy 2008). I felt that an understanding of something had begun to emerge, but I did not know what it was about. Not being able to make sense of what was happening was deeply frustrating. Instead of making sense, I responded sensuously: with uneasiness, doubt and willingness to withdraw to learned positions. I wondered whether both me and Márcio were, in the end, too fixed to our positions as an artist and scholar that it prohibited us from seeing what could come out of the collaboration between art and science, if we genuinely moved beyond the art-science divide.

The friction culminated around conceptions of knowledge and (re)presentation. Art and science have different ways of claiming knowledge and also their bases of knowledge are different. As a social scientist, I was haunted by the question of representation and its relation to structures of power that Gayatri Spivak raised in her nowadays iconic essay *Can the Subaltern Speak?* (1988). Instead of representation, Márcio spoke of presentation. When I said agency, Márcio said action. On multiple occasions, he challenged me to explore alternative ways to put science to 'practice' and to focus instead of writing to 'acting'. It seemed that we held profoundly different understandings of what constituted action and the relationship between different actions in their capacity to communicate what we wished to express. At one point, I was not sure that we could reach an agreement on what we wanted to (re)present through our performance.

I had to ponder hard whether I should find my role and position in what and how Márcio envisioned presenting the project or whether there should be compromises on both sides. Were we sitting on different sides of the table with a wall in the middle? The fact remained that I was not an artist, could not become one in this project and did not think there was a need for me to do so. Just like there was no need for Márcio to become a researcher.





For me, the whole idea of the presentation taking place in a gallery somehow more readily framed it as an art work, a surrounding familiar to him and foreign for me. And yet, I did not want to be ‘only’ a scholar, either.

The hardest phase of the collaboration was to overcome the divide between art and science and not fix each other into positions delineated by them. Troubles began to emerge as soon as we started addressing one another as a scholar and an artist. I refused to be the kind of a scholar that Márcio seemed to think I was, and he refused the position that I tried to offer him as an artist. The difficulties that we went through offered valuable insight into what kinds of normative and value-related questions arise when trying to overcome differences between fixed positions – whether they emerge between art and science or as two opposite poles that characterise debates around asylum seeking and migration.

In the end, we returned addressing one another simply as “Márcio” and “Eeva”, without any attachments to art or science. Withdrawing from these institutional positions enabled us to act as ourselves, to negotiate and find compromises together. In this way, the presentation was true to the spirit of the overall project. We found a way to bring playfulness to the presentation, just as our process of data collection was characterised by similar playfulness.

The difficulties testify how easy it is to be locked in a cycle of identification, labelling and thinking along categorical identities.

Windows of hope and opportunity

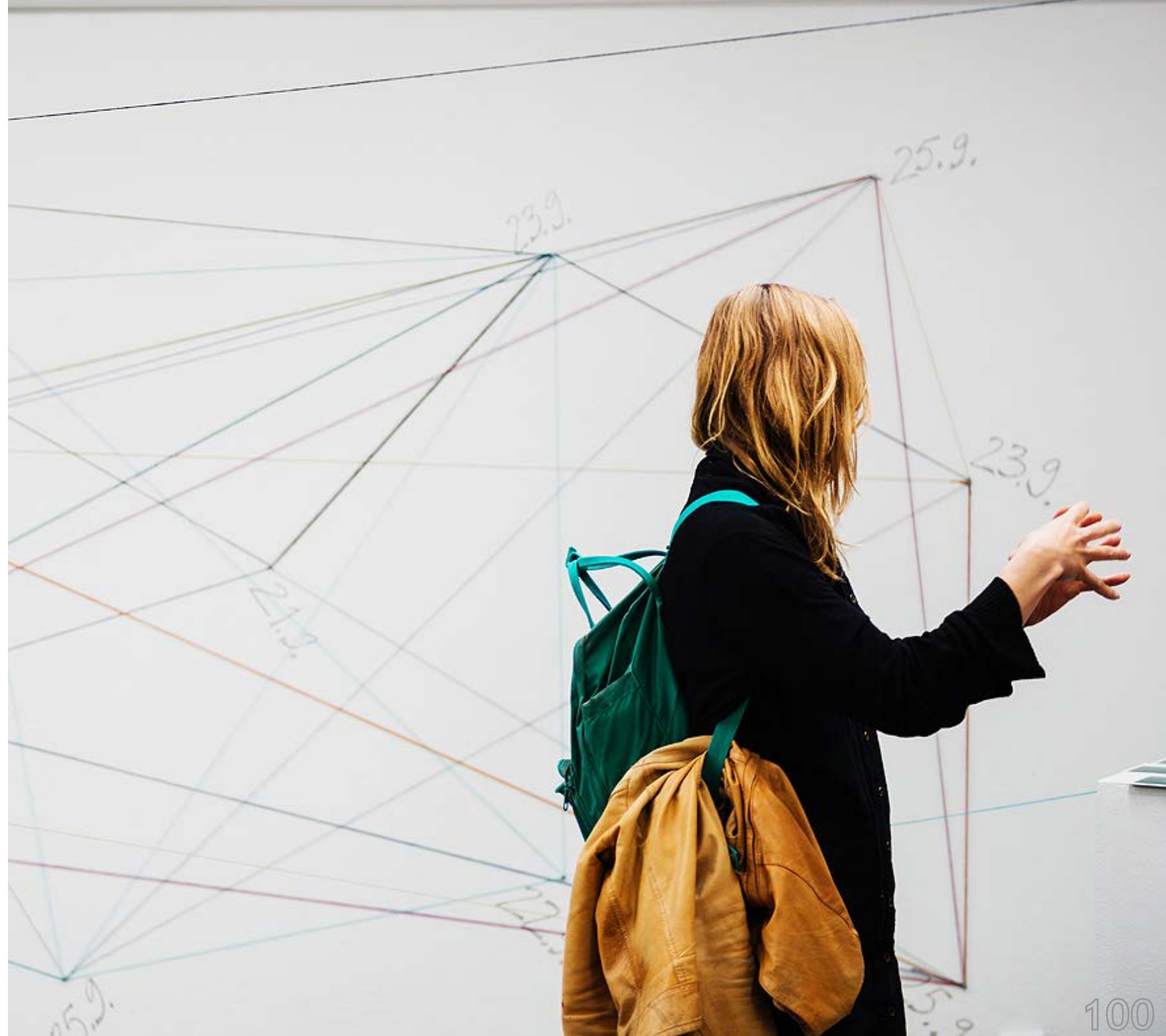
(Im)possible (hi)stories was an intensive process of both unlearning and learning. I experienced a new sense of freedom and creativity in the way we set the agenda and collected material. It felt empowering. To work on those big, difficult theoretical dilemmas that had puzzled me for some years and yet not being concerned how to theorise them. As the process challenged learned ways of doing and knowing, there was a strong epistemologic dimension present throughout the collaboration.

Thematically, the project offered a means to tap into the intersectionality of people’s identities, their self-conceptions. People form and work on these conceptions based on their political statuses, gender, racial or class divisions, but yet our memories and ways of constructing meaning illustrate that we are all members of more than one category (see also Puar 2012). Thus, our identities are fundamentally unstable and prone to change. The divisions that arise on a societal level, are not inevitable representations of reality, but emerge as a result of imagining belonging, identities and political existence in a selective style.

A window of hope emerges.

My dialogue with most notably Márcio but also with all the others who participated in the Floating Platforms project, led me to think more about the potential that collaboration between art and science – or moving beyond the separation – can play. For me, the potential lies in challenging learned scientific methods and ways of thinking or maybe even the scientific apparatus altogether. Can fundamental questions that concern knowing and representation as well as the methods and goals of science be tackled through artistic practice? What kind of potential does collaboration entail in terms of our capacity to address “subjugated knowledges” (Foucault 1980) and in making the process of determining research agendas more equal? These are pressing questions for social sciences and particularly for peace and conflict research as the discipline has a strong inbuilt normative element.

Perhaps a dialogue with art can teach us scholars about our internalised and learned ways of constructing meaning in this world and offers a way to challenge them or at least become aware of these ‘blind spots’.





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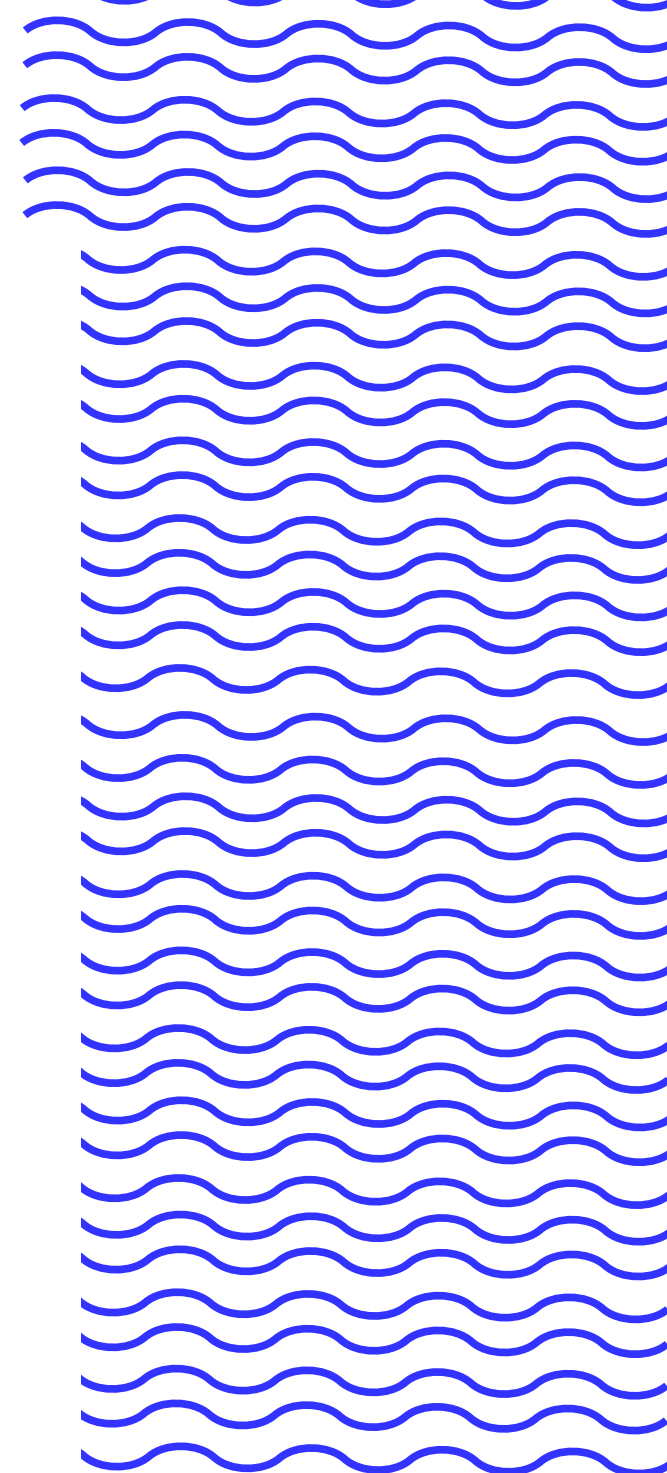
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6. DREAMING THE THEORY 2 - NOTIONS OF HYBRIDITY

*Text by Rob La Frenais, based on his lecture at the Floating
Platforms concluding seminar on November 3rd, 2015*




DREAMING THE THEORY 2 - NOTIONS OF HYBRIDITY

By Rob La Frenais

I'd like to start talking about hybridity in science and art. There has often been talk about a notion of something called sci-art, and the notion that the scientist and the artist are doing the same thing. At the Arts Catalyst, where I worked as curator between 1997-2014, our job was to set up collaborations between artists and scientists. One of the most obvious ways of making a natural collaboration was to work in zero gravity. We worked with a dancer called Kitsou Dubois and the bio-dynamics group of Imperial College. The art project involved dancing in weightlessness but the science project involved serious research into musculature and zero gravity and the way it is affected by different stages of gravity, using transcranial magnetic stimulation (TMS) in a parabolic flight funded by the European Space Agency (ESA). The trained dancer was useful to the scientists in testing their theories about the way signals were sent from the brain in this environment,

both outside and inside a zero gravity situation. This was a good example of a clear model of science and art collaboration, what I would call the utilisation model, where to some extent the art and the science do contribute to one another in terms of building up a body of knowledge.

But I think the main issue between art and science is the collection of data. Basically, the scientist has to collect provable and falsifiable data and then share that data among her or his peers and be evaluated worldwide in terms of peer review - then essentially - the boundaries of knowledge are increased by this process. Now, the scientist doesn't claim to know everything - they are still trying to expand the frontiers of knowledge - but it could be said that it is a fairly and regulated process by which this data become part of scientific knowledge.




The artist, however, is dealing with dreams, poetry, ideas that may have no research value whatsoever, and with they might produce something that we might decide to call art. Now, Joseph Beuys of course, very famously, implied that everything is art, or all human activity is art – I think that has been mis-interpreted as “everyone is an artist”. I think that what he was saying we should redefine the boundaries of art to include all human activity. I think, when looking at that definition and also the definition given by Carl Andre, the sculptor, when he said “Art is what artists do” – we find ourselves in a philosophical place that is very different to the world of building up data and contributing to the body of knowledge that we call science.

This was very interestingly illustrated in the talk by Joshua Sofaer and Mikko Sams who made their Floating Platforms presentation very nicely, I felt, in two matching stripy sweaters which they had purchased from a shop in Turku. I felt that was a very interesting gesture, or statement, because it was, in a sense, playing out this notion of the artist and scientist being somehow similar. But of course the similarities in their presentation came out in a different way to their practice. They talked about a successful visit to London when Mikko visited Joshua and they discovered they liked the same kind of music, the same movies, food, alcohol, all those things. That to me is actually - quite seriously - part of the way in which a curator working in the field of art and science might choose to go about setting up a collaboration and one might actually want to think about those similarities quite a lot.

They then went on quite interestingly to satirise their differences. I was also told they had spent most of their collaboration writing a funding application, which of course artists and scientists do a lot of. Some people felt they had spent so much time on their funding application that they didn't think about their collaboration. But the thing about collaboration is that if it is dealt with as a conscious act, it doesn't really work. You find yourself sitting in an empty room thinking: “what to we have to share, what can we do?” Much better to go on a long bike ride or spend some time drinking in a pub talking about absolutely anything else apart from art and science.

So that's one model, I could think of many other models. It has been proposed by Professor Arthur Miller, from the UK, that there does exist something called 'Art-Sci'. I would completely disagree with this. He is, of course coming from the world of mathematics, which may account for this stance. He wrote a book called Colliding Worlds. I would tend to go with the viewpoint of Roger Malina, who is the son of Frank Malina, who was a rocket scientist who later became an artist. He was actually part of an exhibition, which was very formative to me in my life, called Cybernetic Serendipity, at the ICA in London, which I attended when I was a teenager in the '60s, which must have affected my later interest in art and science.



I tend to go along with that viewpoint. We do have some interesting cases-studies though, particularly those I encountered through working with The Arts Catalyst. James Acord, for example, is no longer with us now, but he wanted to make a sculpture out of nuclear materials and he set up his studio in the United States' largest 'Nuclear City' called Hanford, where basically the atomic bomb had been produced. He was very interested in the issue of contamination and putting down markers in the form of sculpture, saying that "Here is a place that needs to be avoided" In order to do that he needed some nuclear materials, so he started off by using Fiestaware, which was a popular form of crockery, cups and saucers from the 30s that were very popular in the US. Many households had some. Unfortunately Fiestaware was extremely 'hot' - the bright orange colour was caused by mixing the clay with uranium. So he went about getting this stuff from antique shops and melting it down and trying to extract uranium. He was soon closed down by health and safety authorities in Seattle, where he was based. He got together with some nuclear scientists who he had met at an anti-nuclear counter-demonstration and decided that what he would do was train as a nuclear engineer. He took a vocational course in nuclear engineering, and as a result was able to purchase 12 nuclear fuel rods from Germany and thus becoming not only the first artist in the world, but the first individual to hold a licence to own radioactive material. He very proudly tattooed his licence number on the back of his neck. This was a very interesting example of an artist going deep into the scientific world.

He started trying to look like a nuclear scientist of the era, right down to wearing a cheap suit, a workman's shirt and a row of pens in the top pocket. Essentially he went into deep cover, his main associates during his artistic life being nuclear scientists and engineers.

I want to go back, now and somewhat repudiate what I said before earlier in this talk, which was that dreams had no research value. Many people are studying dreams, both in a scientific and non-scientific way, indeed an interdisciplinary way. Referring back to Roger Malina's statement that interdisciplinarity in itself is not a discipline, I think we can bend and merge disciplines. I think we can break a few ground rules from time to time. For example, the artist Agnes Meyer Brandis essentially investigates scientific data rigorously, to the point of obsession, but then what she does is implant a poetic suggestion into the data. So that we are seeing what appears to be data, science, then she introduces an element of fiction into this. The interesting trick is you can't quite work out where the element of fiction is introduced, so for example in a large project I was involved with started with a study of long-haul migration of birds, in this case geese. She went to Siberia to study geese, which she claimed were able to fly, not only between the poles (there are indeed polar-migrating birds such as the Arctic Tern), but also suggesting there were a type of geese which would be able to migrate to the Moon and back. Instead of simply just asserting this, she got herself some geese. How do you get geese? Well, you give birth to them.



She got some eggs and an incubator and she bred 12 geese which she named astronauts, writing the names of famous astronauts on the eggs before they were born. Of course you could not actually prove that the goose now named Yuri Gagarin actually crawled out of the egg so inscribed, but at the point of being born they did have names. I met the goose called Neil Armstrong, after the first man on the moon who gave me a very substantial peck on the leg. If you are ever dealing with livestock in art always wear thick and heavy trousers!


Anges Meyer Brandis's work is always based on actual scientific research. The work I am in discussion with her at the moment is based on gravitational anomalies. These do exist and scientists around the world are measuring infinitesimal, tiny, variations in gravity with instruments. So for example, if you go to Poland there are some hotspots of gravitational changes. In a new work she wants to make a forest float in a region near some gravitational anomalies. She takes a scientific fact and expands and bends it.

Another example is the scientist Jean-Marc Chomaz, hydrologist working with the CNRS in Paris is also interested in poetic use of data coming from water and is working with artists, again working in areas that are not entirely scientifically proven.

I'd like to move on from artists using poetic data to the notion of actually challenging, or transforming science, so I'd like to argue –

lets put it on a grand historical scale – that in the 19th century we really were not quite sure what variety of rationalism we were going to get. We saw scientists such as Sir Oliver Lodge talking to spirit mediums at the same time as Michael Faraday was demonstrating electricity to audiences at the Royal Institution in London. We had people talking about ghosts and spirits and trying to communicate with the afterlife. Then at the beginning of the 20th century a certain kind of rationalism began to push out the other stuff and the same time as we proceeded into the two world wars, science became very much in the service of war and had to get very serious about hard facts and measurements. A good example of this was Jack Parsons, the early rocket scientist, one of the 'suicide squad', along with the artistically-minded Frank Malina testing rockets in the desert, who in the '30s also became an occultist and a follower of Aleister Crowley. As the Second World War approached all that became less acceptable and Malina and the others, started work on jet propulsion in the service of the military. Then after the war came McCarthyism and the atomic bomb, so those guys were all out.

Historically speaking, C.P.Snow, in the 50's bemoaned this situation. He talked about, in the Two Cultures, how science and art had been inextricably torn apart. This brings us forward, through Cybernetic Serendipity, to the beginning of an entente between art and science, with the E.A.T experiments of the Swedish artist Billy Cluver and others in the United States.



Finally in the 90's there was a blossoming in Europe of organisations like The Art Catalyst, the Wellcome Trust's Sci-Art programme, Artsci in New York and the founding of SymbioticA in Australia. So now I would argue we should be possibly moving into a mature stage of collaboration. Again, I'm not talking about interdisciplinarity for its own sake, I'm talking about scientists being able to challenge the way artists go about things and artists being able to challenge the way scientists go about things. I would start to talk about entering a transformational period. We had some conversations about this when I was in Turku. I felt there were different stages, separations, entente, then transformation. In the transformation stage I see things that scientists don't yet know being of interest, that is for sure. In terms of the way science is applied to society, why do we do things in a certain way? Here we come, actually, to my experience of Finland, which to me is a kind of interesting society, in that you appear to have innovation written into the texture of society. Why do I think this – well, as a metaphor, look at the river. I can see lifebelts for rescuing people who have fallen into the river for whatever reason, but you also have ladders. I have never seen ladders by a river. To me, that is very interesting. Someone in Turku has thought, ahead, someone might fall in the river, they have to get out again - lets put some ladders there. Another kind of society might think that if you put ladders there, people might steal them!

So what I am interested in, what this metaphor brings me to, is how society might be transformed by more innovative applications of science and technology. I think that artists do have a part to play in this. I'm currently working with the artist Tomas Saraceno on challenging the fact we need rockets, burning vast amounts of hydrocarbons, to get into space, to launch the satellites we are so reliant upon. So when we think about climate change, for example, we also need to have a paradigm shift, to think differently. Artists could think of ways round thinking out of that box. So this is a rallying cry to you at Floating Platforms, going into art and science collaborations at this mature stage. As Joshua and Mikko showed, you can take a humorous and at the same time radical approach to these things, and at the same time become involved in a transformative approach to the way science and technology is done.

7. IRMA OPTIMISTI - BETWEEN MATHEMATICS AND PERFORMANCE ART

*Interviewed by Virpi Vairinen
Video and editing by Christopher Hewitt*

The interview of performance artist Irma Optimisti and her profound career between mathematics and performance art was presented at the Floating Platforms concluding seminar on November 3rd, 2015.





So in a way, in performance, the feeling of gratification is nearer.

AUTHORS

Márcio Carvalho is a Portuguese visual artist and an independent curator, based in Berlin. Carvalho's practice for the last five years have been focused on memory and its influences upon collective groups and individual people.

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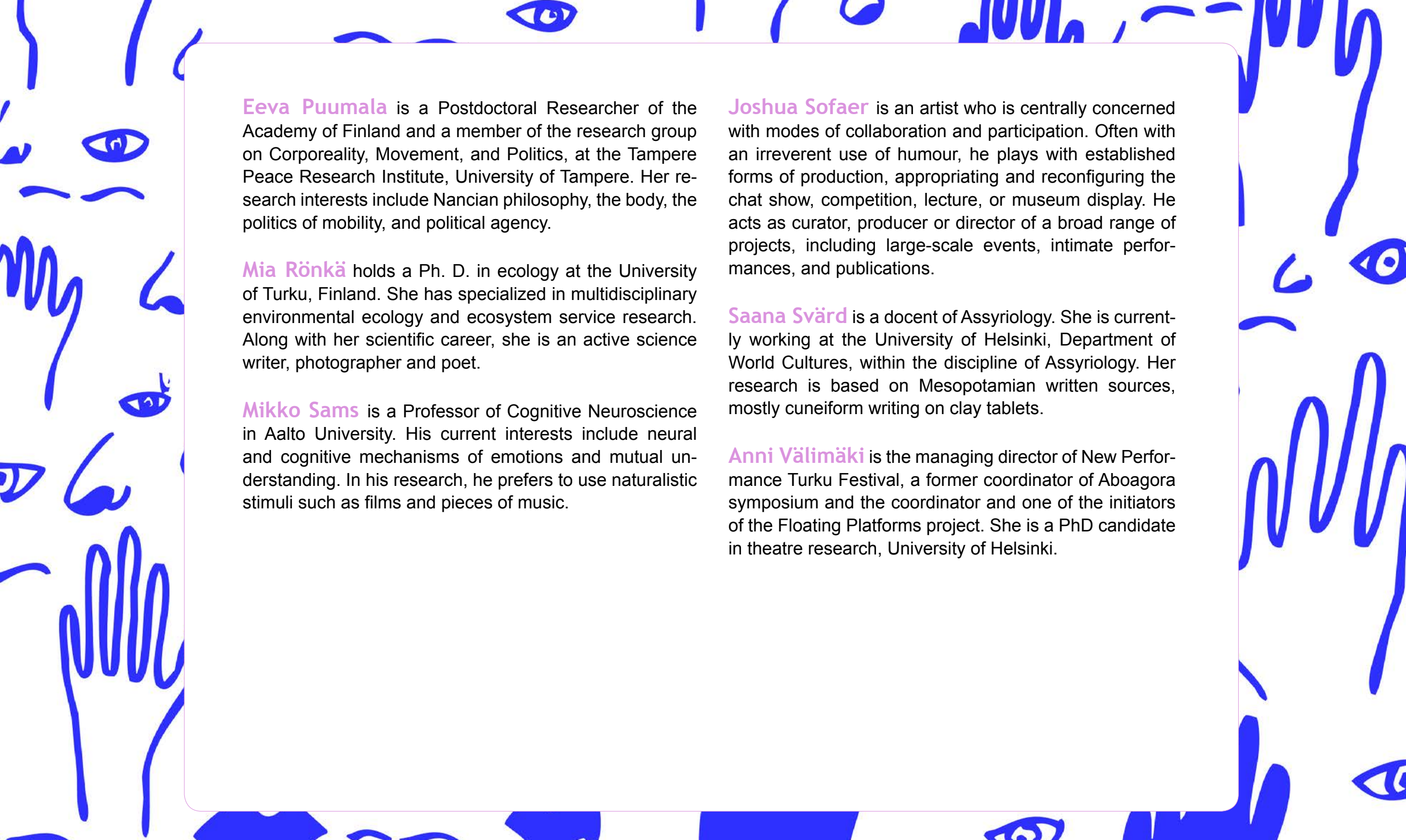
Leena Kela is the co-artistic director of New Performance Turku Festival. In the Floating Platforms project she acted as the initiator, curator and one of the artists. She is currently doing her practice based PhD studies at the Academy of Fine Arts in Helsinki researching the language of performance art.

Mari Krappala is a writer and a researcher in contemporary art. She is a docent of cultural studies in the Aalto University, School of Arts, Design and Architecture, Helsinki. Mari Krappala acted as the mentor and the analyst of the Floating Platforms workpairs.

Rob La Frenais is an independent contemporary art curator, working internationally and creatively with artists entirely on original commissions. www.roblafrenais.info

Lynn Lu is a visual artist from Singapore. She exhibits, performs, and lectures extensively throughout Asia, Oceania, Europe, and the Americas. Lynn lives and works in London as an independent artist, educator and curator.

Irma Optimisti is a Finnish performance artist and mathematician, who is specialized in chaos theory. She has worked with performance art since 1989 and presented over 160 performances in different parts of the world. Her works are often humoristic and deal with chaos, womanhood and combine the elements of mathematics and natural science with the bodily functions.



Eeva Puumala is a Postdoctoral Researcher of the Academy of Finland and a member of the research group on Corporeality, Movement, and Politics, at the Tampere Peace Research Institute, University of Tampere. Her research interests include Nancian philosophy, the body, the politics of mobility, and political agency.

Mia Rönkä holds a Ph. D. in ecology at the University of Turku, Finland. She has specialized in multidisciplinary environmental ecology and ecosystem service research. Along with her scientific career, she is an active science writer, photographer and poet.

Mikko Sams is a Professor of Cognitive Neuroscience in Aalto University. His current interests include neural and cognitive mechanisms of emotions and mutual understanding. In his research, he prefers to use naturalistic stimuli such as films and pieces of music.

Joshua Sofaer is an artist who is centrally concerned with modes of collaboration and participation. Often with an irreverent use of humour, he plays with established forms of production, appropriating and reconfiguring the chat show, competition, lecture, or museum display. He acts as curator, producer or director of a broad range of projects, including large-scale events, intimate performances, and publications.

Saana Svärd is a docent of Assyriology. She is currently working at the University of Helsinki, Department of World Cultures, within the discipline of Assyriology. Her research is based on Mesopotamian written sources, mostly cuneiform writing on clay tablets.

Anni Välimäki is the managing director of New Performance Turku Festival, a former coordinator of Aboagora symposium and the coordinator and one of the initiators of the Floating Platforms project. She is a PhD candidate in theatre research, University of Helsinki.



www.floatingplatforms.fi

www.aboagora.fi

www.newperformance.fi