

# Breaking Frames

Matti Tanskanen

Images and Artworks  
in Current Visual Climates





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### Abstract

This thesis examines the concept of frames and framing in images and artworks in current visual climates. I analyse how framing affects the ways one interprets art they encounter. My central research questions are as follows: What are the frames? What is framing as an act? What kinds of connections frames create when placed in various contexts? Recognizing frames and framing around artworks is one of the most crucial areas of visual cultures to comprehend in order to understand the full context of images and artworks.

I formulate my analysis by these three research questions, and five specific study cases. The study cases I analyse are either artworks, which are part of my personal artistic practice or collective projects I have been co-creating. Nevertheless, the projects are not part of this thesis as independent artworks. Instead, they represent images and documentation of the artworks and experiments I have made. The five study cases create the core of my research process and are distinct part of this thesis. Together the practical and textual experiments formulate my exploration upon the concept of frames.

I examined the frames from the point of view of a single frame structure moving further towards extensive frame-systems. I studied these structures through practical and contextual deconstruction and reconstruction processes and how frames inevitably connect with de-framing and reframing. This analysis I made demonstrated that frames could never operate as single units, but nevertheless are open and irreplaceably interconnected with other frames around. Frictions and breaking of frames are a necessary and essential part of the frame constructions. These open frame-systems are endlessly free for new and uncontrollable interpretations, although framing effects explicitly what kinds of representations artworks create at the same time. For these reasons, the deconstruction-reconstruction process is critical for understanding the full meanings frames possess.

The overall conclusion of this thesis is that frames are endlessly open for new and uncontrollable interpretations. Nevertheless, reframing is never possible without deconstruction and de-framing processes, which are essential for making free interpretations of art.

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**Keywords** Context, Deconstruction, Frame, Framing, Interpretation, Social Structures, Visual Cultures, Contemporary Art

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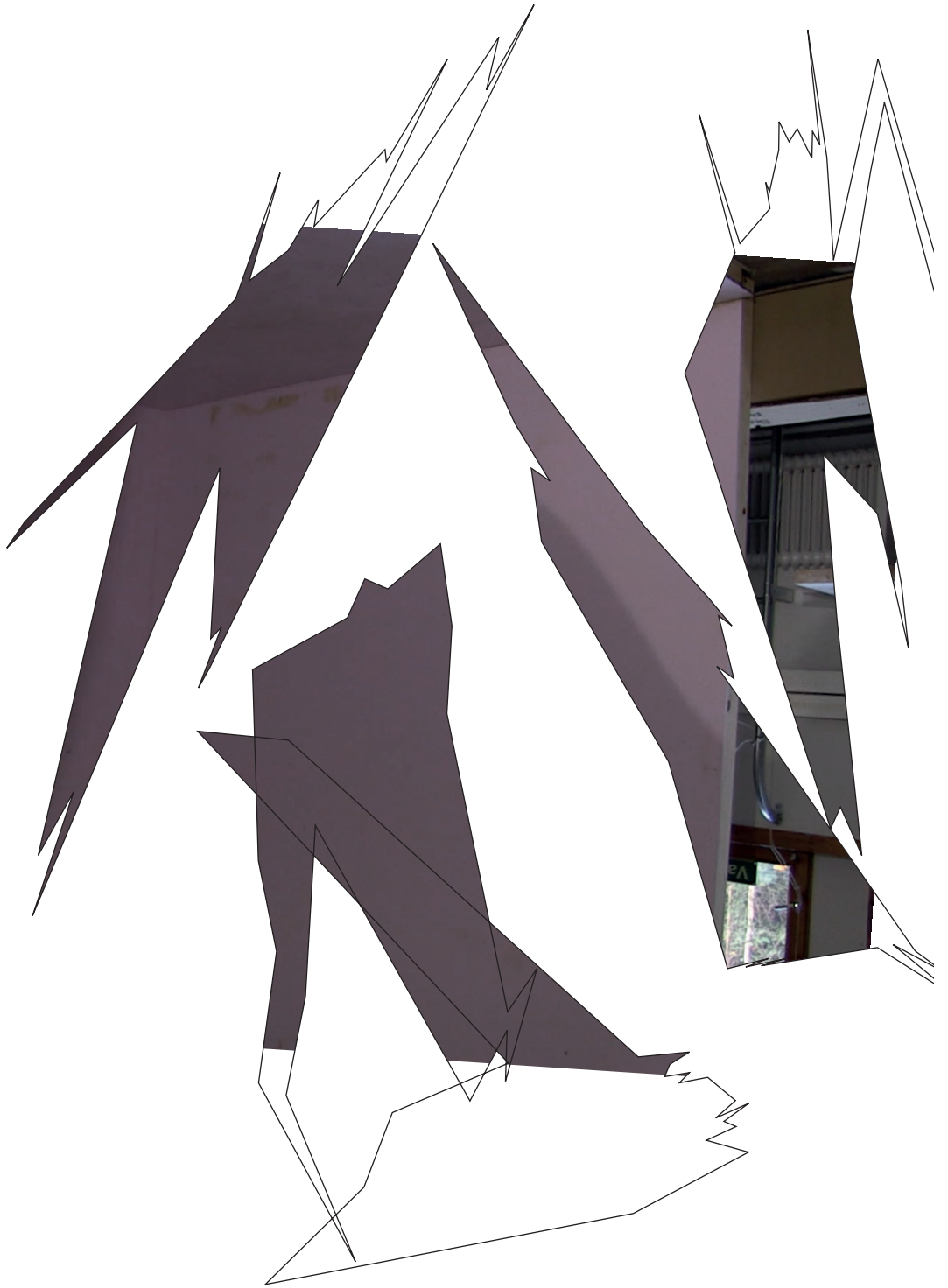
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## Introduction

This thesis analyses the concept of frames and framing concerning images and contemporary art. My three main research questions are as follows: What are the frames? What is framing as an act? What kinds of connections frames create when placed in various contexts? I aim to understand the construction of frames and how frames affect the ways one interprets art. I am approaching these questions through my artistic practice and collective artworks I have been co-creating. Moreover, I will analyse these questions in this textual part of this thesis.

My artistic practice forms a series of study cases, which are not part of this thesis as independent artistic works but as images and documentation of the artworks and experiments I have made. Besides this, they form the core of the research process of this thesis. The study cases are not in chronological order, but they instead formulate the contextual narrative for the text. Together with my artistic practice, this textual part formulates the final study into the subject of frames.

I began to study frames through my main working mediums, photography and moving image. From there, I move towards installations and interventions as an attempt to open the frames of images. I will

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## Introduction

also examine how frames affect artworks and their surrounding environment in more general. Through this thesis process, I will analyse the systems frames create together with each other and how it happens. I am concentrated on examining how frames operate together in more extensive networks and are endlessly open for uncontrollable interpretations.<sup>1</sup>

Each artwork has an essential role in pulling together the bigger picture this thesis is attempting to draw. In each chapter, I am examining the topic from a specific point of view aiming to find answers for the research questions set upon the topic. These five selected works and study cases interconnect with each other on a similar kind of level, and all of them study the concept of frames in particular manners. Each artwork is also irreplaceably interconnected with other frames around it.

The order of the artworks renders the research questions and this research process in its final form by making a full image of this thesis.

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<sup>1</sup> Judith Butler, *Torture and the ethics of Photography, Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, Volume 25 (2007): 960

I am examining the questions upon frames I have addressed here and have been pondering by myself for some time already. Some of these notions are capable of finding from each chapter, and they are also all gathered together to the conclusions.

The following texts are a modest attempt to explore the questions around frames and framing through these five projects and study cases. The question of framing is irreplaceable in the context of visual cultures and contemporary art, and frames keep changing, growing and elaborating inevitable. This thesis is a scratch on that surface. It has also been an exciting journey through my artistic practice, in which I have learned to look at the question of framing new and alternative ways.

**In the first chapter,** I will focus on a short film clip I filmed of a friend of mine, Rafael, wandering around in the city of Porto at night. The film deals with the idea of framing and defining one's position within a surrounding environment. In this chapter, I will study how a simple looking film clip can reflect several frames that are not visible in the picture. I intend to analyse how the invisible frames can be 'seen' in the film as frames placed outside its actual frame, outside the frame of a camera. Besides this, I will also study



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what kind of a context the hidden frames create for the film together with its surrounding environment, and how this concretely happens. I am also analysing what kind of relationship all of these frames have together.

I am comparing Rafael's action to the surrounding city space, attempting to find out how the juxtaposing of these two frames reflect the invisible frames of both, a city space and the moving image, within their labyrinth-like structures. I will approach the topic from a theoretical point of view by analysing one's relation to space. I will also juxtapose the film clip of Rafael with a scene from Jacques Rivette's film *OUT 1: Noli Me Tangere*. Moreover, I expand the process further, analysing for whom city space is framed in the first place, especially at night. I am also giving an in-depth look at the systems these frames create. I am writing about them through an example of J.K. Rowling's fictional prose in the Harry Potter novel series. At the end of this chapter, I will also reflect and analyse the progress of my research process around the film and public space.

**The second chapter** will be studying a series of photographs I made during the Legacies of Contamination summer school in Nuuk, Greenland in June 2018. In this chapter, I aim to analyse my own position as an

artist and photographer working in this particular context, and within the frames it constructs. I will ponder how the structure of geopolitics and social structures are embedded in these images and contemporary art in general. And I am also going to analyse how the frames of these photographs are developing when exhibited again in a new context. I will examine these questions through this particular series, and by studying the position of contemporary art within the current political system at large.

I am also looking at these questions from the point of view of the environment. The way the environment has been framed in western cultures before has been one-sided, and I will analyse this situation in the text. These photographs are representing the history of humans neglecting the environment. I am examining how these events would have been framed differently today. The chapter also includes an analysis of exhibiting this work in the *Ad Break* exhibition in Vantaa, Finland in April 2019.

**The third chapter** deals mostly with the question around public space. I am researching how installations and interventions can turn structures of society visual when juxtaposed to a city space. I approach the topic through *Quite Cube* a collective

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installation-intervention made by Suomi kuvaa Collective in Helsinki, Finland in August 2014. Even though the work was done five years ago, I still find it relevant for my personal practice. It is also interchangeably related to this thesis process. Quite Cube was a work, which was directly examining framing as such. It was also a project, which got me interested in analysing the topic of framing further.

Quite Cube was constructed behind the Finlandia Hall in the centre of Helsinki, Finland. I will be analysing what kind of an effect the installation-intervention had for the place, and how the surrounding environment affected on the artwork as well. I will also be writing about the images and frames it created, and examining these hidden frames this particular artwork brought up and turned visible. Besides this, I will explore how artworks affect frames of an environment, and how an environment affects structures of artworks too. I am analysing these concepts further starting from page 32.

**The fourth chapter** The fourth chapter explores the concepts of deconstructing and reframing in the collective experimental film-installation and research project *Out 2*.

Out 2 is an artwork created together with twenty-six artists. The project initially started as a course for experimental film making at Aalto University in Espoo, Finland, and then formulated to a collective art project exhibited at the Research Pavilion in the context of Venice Biennale in Venice, Italy in August 2017.

In this chapter, I am examining how the multi-layered working process affected the outcome of the film and the working process as a whole.

I am looking at the question of framing through deconstruction and reconstruction processes. I started analysing these concepts through practical experiments, which became crucial for the whole research process. I am examining the concepts of framing, de-framing, and reframing and how they are inevitably connected.

I analyse this process through a concrete deconstruction of the Marilyn Wall. The Marilyn Wall was a wall used for several different purposes. I am concentrating on writing how the deconstruction became an inseparable part of the project and this thesis process. I will analyse frames and how frames connect with other frames. I exploring at the frame-networks in Out 2 research process, and within images and artworks in

general. Out 2 also has a fair share in being an inspiration to start thinking about frames and framing.

**The fifth chapter** explores the concept of framing through and within a text. I am analysing a manifesto, *Manifesto of a Better Future*, which I wrote for The Truth About Finland publication and exhibition project initiated by Porin Kulttuurisäästö ry in June and July in 2017.

The Manifesto of a Better Future is an artwork made of ten different taglines, all saying NO TO – political views existing in Finland today.

**In the fifth chapter**, I will analyse the concept of a manifesto as an art form.

Each tagline de-frames one political issue aiming to reframe it. I will analyse each statement thoroughly by comparing one to others to see the entire meanings they create. I am also writing about a manifesto as a medium and thinking about its aim as an art form and a political tool. Besides this, I am also examining every tagline through the concept of frame and framing.

This thesis is overall studying the concepts of frames and framing within images and artworks. The work researches the connections, and meanings frames create

in relationship with other frames when placed in various contexts. These are the concepts I will be writing about throughout this thesis.



1.

# Walking as Framing







Rafael

# Chapter One: Walking as Framing

## Rafael

Rafael walks on a street in the city of Porto, and I am filming him with a camera. Only a few people are passing him by while he walks. The city looks dark; it is probably an evening or a night. Rafael is wearing a grey woollen coat and a yellow scarf, and he is talking into the phone while he walks down the street. It is impossible to hear his voice: the noise of the traffic is so loud as some cars are passing him by on the left side of the image. The buildings around look medieval and old, Rafael keeps on walking, and the image is changed.

In the next image, Rafael sits at a table in a casino or similar kind of game hall. He holds a pen in his hand, and there is a piece of paper in front of him on the table. A robot-like voice is reading numbers out loud on the loudspeakers. The TVs on the wall are showing images of figurative bingo balls with numbers on them, and the balls are jumping around on the TV screens. The colours on the screens are bright, e.g., pink, green and blue. The bingo balls themselves are white with black and red texts on them. The computational voice is imitating a woman's voice and continuingly reading numbers out loudly: twenty-seven, seventy-eight, eighty-two, twenty-seven... and so on and so forth. Rafael is searching for equal numbers from his paper. If he can find the right numbers or not is not sure. Rafael's reactions are nevertheless the same, almost neutral. Rafael is the only customer in the place, which is otherwise empty. There are a book, a phone and a glass in front of him on the table. Rafael has not taken his coat off.

## Walking as Framing

Rafael is facing towards the camera, and one can see him for the first time. He is around 30 years old man; he has dark hair and beard. The look on his face is calm without any strong expressions. Rafael's eyes are moving upon the paper like searching for the right numbers. He does not raise his eyesight from the paper or look at the camera at any point, and he is just looking at the paper and following the computational voice. The place is full of red chairs circling black roundtables. The whole place looks overall kitschy and artificial. The carpeting on the floor has the same red tone with the chairs. The place has no windows either.

In the last image, Rafael is again outside in the streets. The evening has turned to night, and the streets are empty. The city looks darker than before. Rafael has his back to the camera while he is walking uphill in solitude. He walks towards a bright, bluish light flickering in the front him. It is impossible to see where it comes from, yet it gives the image a blue tinge together with the lamp-posts hanging above the street. Rafael keeps on walking, and I stop filming the scene.

### **Framing space**

In the video clip, of Rafael walking in Porto, Portugal, he wanders around the centre aimlessly. Who he is, the film does not tell. He is just an anonymous character passaging through the city at night. It might seem at first sight he is just idling around, but when given the film a closer look, one can realize he is trying to find something. By walking around the city, he is perhaps trying to frame the space for himself. When a place belongs to one, the one also belongs to a place. I do not mean one would occupy the space from

anyone else. It belongs to everyone as much as to Rafael or anyone at the same time.<sup>1</sup>

Walking around the city space is an attempt to make it once own, to have a relationship to it, to have it, to inhabit it, not to be a stranger anymore. When something becomes ‘visible,’ it becomes alive. Walking around city space can be seen as an attempt to frame it for oneself. The city creates an image of one belonging to a place. Essentially, it is the frame and image that one needs to become visible and therefore alive. It is a reflection of belonging to somewhere, to belong a place. Walking is an attempt to create a new frame for oneself. A city also has its character, its name, its heart, and its spirit. It needs humans to come alive. It is exactly humans who eventually are the city – infrastructure is just a frame. Cities are avoiding being ghost towns as much as humans are avoiding being ghosts themselves – the city needs people as much as people need the city. Both need each other to construct a frame to make an image.<sup>2</sup>

### **From Rafael to Colin**

The scene above reminds me of Jacques Rivette’s film *OUT 1: Noli Me Tangere* and a character called Colin. Both, Rafael and Colin, are living in a European city and trying to frame their own position within it. In the film *OUT 1: Noli Me Tangere* Colin is trying to solve the mystery of the thirteen, a theatre group he has some distant

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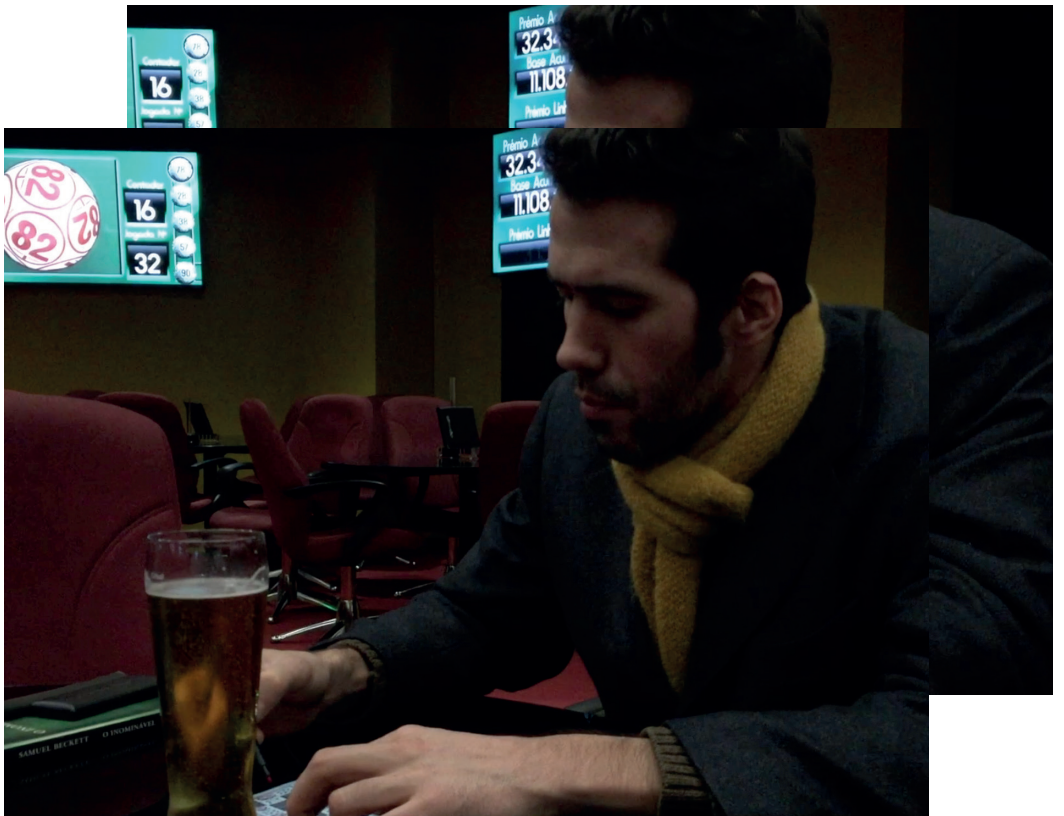
1 Michel Serres, *Malfeasance: Appropriation Through Pollution?* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011), 8.

2 Ibid.

Walking as Framing



Colin from OUT 1: Noli Me Tangere



Rafael playing bingo

## Walking as Framing

clue.<sup>3</sup> Colin's playful actions of solving the mystery hint an interpretation that he is framing and determine something in his life. One could see these actions as an attempt to create and define a relation to the surrounding environment.

What really is Rafael's purpose stays hidden in the film. What one can see is a man walking in the city centre at night. It is complicated to say if he has a plan or not. The scene does not reveal any information upon that. It is impossible to know better who he is and where he is coming from or where he might be heading next. Rafael's actions remind of Colin in the *OUT 1: Noli Me Tangere*.<sup>4</sup> In both of the films, a person is idling in a city aimlessly, or the aim they have, if they have, stays a secret. They are solving their mysteries alone, having something invisible to frame and figure out.

By walking around a city and creating a relationship to it one renders a territory for themselves. To create a relation to space, between spaces, and to other beings, one establishes a frame wherein they can have their image. Both Colin and Rafael are trying to understand and participate in the surrounding environment. They are trying to determine the boundaries between solitude and togetherness with the surrounding shared space.

Colin plays his own game in the new free atmosphere of France after the civil unrest in Paris in 1968. Rafael plays bingo in Porto, in the current more prosperous atmosphere of Porto, after the economic crisis in the EU. Perhaps these two moments are not so

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3 Rivette, Jacques, *OUT 1: Noli Me Tangere*, the film, directed by Jacques Rivette, Paris: Sunshine Productions, 1971.

4 Ibid.

different after all. Both Rafael and Colin are playing their games, look to find the right pieces into the right places. Colin is trying to solve the riddle of the other thirteen to frame his relation to it. These are their ways to roll the dice, to see if something happens if nothing at all.

The city is a frame, a heraldic device<sup>5</sup>, which collects life within itself. As one is walking around in the labyrinth of a city, they are constantly walking through various frames, boundaries, and definitions of society. The city is an archive of social structures, which collects the past, present, and even reflects the future of society. It is simultaneously an archive and a void wherein one can lost or find the answers they might be looking for.

This relation between the city and a human being creates a new dimension for the work. It is the frame and space of discussion. It is the image and space to reflect oneself and to reflect each other. It is a frame, which determines our experiences and gives room for them to appear. It is the juxtaposing of different elements that give the film its narrative and its space for the dialogues to begin.<sup>6</sup>

## **Harry Potter and J.K. Rowling's Frames**

Rafael walks around in Porto at night. On the one hand, it almost feels like he almost walking in a fictional space of the film. On the other, the film would not exist without reality. Photographs and

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5 Jean-Luc Nancy, *La Ville au loin*, (Strasbourg: La Phocide, 2011).

6 Michel Foucault, *Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias*, [web.mit.edu/allanmc/www/foucault1.pdf](http://web.mit.edu/allanmc/www/foucault1.pdf), 1967, 1.



## Walking as Framing

moving images are like pieces of time and space archived within their system. Small fragments of the past time travelling in one's pocket, on a smartphone or as a picture on a wall or in a picture frame on a bookshelf.

Time and space within photographs are living their own life now, carrying the reality inside them as their construction material. Past time is traveling within artworks with human beings until it has entirely vanished again. Photographs are time travellers, going through time, giving one a possibility to see the past times, which are not here anymore. This happens through photography's two-dimensional time relation. Once taken there-and-then, seen in the present time, here-and-now.<sup>7</sup> The way images and frames are seen changes a bit with every spectator, and with time as well.

Perhaps the interpretation of the punctum of photography is the one that is really changed with time, which also changes one's awareness of the social frame within photographs too.<sup>8</sup>

I am more focused on writing about these frames and their connections in chapter four where I am writing about the process of Out 2. During the working process, the idea of traveling through frames started to develop through practical exercises in the project. The way images are interpreted changes with every spectator and within time as well.

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7 Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflection on Photography* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1981), 76-77.

8 *Ibid.* 94-97.



Portraits at Hogwarts

In the J.K. Rowling's Harry Potter novel series all the portraits at Hogwarts, the school of witchcraft and wizardry, are alive and have a passage to another frame somewhere else.<sup>9</sup> The Harry Potter books are fiction of course; nevertheless, I find the idea of portraits being alive quite intriguing. All the people who live in these images have passed away in real life – or in life outside the frame. They are forever stuck inside their frame system. They can move between two different frames as their territory and space. This has nothing to do with the reality of course, although it is an interesting idea to think about and reflects the way in which photographs can be interpreted. One can travel through pictures and frames, through

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9 J.K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Deadly Hallows*, (London: Bloomsbury, 2014).

## Walking as Framing

different times to different places that are no longer here. Frames are like windows and passages to go through further into labyrinths of times and images.

In the portraits at Hogwarts, the time is always present time. People within the frames are dead but alive, and they possess knowledge of the past times that living people cannot have. Similarly, photographs can perhaps help one to know or see, at least to imagine, the past times and events are here and now.

A frame is a powerful archive as such. It is a place where we save our memories, a structure outside of ourselves where one can collect life, and time travel to meet the previous times. In some sense, the traveling between two frames in the Harry Potter novels happens between the frames in real life as well.

Frames of a picture on a table or a wall meet with the frames in one's mind. When all of these frames connect they create the actual image, this happens in the frame-system wherein the real images appear. It is a passage, a window through time and space, meanings and structures. It is a window through something that once was, and is here and now in the form of a photograph. It is a window to see somewhere else. These frames together create the actual image one sees. In the same kind of way, frames and passages create the actual image and space for the dead in the Harry Potter novels. A camera frames a photograph, and a photograph frames a spectator as much as a spectator frames a photograph. The actual image is a reflection of each other within the frames between them. It is the frame between the past and present where they both can come visible at the same time. It is the imaginary-space of photography where the conversation of frames begins.

## Photography vs. Moving Image

The frames, borders, and limitations that a medium has are also its character. Through these characteristics, a medium determines its existence, what it is and is not. The limits determine what it is as such, as one can differentiate it from other frames and mediums. Photography and moving image are sharing many similar features, even though they are different mediums — both bases on still images as a starting point. One of the main differences that differentiate them from each other is their relationship to time. Moving images cannot possess the same stillness as photography does and photography does not have the dimension of movement, which differentiates moving images from any other visual medium.

Photography, as a medium of still images, does not create time the same way as the moving image can. The movement of the film or recorded file creates a dimension of its own, which separates it from the original time, the common time everyone shares, and starts to develop time of its own. This time starts to develop right after someone presses the rec-button of a video camera. The continuous movement of images creates time gives the medium a dimension that separates it from photography. Photography also creates a parallel reality as a motionless. Photography, no matter how staged, is irreplaceably connected to the time outside. The time of photography is always within the time we are sharing. Moving image creates space of time of its own wherein all the movement, all time of the film, is collected. It is an abstract time dimension, which only moving image has.

Photography also has its singular timeframe. It is the time of a photograph. Its exposure time, the exact timeframe of milliseconds

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it was created. This timeframe makes every photograph singular. It would be almost impossible to take a photograph in the precisely same time with another photograph. Time does not affect the aesthetics of a photograph, and it could still look precisely the same with another photograph. Nevertheless, it would always remain singular because of its unique point of time.

One also creates moving images at some precise point of time. The final films are often constructions of various clips made in multiple times and contexts and then attached to a new order. This order creates a singular time dimension, the time of the film. Even if someone had made a film in a single shot, in one single take, the movement of the film would break the original timeframe, and create new time. The frame of a film collects seconds and minutes into a new dimension only moving image as a medium can have.

Through the movement of a film, it is trying to break free of 'our' time. The movement of the image starts to develop a new time, the time of the film. This time is not the duration of the film, but the time of the movement a moving image develops. This time is increasing every time a film is played. One could say that moving image and photography both possess at least two time-dimensions in their systems, the time of the picture and the time of the artwork. The time of the artwork is our time, as it is contextually always connected to reality. It cannot escape it. It is always placed within the ordinary time and various contexts. Both of these mediums have at least two time-dimensions — the time of a spectator and the time of the medium. The movement of a film gives it a new, specific time-dimension, which differentiates it from photography creating a frame of its own.

## About the Process

When I first started to write about Rafael and the film scene, I did not quite know what it was that caught my eye in the first place. I just found the film engaging in general. That being said, I knew that it was not entirely there, under the surface was something I could not see back then. This content was rather outside the actual film frame. A public city space includes several different frames, which affect directly artworks placed in the context. After bringing the work into the discussion in the thesis seminar, these hidden frames started to come more and more visible. Questions for whom city spaces have been framed for, and who are allowed and welcome to use them at night became clearer. After the discussion and recognizing these frames the work grounds, the structure of the film started to appear as a whole.

Throughout this thesis process, many ideas have become visual in the form of documentation. This text is one of those forms. The video is also some kind of an intervention – or the frames outside the camera’s frame are intervening the film. The working process has well shown the significant role documentation has for artistic processes after the actual work is done.<sup>10</sup> The documentation and analyse upon the frames can give the work new and unpredictable value. Deconstructing and reframing it produces valuable knowledge, something one could not have otherwise achieved.<sup>11</sup>

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10 Anna Jensen, Taina Rajanti, Denise Ziegler *Interventio kaupunkitilaan/Intervention to Urban Space* (Espoo: Aalto ARTS Books, 2018), 133.

11 *Ibid.*, 133.

## Walking as Framing

At the beginning, I was most focused on examining the relationship between humans and space as necessary for everyone. And even though walking can be used as framing, the film well showed how public city spaces are already framed before anyone walks into the scene. This experience reveals the process of artwork, which continues after the work has been done in the first place. The aftermath analysis exams where and how artworks actually exist – where they began and end, and how they are framed as a whole.

As I have a background in photography, I often found myself comparing other mediums to photography. Frames of moving image and photography are different as the mediums are different too. Nevertheless, in a straightforward sense, they share several similarities. The way photographs frame reality is always an attempt to render it to represent a specific interpretation or series of interpretations. Every framing is an act of emphasizing reality in a particular way. Framing of an image can also become a concrete visual part of the image itself. Each image has several different frames embedded within them, frames that can also be non-visual. Once these structures are found and seen, they become inevitable part of the image. The framing becomes a part of the image that one interprets and sees, the image that it then actually is.<sup>12</sup> These hidden frames are the frames that show what one can see in an image. The hidden frames complete the image and form the picture and artwork as a whole.

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12 Judith Butler, *Torture and the ethics of Photography, Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, Volume 25 (2007): 952.







2.

# Legacies of Contamina- tion



Bluie East Two

## Chapter Two: Legacies of Contamination

### Nuuk

In June 2018, I participated in the Legacies of Contamination summer school in Nuuk, Greenland. The summer school was jointly organized by Aalto University and the University of Reykjavik together. The focus of the project was to study on today's most critical issues, e.g., climate change, and the reasons behind them. Climate change is affecting the whole world in many ways today. The ice caps are melting in the Arctic, and more natural resources become available for capitalistic use. At the same time, it reveals numerous cases of neglecting environmental responsibility in the past. And it is still a significant problem. All of these actions have created tragic circumstances both globally and locally in the world today.<sup>1</sup> My aim as a student and artist was to study these structures and to think about how one could try to affect these issues through contemporary art and artistic research methods.

The course gave me a lot of valuable knowledge in regards to the political and environmental situation of the world at the moment. Greenland has been a site of several different political issues and has reflected the geopolitics of the world in many dark ways. Behind these issues lay several unequal political decisions. This thesis is concentrating on analysing how these frames formulate and what kinds of structures they create together.

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1 Pia Lindman, Tinna Grétarsdóttir, Legacies of Contamination Open Call Proposal, (Espoo, Aalto University, 2018).

## Legacies of Contamination

I am concentrating on writing about a photographic series, which I made on one of our field trips during the summer school. I am writing about the questions and thoughts that rose through the field trip and these images. I am studying how my own position as an artist affects the process of photographing in Greenland, and on the other hand, how exhibiting these images frames them in a certain way. This thesis is concentrating on analysing how these frames formulate and what kinds of structures they create together.

I am writing about images that I took at the old, closed NATO base Bluie East Two. Nevertheless, when the NATO forces left the area was left entirely not cleaned. Also, it has been kept so ever since. One can find several different objects in the area related mostly to oil. Oil is another symbol for many complicated issues, which have led political situation making, military conflicts and even wars throughout history and still does every day. The visit to the site was a powerful experience overall.

Our group travelled to the place by boat from Nuuk through the fjords in-between magnificent mountains in a chilly early summer morning. We had had many lectures about the issues in Greenland and the political decisions related to them. It charged the whole study trip politically. During the time in Greenland, it felt that the group was concerned about Greenland, but when I look back now, it seems we were simultaneously concern about our position within all of this. This is perhaps just natural. I will continue writing about these issues later in this chapter.

Stepping out of the boat and climbing up over the hill in sunny but windy weather felt already strong. We started to walk further on to the ex-base. The first traces of pollution and of appropriation that

I encountered while climbing up was a single oil barrel lying on the ground alone. It felt like the first mark. A sign of stepping into the area, into the frame the military forces had framed in the place. It did not feel accidental or something that had just happened by a change. Of course, someone visiting the site could have just thrown it there. In spite of that, it felt like stepping into a marked frame, into a frame where NATO's military space really starts.

After climbing a bit further, the actual scene opened up from the top of the hill. The area was large and full of different kinds of things. These objects, which were most of all parts of machines reminded me of oil. I walked around taking pictures with my camera. It felt both a bit challenging and necessary simultaneously. The sunlight was beautiful, and nature around was stunningly beautiful as well. I kept wondering what had happened there and I could almost hear the noise of the military forces.

In the photographs, one can see objects left behind by NATO. When I am looking at these things, e.g., rusty oil barrels, a rusty car or random engines they make me think that they are not left there just because of ignorance, but also on purpose. It feels that the barrels and other things are left there to make a mark. To mark the existence of the possible military power and appearance when NATO is not physically present in the area anymore. These rusty old objects lying on the ground, surrounded by the most gorgeous scenery of mountains and the turquoise ocean, are a mark of the political and military power.

When someone visits the site, they do not only see the beautiful landscape, and nature, the natural scenery of the place, which would have taken over by now, reducing the presence and the time

## Legacies of Contamination



of the military space further in history. What the site now represents is still the past time of the military forces of NATO. The time in the site has not completely changed, even though it actually has. The litter left behind is exactly a manner of marking and framing something for oneself. It is a mark of appropriating something for someone through pollution.<sup>2</sup> These rusty objects could be seen, as elements to mark the area visually, it is a visible mark of those who framed the place. At the same time, it is a frame and mark of ignorance as well.

## **Environment and these photographs**

When looking at the question of framing within these photographs, one can easily see the climate policy of the past. It seems like the framing of them had been made before they were taken, it exists outside the images.<sup>3</sup> Mass media has already framed the way these photos can be seen, the framing comes within the picture – it is embedded within the possible interpretations. This type of framing holds a real risk of oversimplifying complicated issues within a powerful frame like mass media context. Seeing behind the endless stream of news is not always easy. The representations created by the news can be long-lasting frames and patterns around any topic. This has been seen in the reporting of cultures, wars, and crises outside the so-called western world context.

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2 Michel Serres, *Malféasance: Appropriation Through Pollution?* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011).

3 Judith Butler, *Torture and the ethics of Photography*, *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, Volume 25 (2007): 957.



## Legacies of Contamination

This kind of frame follows these photographs in many forms, e.g., as rusty oil barrels and their position in nature. It is again the juxtaposing between the two frames and spaces that makes them visible.<sup>4</sup> Could these pictures or any artworks from the area then be considered as some kind of interventions, which criticize the past? Or are they just more pictures strengthening the already existing power structures?

Even if the images or any artworks were framed critically, they would not be completely free of the post-colonial structures of the world. Contemporary Art or Visual Cultures at large are working within the same political and economic system and are, therefore, affected of these structures as well. In spite of that, they do not address or represent those structures directly either. Current political structures can be found in photographs and artworks even if hidden or outside their visual frame. Photographs like this could have been seen slightly differently 40–50 years ago. They could have been seen as an environmental problem and misbehaving. Nevertheless, the planetary level climate catastrophe places them into an entirely different context today. And this is not only based on framing or representation of images but scientific facts. The climate change was known 40–50 years ago already, on the scientific and governmental level. Therefore the frame was framed politically or just ignored by those in power. This frame could be said to be the frame of not taking climate change or environmental catastrophe seriously.

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4 Michel Foucault, *Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias*, [web.mit.edu/allanmc/www/foucault1.pdf](http://web.mit.edu/allanmc/www/foucault1.pdf), 1967, 1.

When I am looking at the oil barrels lying on the ground, in the most beautiful environment, I cannot avoid thinking they represent inequality and injustice in numerous ways. The barrels represent the human misbehaviour, abuse of natural resources, and post-colonial capitalism as well. The actions these pictures represent could be taken almost anywhere in the world. Therefore I do not see them as site-specific but rather global. The photographs could represent the end of an oil-based society at large. However, the pictures are particularly Greenlandic. Nevertheless, the questions around oil and environment are more global than local.

### **The Ad Break Exhibition**

I participated in the *Ad Break* exhibition in Vantaa, Finland in April 2019. I had been pondering for quite some time how to exhibit these photographs, if at all. After having a supportive discussion around the subject with Professor Bassam El Baroni at Aalto University, I realized that perhaps the question around these particular images was not so critical that I had felt during the trip. When I was talking to Bassam, he emphasized that reacting and taking these specific images was most of all a human reaction and response to structures and incidents in the world. I had been worried about continuing to strengthen unequal structures within the pictures I took. The role of contemporary art and photography in the current reality has been somewhat challenging to address. And to see how the unequal structures would appear in an everyday environment and would frame the image of Greenland.

## Legacies of Contamination



From this starting point, I decided to exhibit one of the images in the Ad Break exhibition in public space in Vantaa. The project addressed criticism upon the endless flow of advertisements in open city space. I wanted to see how my pictures would appear in this context, in practice and not only in theory. I wanted to research in practice how the photographs would be interpreted, and how the surrounding city and the new context would affect them. Each artist participating in the project was asked to create a poster. I exhibited one image alone, so there was no place to render it with other elements such as written text.

As I have taken the photograph and new its original context, it perhaps looked different for me than a spectator. The new frame of the exhibition was criticizing consumerism, and the image was seen more in this light, in the frame, it was framed now. The content of the work fitted well for this purpose too. The work could perhaps be interpreted in all of these frames, some of them might just be not so clear than others. Without a specific framing of the site and situation, the artwork can be seen within a loose frame. All these questions brought up many thoughts around frames and how the framing is visual in work as such too.

The act of taking a photograph is already framing an image, and an image is an interpretation as such too. A spectator cannot know for sure where the event within a photograph starts and ends, and what is the photographed situation in total.<sup>5</sup> In spite of this fact and not only that but also because of this truth of photography,

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5 Judith Butler, *Torture and the ethics of Photography, Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, Volume 25 (2007): 960.

## Legacies of Contamination

framing has an irreplaceable role in photographs. Framing has an irreplaceable role in photographs. When photographs are not only exhibited alone but also named, described with words, placed in various environments, i.e., on a gallery wall or published in a newspaper, all these elements construct the image one can see.<sup>6</sup>

The frame creates the image as a particular part of it. At the same time, as it renders and finalizes an image, it differentiates it from what is outside. In other words, one cannot see the structure that frames an image and what it is framed from, and simultaneously see what is inside a frame.<sup>7</sup> Judith Butler criticizes this as a weakness of a photograph in her text *Torture and the ethics of Photography*.

The frame of the Ad Break is somewhat two-dimensional. The artworks in the project are aiming to criticize commerciality of public space within a commercial frame of multinational corporation JCDecaux Finland, and criticizing that frame as well, at the same time than supporting it. Even so, the frame of criticism seems stronger and more meaningful to concentrate on, as the contradiction between the two brings up the question of framing of public space to the front. It visualizes the contradiction between these two aims very well. The framing of the works happens from two directions at the same time. Two different frames are competing to frame the work hoping one would interpret them in a certain way.

The artworks are placed in a privately owned public space or directly just inside a private space or frame. Despite that, the art

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6 Ibid., 957.

7 Levi R. Bryant, *The Democracy of Objects* (London: Open Humanities Press, 2011) 22.

posters are 'projected' into the surrounding environment, and the frame they are in tries to frame them as commercials as such. My interpretation is that the artworks, which are placed within the commercial frame, at the same time break out from it and step out to the public space as artworks criticizing the advertisement frame.



3.

# Quite Cube







Quite Cube in the making



## Chapter Three: Quite Cube

### The beginning of the project

*Quite Cube* was an installation project created by Suomi kuvaa Collective.<sup>1</sup> We created the work as a part of the Kiasma Theatre's URB 14 art festival in August 2014. The process started by looking around for a suitable site to build up the installation-intervention in the city centre. We aimed to find a location, which would already be an alternative compared to the surrounding commercial city centre. We also wanted to find it close to the Contemporary Art Museum of Helsinki, Kiasma, so anyone could access it easily. After some searching, we found the right place behind the Finlandia Hall, close by both Kiasma and the city centre. The site was a bush like a wasteland left alone in the area. It was full of traces of life. While we were building up the installation, it already started to create a relation to its surrounding environment. This process happened in several forms, our construction materials got almost stolen once, or the place was used to give cover for drug addicts. Something like this was of course expected as we were working in public space in the city centre.

Almost immediately we finished the construction process, a group of homeless people moved in the artwork. We had expected something to happen around the work, but this was something we had not taken into consideration before it took place. We made an

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1 Suomi kuvaa Collective is an anonymous artist collective where I am one of the four members. The collective's works take a critical approach towards photography and the ways they are presented. Suomi kuvaa Collective's works are often created outside the institutional art spaces in public space.

## Quite Cube

instant decision and let them move into the installation as a part of the process. Nevertheless, it changed the course of the work to be more directly an intervention. It repositioned the construction to be a frame for the intervention, from being a bit more contextual installation dealing with the thematic of space more theoretically. It is easy to acknowledge now that events like this are an irreplaceable and valuable part of the artwork. All the different events and incidents that happened around the work created the intervention and research dimension for the process when juxtaposed between the environment and the installation. These happenings are mostly not documented.

This dimension is the dimension of the intervention that no one can predict. All that is predictable is the unpredictability of the different small interventions and dialogues happening around the site and the work.

It is the juxtaposing of different frames and elements that make them visible visualize the full frame and image of the Quite Cube installation. The place itself had an important role in all of this. It does not only represent a place to build an installation, but it instead creates the first image and frame for the work. It is an image that stays visible all the time during the project. The place is the first frame and the image, the first space for the artwork as well.<sup>2</sup>

The place determines the installation-intervention's position from outside. It is one of the crucial factors to determine the frames and

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2 Michel Foucault, *Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias*, [web.mit.edu/allanmc/www/foucault1.pdf](http://web.mit.edu/allanmc/www/foucault1.pdf), 1967, 1.

images that will follow it — the place affects the following frames through the relationship they inevitably have to each other. The first image, the first frame is the city, the particular spot, framed by the surrounding environment.

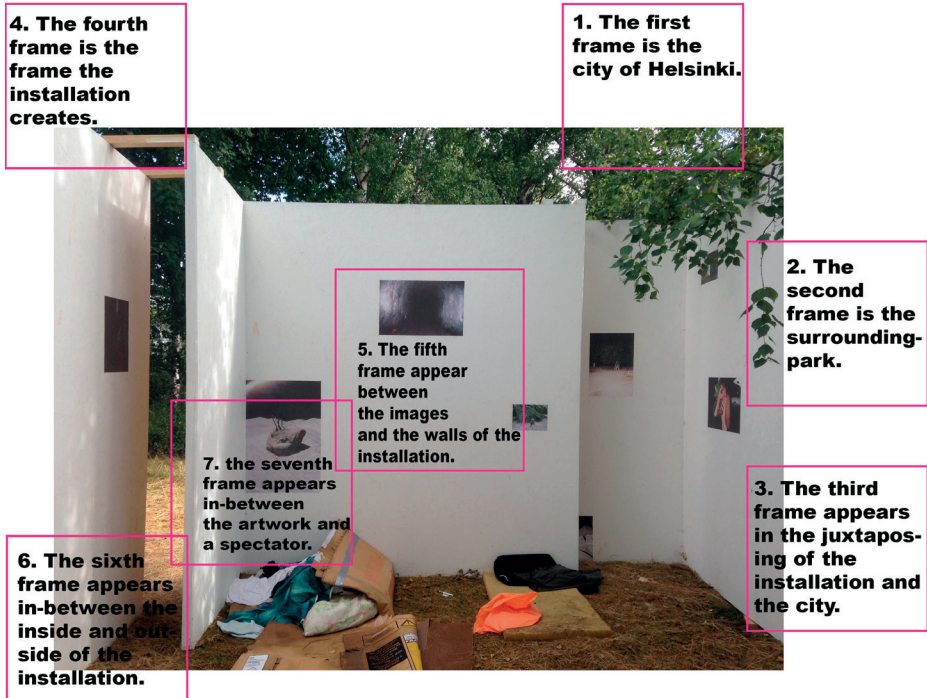
The first image and frame is the city and the particular spot. One could perhaps create differentiation between these two as well — the city of Helsinki at large, as one frame and the chosen place, the park, as another. Finlandia Hall and the chosen place are separate frames and images, although they form a new frame again together.

The installation would not look the same without its counterpart Finlandia Hall. Finlandia Hall represents an iconic building and a significant cultural sight of Finland. Finlandia Hall or the other culturally significant buildings around the artwork would not form the same kind of frame and image between them if the chosen place and the installation represented something else. The relation between the two creates a new frame for the artwork. This new frame activates within the intersection and juxtaposing of the two or more separate elements and the qualities these frames possess. There can be many different hierarchies on multiple frames, and it is precisely the juxtaposing that makes them appear in the first place.<sup>3</sup>

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3 Michel Foucault, *Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias* [web.mit.edu/allanmc/www/foucault1.pdf](http://web.mit.edu/allanmc/www/foucault1.pdf), 1967, 1.

## Quite Cube



Analysis of the various frames



## Multiple frames of the installation

Helsinki presents the first frame for the work, and a specific frame and power structure as such. What Helsinki represents as a northern European Capital city determines its frame and hierarchical position.<sup>4</sup> This structure works as the first frame for Helsinki and as the first frame for the artwork as well. The chosen park and the surrounding environment mark the second frame and sharpen the image for the project. In some sense, this frame is more determining for the artwork than the first one.

On the other hand, one could say that the near-by surroundings represent the city at large as well. These are at least the elements that determine the representation of Helsinki in the first place. Helsinki is the location and a structure wherein everything happens the artwork.

Everything happens within the larger frame of the city; therefore the frame of the city determines the context of the artwork as well. It is the context, the site and the situation for the work, which eventually determines it contextually in its environment. However, the second frame is perhaps the more accurate and more detailed determination of the artwork. The second frame presents concretely the actual elements of the city that affect the installation and frames it makes appear.

The third frame and image then exist between the elements of the nearby city, e.g., Finlandia Hall or The Museum of Contemporary

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4 Jack Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place* (New York: NYU PRESS 2005), 6.

## Quite Cube

Art Kiasma. The relation and juxtaposing of frames and structures can turn hidden power structures visible. Therefore, it is relevant to think that the hierarchy of frames comes from outside of a frame or the recognisability of hierarchical structures becomes more visible through a relation of two or more frames. The installation-intervention mirrored to the park like wasteland would not look the same without the surrounding environment and the frames it creates.

The fourth frame is the frame and image the walls create inside the installation construction itself. The fifth frame happens between the printed photographs and the walls of the installation, and sixth between the inside and outside of the gallery space. The seventh and the last frames that I write here now would then exist between a spectator and the installation-intervention, (and all the frames that it already possesses inside its system). A spectator also has more than one role and frame within the context of the work,

Spectators are observers as the audience; nevertheless, they are also an essential part of the intervention as well. By entering the white-cube-like gallery space, a spectator creates a new frame for the installation-intervention again. Therefore they become part of the intervention and the research dimension of the work. It is interesting to think, where the actual work happens. If the actual work appears in-between all the elements and all the frames mentioned before, on the other hand, the outcome of the project would not be the same without all the elements, which have an important role for the intervention to happen as such.

The installation-intervention transforms the ideas around framing and space into more concrete and material form. It turns the hidden frames and positions of the public space to a visible form

asking the crucial questions of who has the right to enter it. It is eventually created in relations of different frames, which together draw the most accurate image of the work. The relation and even a collaboration of various frames are the passages and threads, the key elements that point at the frames turning their contexts visual. Not a single frame can create this alone.

A single frame would always just be locked within the structure of its own that would remain incomplete. The shared connection can activate and reveal the real frames between all the other frames, which in the end create the precise and more complete reality of the artwork, framing all the frames together.

### **City and Photography**

The French philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy writes in his book *La Ville Au Loin* that photography is most at home in a construction site. Moreover, he also points out that cities have similarly started as construction sites. Cities are continually balancing between the new and old, deconstructing itself as a way to reconstruct itself again. City and photography have a similar dualistic relation to time. Both of them are partly in the past, there and then and simultaneously here and now, as we speak.<sup>5</sup>

Both photography and a city can be seen as artificial misfits, which share many similarities in their nature and origin too. Cities are places for strangers and passengers, and so is photography living in

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5 Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflection on Photography* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1981) 76-77.



## Quite Cube



Artwork and the city

its parallel space and reality, yet concretely here and now. Both are misfits of their kind that can hide something hidden or invisible inside the frames and structures, within the medium, which one can only reveal when knowing how to look.

A city is also conceptually exposed to the time and natural light the same way, as photography is. When the gateways of a city are open, the yet unknown passengers are welcome. Similar way, the sensor of a camera is exposed to light when a shutter opens, and time and light can travel in. This connection is somewhat metaphorical than concrete, although it draws a compelling picture of natures and similarities between these two mediums.

Photography is said to stay at a distance or to escape from a full understanding. Some part of it will always stay as a mystery. Photographic images will always remain partly in the world of images.<sup>6</sup> They are here and somewhere else at the same time, in a place where one cannot physically go. One is only able to look at an image and let the mind travel. A photograph exists in two separate spaces at the same time, without which, it cannot exist. It is the space between all the frames and images, the shared space where photographs appear. The frame and image of the city are similarly partly hidden from being seen. One can only encounter them partly at a single time. One part of it is here and now and another part is simultaneously escaping from one's reach somewhere else. The actual city lives within two or more spaces at the same time, which makes it always partly unreachable as it is continually changing somewhere else.

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6 Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (New York: the Penguin Group), 153.

## Quite Cube

Interaction between the installation and open city space



Photographs and city are both labyrinths – combination of passageways, streets, junctions, tracks, and other connections. Both of the mediums share similar uncanny quality and dimension, space, where one feels both familiar and unfamiliar simultaneously while walking around in a city space or when looking at photographs of the past times. It is the nature of the city and photography that escapes and avoids being fully determined. In other words, perhaps it is precisely the need for a determination that makes them to escape from one's hands in the end.

### **Documentation of the work**

Documentation also has a significant role within the project and in the representation of it after the exhibition has ended. As the project constructs from several different elements, which were all temporary, the documentation of the work has a special role in collecting everything together as a research outcome.<sup>7</sup>

The documentation is not the original or actual medium of work, therefore not the artwork as such. Although it is perhaps kind of a concrete trace or evidence of something that once was, the installation-intervention cannot be experienced the same through any other medium than itself, which only takes place temporarily at the time it happens.

As a non-permanent artwork, the medium the work is seen in

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7 Anna Jensen, Taina Rajanti, Denise Ziegler *Interventio kaupunkitilaan/Intervention to Urban Space* (Espoo: Aalto ARTS Books, 2018), 133.

## Quite Cube

the future is photography or moving image. Construction of the installation is one thing, and it is the physical element, the frame, concrete and metaphorical, which interferes with public space. The installation opens a door for the intervention to step on the stage; it is the dimension of the artwork enabling it to happen. It also helps the hidden structures of society and public space to be more recognizable. The installation creates a platform for the intervention to happen. The following events and incidents and how the general public will react to the work are impossible to predict. When an artwork is interfering with public space, the interventional level of the work is evident, nevertheless, unpredictable. It is only possible to predict that it will be there.

The incidents and dialogues that followed between the artwork and the surrounding city space are mostly temporary events. Traces and evidence of them again can be very permanent. The research dimension of the work is often impossible to document thoroughly. Everything cannot be seen and recorded. Images cannot tell everything that has been thought and experienced during the process. It is not perhaps even necessary. In spite of this, the process the intervention started is still active and progressed while writing and thinking about the work onwards here. The questions it brought up during the time of the actual exhibition are now analysed further.<sup>8</sup>

The documentation, written or visual, is eventually the form through which the general public will encounter the project, as the exhibition does not exist anymore. The project has changed

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8 Anna Jensen, Taina Rajanti, Denise Ziegler *Interventio kaupunkitilaan/Intervention to Urban Space* (Espoo: Aalto ARTS Books, 2018), 133.

its form and exists now as something else. Something, which is not the artwork it previously was, or only documentation of it either. It is somewhat a combination of these two, turning to third. Photographs and moving image are the only visible traces of the artwork and the mediums that remain from here on. In this sense, they are the final visual medium of the installation in public space.

### **Breaking Out of Frames**

Photography and moving image are mediums of closed frames, but installation may be a way to break out of these structures. Installations can break the traditional conventions of these mediums and step on the field of contemporary art as a multidisciplinary art-monster. On the other hand, it is not entirely possible to escape the origin of the medium as it haunts the artworks related to it in any form. Some of its limitations might follow even in a new multidisciplinary frame.

It was an intentional part of the work to study how these structures operate and are formed. Perhaps the borderline in-between an open and closed frame is the space where to find the most interesting answers. Finding out how a frame and structure could be open and closed simultaneously, closed in a sense that one can determine it as something specific, yet open for a dialogue with the surrounding environment. It is important to experiment on how to break the original frame as an attempt to create something new and unexpected.

Installation can be seen as an attempt to conceptually open a medium, to break its frame and create a photographic image



## Quite Cube

without a camera to create an artwork, which is in-between or a mix of all various different mediums unchain of conventions to be able to grow freely to any direction possible and stay open at all times. To create a completely new frame, an art-monster one has to first know what are the construction materials and methods of the medium it is constructed from. It is like a simultaneously act of deconstruction and reconstruction, like a city being built and destroyed simultaneously.<sup>9</sup>

The installation is both, a ruin and a construction site – it reflects both the past and the future and is not only open or closed either. It is a frame, which is created around the questions of time and space. The installation's relation to time is parallel – it is simultaneously related to the past and future, it a memory and archive of something that has already been, and a possibility, a platform for something new to happen. Without the installation in this particular place, we would not be able to see the same frames we do now.

Quite Cube was an attempt to frame the surrounding reality and chaos to understand the environment and its structures thoroughly. Constructing this installation was a method to create a differentiation of the frames of the city space. Installation and interventions are attempts to study the borderline between closed and open frames to bring hidden structures of society up and visible. It was an attempt to bring hierarchies of space to the front in an intersection of frames and power structures between the city and artwork in the juxtaposition of the two.<sup>10</sup>

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9 Jean-Luc Nancy, *La Ville Au Lion*, (Strasbourg: La Phocide, 2011), 76.

10 Michel Foucault, *Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias* [web.mit.edu/allanmc/www/foucault1.pdf](http://web.mit.edu/allanmc/www/foucault1.pdf), 1967, 1.

## Framing Time and Space

Framing a public space with concrete, wooden walls have many conceptual levels and frames besides the ones formulated directly in the intersection of the installation and the surrounding environment. These could be perhaps called frames of the surrounding climate. The construction as such demonstrates the need our collective had to use the open city space other ways than it is directly given from the authorities above – the given frame are hoped to be taken as granted.

Constructing the installation-intervention was our attempt to frame and use public space more freely and perhaps to make it represent ideas we had of the structure of institutional art and a city space at large. We attempted to frame time and space and to create our own image of it.<sup>11</sup> We wanted to break out of the frame of the traditional photographic image. And we wanted to exhibit photographs differently than in a traditional institutional setting, both practically and conceptually.

In an open city space, artworks step out of their usual so-called Do Not Touch –law of an institutional art space, which frames the space in between a spectator and an artwork to be neutral and fixed, making art immune in this sense. In the streets and outdoors the interventional dimension of artworks take over thoroughly. In public space, artworks are now open for any kind of dialogue and interaction with the city space and its beings. The Quite Cube installation started many physical and conceptual conversations

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11 Mikael Aaltonen, Urb-taide pohtii tilan käyttöä (August 1 2014) <https://areena.yle.fi/1-2345164>.



## Quite Cube

with the surrounding city space. It was used as a shelter or to have a brief party by a group of teenagers before moving on in the city again. Perhaps the most exciting aspect of all these actions that happened was that the artwork made them possible and recognizable as they were framed within its radar. Every day something new happened big and small. None of the people who used and visited the space did try to break it or anyhow damage it. The installation was mostly used to get a little privacy within the public city space. Even though it was open and anyone was able to enter the space, it was perhaps considered as more private than public in the end.

Our aim as a collective was also to exam photography and thematic of space by constructing our image in the city space. In this space, it could interact with the surrounding environment. Through this experiment, we aimed to study what else a white cube gallery could offer than just be a clean untouchable and highly controlled space for institutional art. What could be the other methods for us to experience and research the world around us?

In the public space, artworks are exposed to the hierarchical power structures of society, and the hierarchy between frames appear in the intersection of various different elements. In an institutional exhibition space, the hierarchies are framed and fixed to appear in a particular order. The active hierarchical competition between different dimensions perhaps instead exists in-between the external exhibition space and the outside world. In other words, art in a museum or an art gallery has an 'upper hand' over the general public. By entering an institutional art-space, the audience agrees to follow specific rules set upon the art-space or otherwise one will be removed from it. These rules do not apply in public space. Outside artworks are exposed to the world with much less restrictions. Art

can affect the surrounding environment and conceptual climate more freely, without fixed frames controlled from above. The game over hierarchy is on as soon as art is taken out of its institutional zone where its position is already fixed.

Deconstructing something embedded in a culture can be done obliviously in various different ways to create room for new frames, concepts, and images within the time and space we are sharing. Those constructions, or spaces, which are more conceptual, could be perhaps being called conceptual heterotopias.<sup>12</sup> These dimensions would represent frames of cultures their values and manners etc. Spaces, which are not necessarily, concrete yet very concretely existing as such.

What happens within and around the installation is unpredictable, although whatever happens within the frame of the installation is part of the intervention. In Barthes' terms, one could ask what we actually see when we look at the frame, what is the image the structure has now created. It gathers together by simultaneously creating differentiation between ideas leaving something out as well. What will happen within the intervention is unpredictable. Yet it is certain that the dialogue between the environment and the installation will occur. In the case of *Quite Cube*, it was used as a place to stay for a while, as a place that gives shelter. And this was allowed to happen of course, as the structure of the project was kept as open as possible during the process.

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12 Michel Foucault, *Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias* web.mit.edu/allanmc/www/foucault1.pdf, 1967, 1.

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The gallery-construction is the body of the intervention. Whatever happens within the frame of the project is part of the work. Anything can happen, and nothing will happen for certainty – no one can really control it in the end. The process of the intervention continues after the installation, and the exhibition is already closed. In this sense, this text and images are now the final medium and frame of the work.<sup>13</sup>

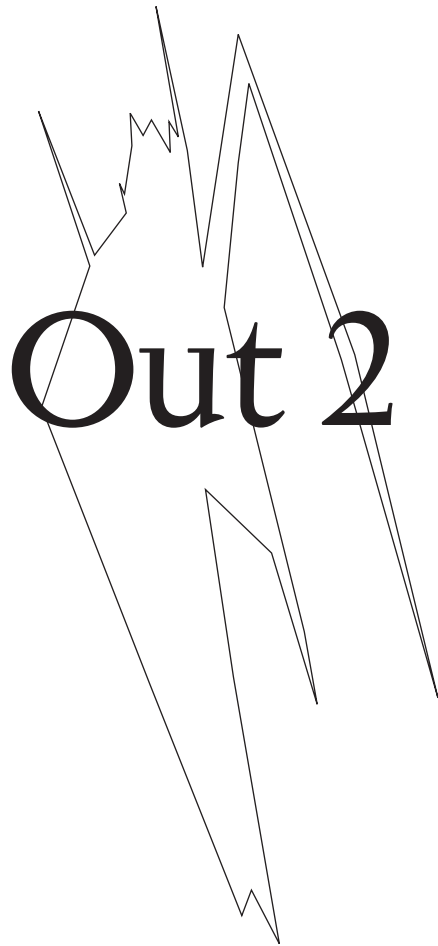
Documentation is part of the intervention and a method for the research process. It is also a study of how the context of art could be used besides its somewhat narrow institutional frame. The installation-intervention was an experiment to deconstruct something existing and try to create new ideas of the construction material that was now available for use and new constructions. It was a gallery construction and the image that it created, the new conceptual 'space' that it drew. With the construction, one would have not been able to see the image, and without the image, one would have not been able to see intervention. The artwork, the performance as such would have not been the same without all the performers. All the thinking and artworks the process produced form the final frame for the project in juxtaposing to each other, wherein it appears as a whole.

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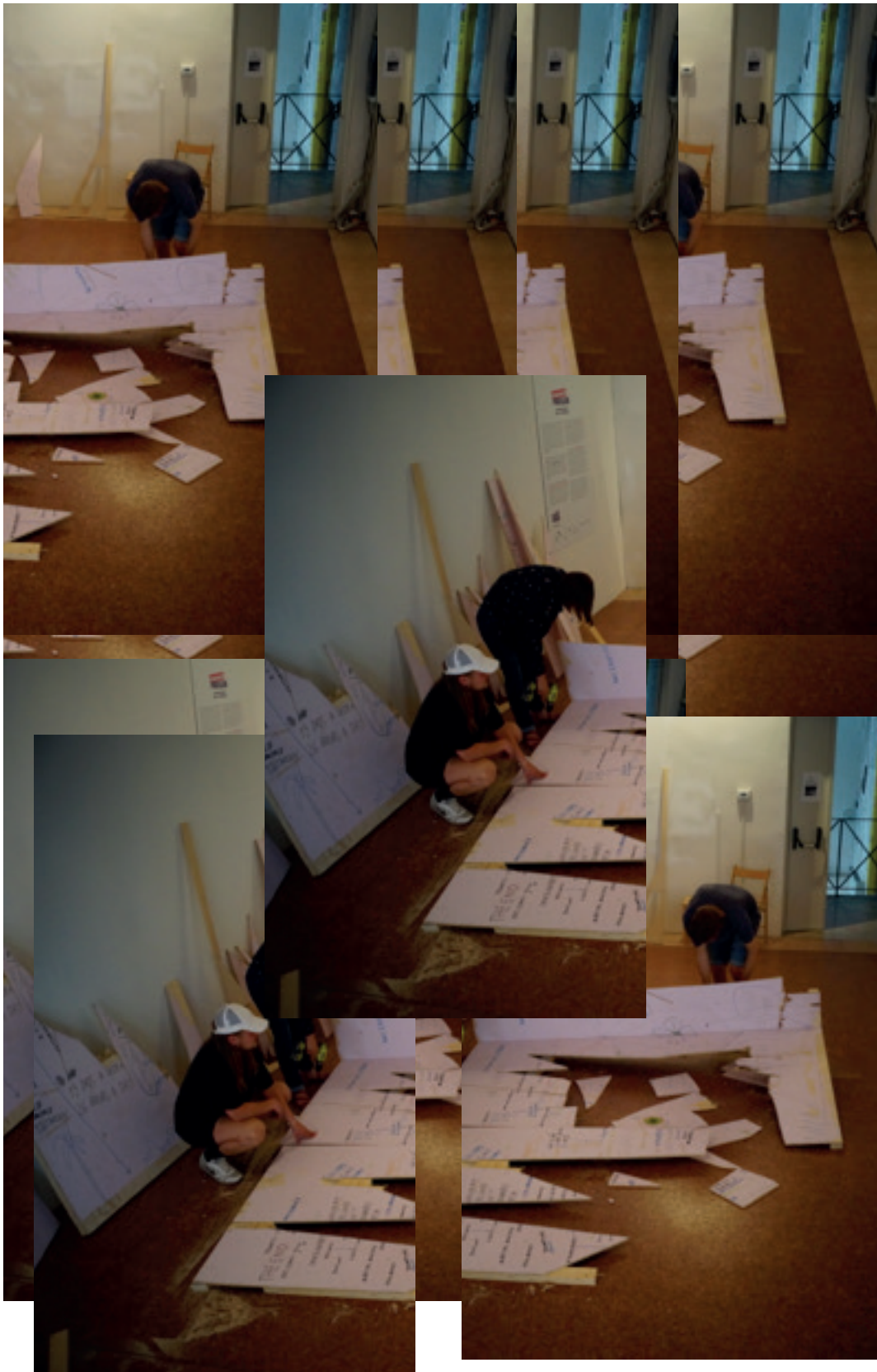
13 Anna Jensen, Taina Rajanti, Denise Ziegler *Interventio kaupunkitilaan/Intervention to Urban Space* (Espoo: Aalto ARTS Books, 2018), 133.







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## Chapter Four: Out 2

### The Process

*Out 2* was an artistic research project of twenty-six artists working collectively together to explore the concept of experimental film as contemporary art. The whole process began, as a course initiated by Professor, Dr. Harri Laakso, and Post Doc researcher Maiju Loukola at Aalto University in November 2016. From there the project took many forms as a research process and collective artwork. The outcome of the project was exhibited as a multi-channel film installation at the Venice Biennale Research Pavilion in Venice, Italy in August 2017. The starting point and inspiration for the project was Jacques Rivette's 13h long film *OUT 1-Noli Me Tangere*. Harri Laakso and Maiju Loukola write about *Out 2* in the Venice exhibition catalogue as follows:

*The project was originally inspired by OUT 1-Noli Me Tangere, an enigmatic film by Jacques Rivette, rarely shown in movie theatres since its completion in 1971. Rivette's film is a 775-minute gigantic creature made up of absurd elements and fragmentary scenes, with references including Honore de Balzac's texts and conspiracy theories, political atmosphere of 'post May 1968' France, scenes with an experimental theatre group rehearsing and discussing two plays by Aeschylus. It has been described as a dreamlike – also, as a nightmare-like – image of a certain time.*

*OUT 1* as a mix of fiction and fragments of reality formulates a film operating on several parallel levels simultaneously. All of this creates a film, which is impossible to follow as a linear narrative based film structure. It is instead an uncontrolled experience, in which



## Out 2

one just has to dive in relying more on the atmosphere of the film to experience it as a whole.

Similar kind, or even more complex, structure followed Out 2. Out 2 was a film and artwork, which was combined with fictional and documentary fragments, live happenings, and sculpture-like installation elements at the Research Pavilion space. It took several directions as a film and through them framed itself into current time and space. Our aim as a working group – as Équipage as we called our collective – was to work in as non-hierarchically order as possible. It meant leaving the individual authorship behind and replacing it with a collective one. This considered the materials and the process and the outcome of the film. Everyone was as much in charge as another. We aimed to keep the framing and determination of the work as open as possible. And make an artwork with an open frame wherein everyone, and everything is allowed to come and go as freely as they like.

This all created artwork and a film, which structure is multi-layered, complex, non-linear, and which keeps formulating itself again and again and reframing itself into current context and time continuously. This brought many new features to the work that are technically and contextually missing in OUT 1. In Out 2, scenes were filmed horizontally with smartphones in a fast pace, fragments were shorter and more random in an entertaining way, and themes changed fast and had several aesthetic variations. One could perhaps see the influence of the Internet and the pop-cultures in them, features, which did not exist in the French visual culture in the 1960s.

One big difference between OUT 1 and Out 2 is that one director directed OUT 1. And twenty-six artists collectively directed Out 2. The question of individualism and collectiveness are examined and studied in both of the films, nevertheless in Out 2, collectiveness could be said to be taking a step further, out the frame of OUT 1, from being a subject of a study, to be a method of the research too. Working collectively is one of the most interesting aspects of Out 2 at large. It made the project to be exactly what it is in all of the forms it appears in, as a film, as contemporary artwork and as an artistic-research-process and more.



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Collectiveness is the point where Out 2 really takes its own path and steps out of the frame of OUT 1, framing itself to be an artwork operating in its own means. I see this as an essential difference between the two artworks. It is the focal point of OUT 1, where Out 2 breaks out of its frame and creates a structure of its own in all of its forms. OUT 1 is an example and an ancestor for Out 2, and therefore they stay connected. Some aspects, themes, and frames follow it permanently as it lives a life of its own. On the other hand, it is an artwork that no one can really manage; it keeps de-framing and reframing itself out of anyone's full control as long as one of the Équipage continues to reframing it and working on the project.<sup>1</sup>

### **The Marilyn Wall**

The Marilyn Wall was a wall constructed in the project space at Aalto University where the Out 2 project and course initially started. The wall was named Marilyn after its colour, which was called G342 (Marilyn) at the hardware store. Name Marilyn has a tight connection to Marilyn Monroe and Hollywood, although in this project it perhaps projected more the dreamlike reality of OUT 1 and film making at large. This simple looking construction turned out to have a leading role in the project. It had several different parts from being a backdrop for the film, a board for contextualizing the project, to an art object and installation element at the Research Pavilion in Venice, and most importantly, a concrete visual example of the framing process itself. It gave the somewhat

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<sup>1</sup> Harri Laakso, Maiju Loukola, Out 2 – a Filmic Experiment, Out 2 – Catalogue (Espoo: ViCCA Production, 2017) 6-7.

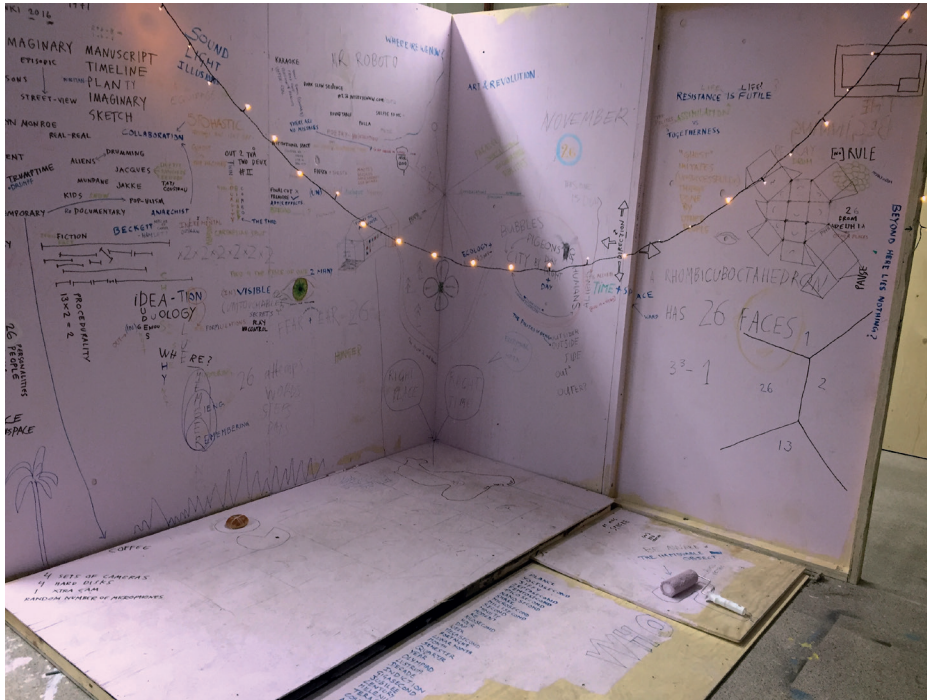
abstract working process concrete visible frame and structure to hold on for developing the film further. The pink wall framed the artwork and the research-process from one corner, leaving it open and welcoming from everywhere else.

This structure, which appeared as a frame for the process, left the process completely open at the same time. The structure visualized and made the project more accessible as it had a form now. It gave the film its frame and a concrete space to come back to and leave again. The structure of Out 2 is also a good example of an open-frame system. I am writing more about open frame-system later in this chapter. The Marilyn wall visualized the abstract idea of deconstruction and reconstruction in a concrete form. It demonstrated how different concepts and ideas could be de-framed and reframed again into new meanings and views.

The wall was first placed in the context of Aalto University where it was deconstructed into pieces as a part of the film and for educational reasons for the first time. We had no concrete plans to transport the pieces to Venice first. When the process went further on, and the concept of deconstruction became more essential the wall was decided to take to Italy with us as well. It travelled to Italy in pieces where it was reconstructed again for the exhibition and framed into a new context of the research Pavilion. These different frames and framings interestingly gave the research process again more visual form amongst the film itself.

The wall helped to frame the artwork both contextually and concretely in a different environment. It also visualized how interpretations of artworks – and art elements or deeds – could change when placed and framed into new contexts. The work was first

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framed as an educational project at Aalto University and then in Venice within the context of the 57th Venice Biennale, which is one of the biggest contemporary art exhibitions in the world. The surrounding exhibitions and pavilions gave new frames also for Out 2 as part of the international art world context. Venice is a city, which lives from tourism. 20 million tourists visit Venice annually, and most of them only stay for a day. In this sense, the city is already an exhibition as such. Walking around in Venice feels like being in a surreal film set full of statistics. Each statistic has a vital role in the play including you. It is like a silent agreement of the city and its labyrinths. All of these aspects reframed the artwork and research-process including new frames of the commercial art world in its context.

### **Deconstruction of the Wall**

Seeing the Marilyn Wall broken on a floor was as an eye-opening experience, which pictured well how the deconstruction process might work in a more theoretical sense as well. The wall did not merely just represent a wall. It had an important role during the process, as it was a concrete visualization of its frame, and a piece of the film itself. This all opened the door to for me to see the whole working project from a new point of view. Tearing down the wall with a chainsaw made the abstract concepts discussed in the class more concrete and visible. The wall was cut down into several pieces in different sizes and shapes. It would not be able to be pulled together without every single piece of its structure to be found – to be the precise same frame and wall it had been.



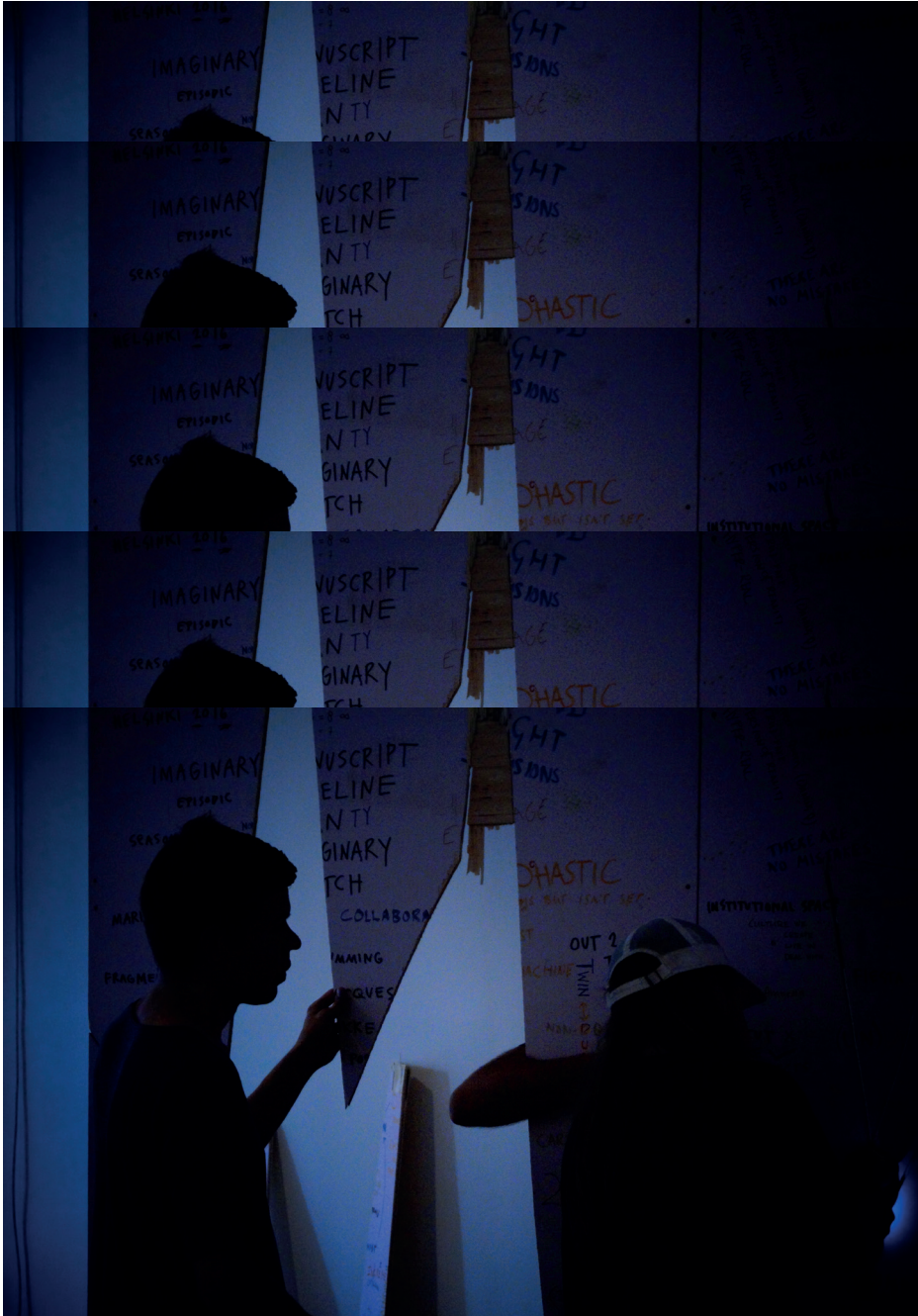
## Out 2

From the moment the pieces were lying on the floor of the project space, a whole new phase started. The wooden pieces on the floor were something completely different than the wall had been. It was a frame for new dimensions. When we started to reconstruct the wall for the Venice exhibition some of the pieces were discarded as not necessary anymore. The construction of a new frame had started. The frames were again formulated into a new order, which was clearly different from the first wall. The Marilyn Wall had begun to formulate into a new order that could change and reshape over and over again as a concrete part of the research process.

The words written on the wall made new frames for the process. Together these elements created a combination and network of everyone's thoughts, which started to affect the framing of the work directly. It visualized well how practical examples make theories stronger. The wall represented some kind of a stronghold for one's abstract thinking. Abstract ideas inside one's head might also need frames and structures around them, structures that can put ideas together into more concrete forms. The deconstructed pieces referred to an interesting example of the act of framing. The wall was not the same frame anymore. Nevertheless, these small frames that had previously formed the wall still existed in the space as pieces now available to be reframed into entirely new dimensions.

### **Open frames**

An open-frame is a frame-system that is constructed of multiple frames and has two or more functions at the same time, it simultaneously a structure, which is open and closed. It is a frame and a non-frame at the same time. This means that it appears as a frame





## Out 2

yet it is open to any kind of activity and moment and it cannot be controlled. Anyhow, it cannot escape from being a frame either. To be determined a frame; every structure needs some kind of differentiation between itself and other concepts around. And for an open-frame, the borderline has to exist and non-exist simultaneously. This means that an open-frame is a multi-layered frame. It has to be constructed of two or more frames. It is a juxtaposing of frames within its structure, which multiplies the borderline and blurs it to appear with several different forms.

This kind of frame could be called a multi-layered frame. Every frame and borderline needs juxtaposing with other surrounding frames to appear in the first place. Therefore, frame needs to be in the intersection with other frames. These juxtaposed elements are similar but different in the sense that in the first example two frames are juxtaposed within one frame and not only to each other as separated elements.

For an open-frame, the borderline has to exist as both at the same time. The borderline needs a differentiation to appear. It requires the intersection within itself to be juxtaposed with another frame to blur its borderlines and to create openness. The size of an open-and-closed-frame may be infinitive. Differentiation cannot be made only around a single frame; it can only appear in the juxtaposing two or more frames to each other.<sup>2</sup> The borderline of an open-frame is indefinable as it is impossible to determine to exist fully closed. Nevertheless the borderline exists there, and they

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2 Michel Foucault, *Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias*, [web.mit.edu/allanmc/www/foucault1.pdf](http://web.mit.edu/allanmc/www/foucault1.pdf), 1967, 1.

cannot be entirely defined as borderless either. They are frames, which means they have to have some structure and therefore a border to be recognized and to appear. This creates a frame-system that stays open and is just partly closed like the Marilyn Wall in the Out 2 project before for example.

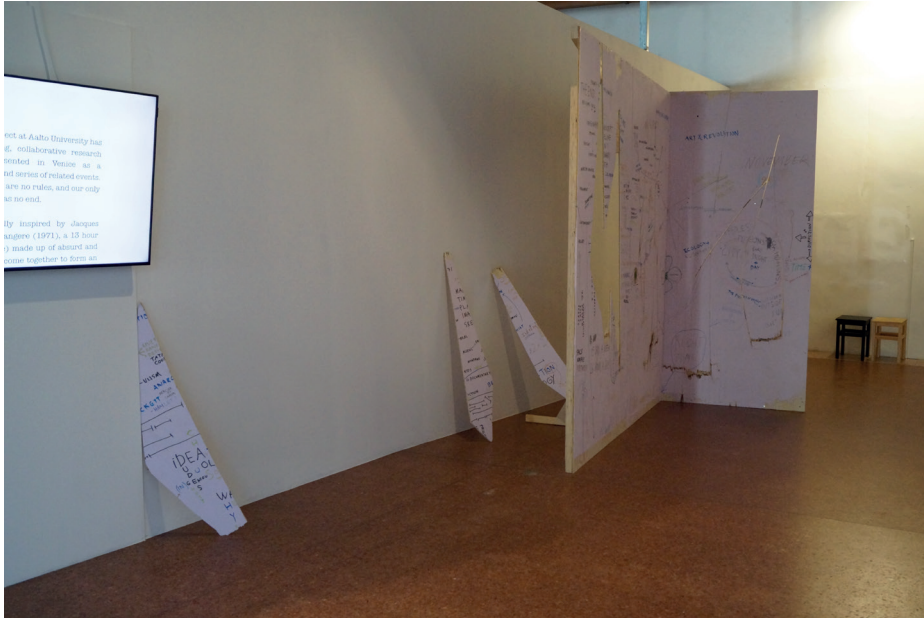
The difference between an open-frame and non-frame would be that a non-frame would not be a frame – as it would not have a structure. It would not have a practical ‘infrastructure’ for ideas and concepts to operate in. They would be borderless and not frames and therefore frictionless. It is precisely the friction determines its openness.

The open-frames can connect with other frames creating a network of frames through frictions. Together these frames create a new frame, which is both open and closed at the same time. It is a frame, which cannot be framed close. It stays open for anything new and unpredictable in spite of all the attempts to be closed or controlled. It is a structure that creates a free, infinite network of frames.

### **Open frame-systems**

The structure of Out 2 as a film and project is an exciting example of the openness of a frame-system. It is an artwork, which hesitates fixed determination, position and is under constant change. Perhaps this openness could also be called communality, as Out 2 is a collective artwork, which frames are changed continuously by someone of the Out 2 crew. It is an artwork and frame under no one’s personal control. Its structure is communal and open. In this type of frame everything is free to move and change.

## Out 2



Exploring and studying this kind of frame-system makes it possible to examine the focal point of a frame. On the one hand, it is an engaging way to examine where the focal point would exist within a frame, and on the other, if frames have a focal point, or if they are always operating within larger frame-systems. Also from the point of view of working process Out 2 has a structure and framing, which has been very interesting to analyse. Its open-structure expands itself into every aspect of the project, from the artistic working process to the artwork, and to the production of the exhibition. The example of frames in the Harry Potter series I am writing in the first chapter, pictures have a somewhat similar kind of passage that Out 2 does.<sup>3</sup>

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3 J.K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Deadly Hallows*, (London: Bloomsbury, 2014).

Out 2's structure reflects reality in its overlapping plurality better than a traditional linear film, which moves chronologically from the beginning to the end. Due to the collectiveness of Out 2, it rather moves to at least twenty-six different directions at the same time. Its nature of being research-based artwork also directs the process to alternative courses to find new passages and stand-points for the work. These factors create a plural structure that no one alone can really control in the end. It could be almost called a self-generating art entity, an art-creature living a life of its own.

Deconstructing and reconstructing the Marilyn Wall worked as a great example of de-framing and reframing of artworks and art-making processes into the new environment and places. It visualized how framing really puts an interpretation on artworks, when placed first in the context of Aalto University in Finland or later in Venice, Italy. Both places have their own statues and identity, their unique settings. Deconstruction of the wall also showed how the collective process keeps the frame of the project open through reframing, meaning it stays open and inviting for change and the de-framing-reframing process. This is precisely how Out 2 worked as a frame. It aimed to remain open for any kind of change at all times. Therefore one could say that the openness of a frame depends on its capability to stay open to anyone and anything that goes or comes from outside of its structure at all times.<sup>4</sup>

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4 Jacques Derrida, *Positions* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1981) 37-96.





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# Manifesto of a Better Future



## Chapter Five: Manifesto of a Better Future

### Manifesto as a concept

Writing a manifesto is a directly political way of making art. It is a declaration, a public announcement taking its stand in the core of the concept. A manifesto is stating and framing reality from a political point of view by just being a manifesto. The concept is not only trying to visualize or address a certain phenomena or political situation. It is already aiming to take a step towards change and new order, as it is manifesting in its manifest. An artwork, which is not stating and manifesting its standpoint, and is not aiming to frame the situation its been made for is something else than a manifesto. The idea of manifesting is inseparable of the concept. A manifesto is manifesting its views and trying to take a concrete step towards its aim by just being a manifesto.

Writing a manifesto is a political way to make art. It is a political act. And an artists' manifesto is a political way to make art within the field of art. It is a concept, a political frame no matter the substance it includes. The ideas and messages of each manifesto changes every time, nevertheless it does not change the fact that a manifesto stays the same as a concept of political declaration. An empty frame titled as a manifesto without any particular manifest would still remain, as a political statement, as an empty manifesto or a manifesto of emptiness, would still be a strong political message and statement.

Manifestos are attempting more than to show the idea it wishes us to see and to think. A manifesto attempts to step out of its frame, break the frame and step into the world within the thinking

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## Manifesto of a Better Future

process and actions of people. The possibility for a manifesto for further actions is there, yet no one can be sure what will happen, if anything. Perhaps any form of art can have this ability and aim, although a manifesto as a concept has the character of trying to transform its declaration towards concrete actions as the main idea of the concept. Any kind of declaration tries to step out of its frame, of its first form of being just ink on paper. The idea starts to travel with human beings and perhaps affects someone or something the way it changes some aspect of their lives even one degree into the new direction. The idea can change or multiply, be deconstructed and reconstructed on its way, yet some parts of it may still stay the same too.

A manifesto is trying to take a step by just being a manifesto. It is a primary idea of the concept: manifestos are declarations manifesting their agenda. Manifestos are statements aiming to frame the time and space wherein they stand. All of the manifestos are neither artworks nor dealing with views related to art. All manifestos are still political attempts to manifest an agenda. When a manifesto then possesses characteristics of art? What separates artists' manifestos of non-artists' manifestos?

Artists' manifestos are as political as non-art manifestos or any kind of manifesto as such. Art manifestos are perhaps dealing simultaneously with matters of art and society or they could also be declarations for the concept of art itself. The author of a manifesto determines the category of each manifesto separately. Artists, artists groups and art movement make artists' manifestos. Artists' manifestos are made for the world of art at the same time they are made for the larger societal context. Art manifestos are declaring their message for art and through art, taking their standing point,

their step into two directions, to include both the world of art and society at large. Artistic manifestos are created in more artistic manners; they can be more experimental in their form and interfering with questions dealing especially with art. Artistic manifestos may e.g., be trying to redefine the concept of art by proposing new ideas, new frames to occupy space and a new territory for art, through art and beyond its concept.

### **Manifesto as a frame**

A manifesto works as a frame, and a frame operates as a tool for gathering wanted ideas together.<sup>1</sup> It is a differentiation between ideas and thoughts floating around within one's mind and in the air around.<sup>2</sup> Differentiation is an act and manner to formulate frames and concepts in which one can concentrate their thinking on specific thoughts without a distraction. It is a method to gather the surrounding chaos of thoughts together. Framing is also a way of understanding and a way to stop other ideas from intruding our thinking-process while focusing on specific concepts. Framing is a method to keep only selected thoughts within the wanted frame.

Framing is a manner to separate and to leave out. What happens outside a frame cannot be seen simultaneously while being focused on ideas within the frame or on the frame itself. In this sense, frames could be said to be working as shields, blocking the freely floating ideas entering from the chaos. It works as a method or an

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1 Martin Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology and other essays* (Harper and row, Publishers, Inc. 1977).

2 Levi R. Bryant, *The Democracy of Objects* (London: Open Humanities Press, 2011) 22.

## Manifesto of a Better Future

element, which separates thoughts within our thinking-system from one unit to two or more others. It creates a space for one to look only at specific dimensions and ideas at the time without interruption. It is a manner to categorize and archive thoughts in a particular order and within this order to signify and prioritize them to be appearing and memorized in a specific way and order.

Chaos is often described as a system too complex to grasp, or understand at once. It could be compared to a transport system impossible to picture and think as a whole at once.<sup>3</sup> We are unable to comprehend the whole transport and traffic system clearly in one 'thought' or an image. It is too extensive network, and too complex to visualize all together. All the streets, sidewalks, underground tunnels, bus – and tramlines or any other passages is like an invisible network one cannot see. Framing is a method to look at the world in smaller pieces to analyse each piece at its own time.

A manifesto is a way to frame words and ideas into one declaration, into a frame. It is a method to asset them on the stage under a spotlight, to emphasize them, and to make them more visible for everyone to see. To highlight them like bright signs stating their message loud and clear. If a manifesto was a human being, it would be someone articulating their statement through a megaphone on a barricade. In this sense, a manifesto could also be called a caricature or a sharp, informative photograph. A manifesto is clear-cut and a cut-out, carefully selected thoughts on a leaflet or a poster. It is an act to demonstrate, to construct space and a territory for wanted views.

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3 Jean-Luc Nancy, *La Ville Au Loin*, (Strasbourg: La Phocide, 2011), 78.

Framing is a powerful political tool and a method. The whole world could be said been constructed of frames. Everything is categorized into its own frame and category, individuals, families, communities, societies, nations, unions, economic systems, religions, languages, cultures and belief systems and so on and so forth. The world around humans is built in the ideas and concepts, frames, borders; everything has been differentiated into separated units, into smaller systems of understanding and simultaneously separation from each other. Therefore a manifesto as a frame is foremost a political tool of making art. And a frame itself is already a political statement as frames are political by default. Manifestos are framing and shaping the time and space it is situated in. A manifesto also creates an image too. Conceptual frames are collecting ideas together with similar way photography gathers different elements in a single image, in its frame as well.

Words and letters on a paper are little visual frames in their nature, as they would be invisible without visual perception. Every letter has a unique visible form that one can recognize to be part of the alphabetical system they are familiar with. All the letters have their unique shape one can interpret and understand. We look at the letters as anything one have known for almost all of their life. These little visual elements, these small images formulate words, ideas, and new frames together. The structures created of words on a white background arranged in a precise order, develop entirely new frames, new images together. The image that we now 'see' that we can imagine are not the images that one actually sees when we are looking at the text, one sees the connotations of words that they already know or learn from the framing of a sentence. This image is an abstract idea, a dimension, imitative in its form. Every letter is collected in a frame of the particular word, and these

## Manifesto of a Better Future

MANIFESTO OF A BETTER FUTURE (2017)

NO TO FASCISM  
NO TO RACISM  
NO TO NATIONALISM  
NO TO BORDERS  
NO TO SEGREGATION  
NO TO ISLAMOPHOBIA  
NO TO PATRIARCHY  
NO TO NEOLIBERALISM  
NO TO SURVEILLANCE  
NO TO LIES

FIGHT THE POWER

## MANIFESTO OF A BETTER FUTURE (2017)

NO TO FASCISM  
NO TO RACISM  
NO TO NATIONALISM  
NO TO BORDERS  
NO TO SEGREGATION  
NO TO ISLAMOPHOBIA  
NO TO PATRIARCHY  
NO TO NEOLIBERALISM  
NO TO SURVEILLANCE  
NO TO LIES

FIGHT THE POWER

## Manifesto of a Better Future

concepts collaborate with the surrounding frames creating the final frame, the frame of the spectacle that is on the stage in front of one's eyes.

### **Manifesto as an image**

A manifesto as a work of art can also be seen as an image. The ways manifestos operate and frame their space is somewhat similar to the way photography frames images as well. Manifestos are trying to frame the time and space around them like photographs also do. Manifesto possesses 'hidden' powers, non-visual frames, which could be compared to the power of punctum of photography.<sup>4</sup> It is an ability that punctures the image as the stadium punctures the surface of a photograph. The same way text possesses the power to draw an image through the text that has been written. Manifestos' 'punctum' is also their force to strike, step through the frame, and be the 'punctum' of a manifesto. By doing so, it addresses something for people that only framing and therefore 'punctum' can.

The punctum not only punctuates the surface, the passive concept, the stable surface that it is built in, but it is also the force that can affect on something much more significant, and possibly make a change. What is similar between a manifesto as a concept and photographic image is that both are frames of gathering together. Both mediums and frames can turn non-visible meanings to visible. Like photography, these framed words of a manifesto can show us something embedded in its structure, by making a differentiation.

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4 Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflection on Photography* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1981), 94-97.



It cannot stop collecting pieces of reality in frames like photography does, but it can 'stop' ideas and point at them. By doing so change something in the reality of its surroundings, or at least to address and frame a problem.

Perhaps this is something that is an ability of everything called art, a theoretical and abstract probability to be able to affect people some way. It is impossible to fully determinate how artworks can affect – what artworks possess is only a possibility no one can really control in the end. Still, a manifesto as a concept is more willing to strike than a still life painting of flowers might be. It is a tool that aims to affect society directly. It wants to make some kind of shift, and therefore it is not a passive form of art the way a painting or a photograph can sometimes be.

### **Manifestos as art**

The *Manifesto of a Better Future* feels both political and poetic at the same time. The handwriting style gives it more character, which gives the work a more poetic touch. Every line is different and creates a distinct shape and form. The text has particular kind of energy and vibe; and you can almost imagine how the pencil has moved on the surface of the paper. It is visual and has image-like layout too. At the same time it is poetic it includes a straightforward political message. The tagline format could be something seen on the wall outside in the city streets as a message you can easily pick up while passing on in the quick pace of everyday life. It could be an instant message, or a short tweet, a punch line, a straightforward opinion.



## Manifesto of a Better Future

Together all the lines formulate a more complicated image and an idea that needs more time to be thought about than just a quick look. All the ten written lines in the Manifesto are saying NO TO an ideologies and political views already existing in the world. From this point of view, it is manifesting its manifest through denial or de-framing. The declaration states the opposite that it denies; and it could be also called reframing. It is stating its manifest in an invisible or imitative form. Therefore it creates an image and an idea that one cannot actually see, only imagine. The manifesto turns non-visual ideas to an image, which exists somewhere in between the text, a spectator and the world.

I think the Manifesto of a Better Future could be said being both artists' manifesto and direct political manifesto as well. It is a manifesto dealing with such topics that are important and relevant to both the world of art and societies in a larger context. On the other hand, art is not a concept separated from the society. In some sense art as a concept is a miniature version of the larger system known as a society. It is still perhaps possible to look at art as a singular concept, nevertheless, the happenings of art hopefully affects the society as whole. The way art can make change is unpredictable and works on several different levels. When a spectator encounters an artwork, the abstract idea and a dimension, the frame that is created can be interpreted uncountable different ways.

From this point of view a political manifesto is no different from artistic one. The interpretation of political statements and views can be interpreted also with several ways that are impossible to control. Therefore, these two different types of manifestos are still similar in their core. Both are manifestos in their nature, even though they might be dealing with particular content and to be

created somewhat different ways. The ways artistic manifestos are made can be formally on the very edge of the idea of manifesto, and yet remain as one. At the end of the day, there is not a huge difference between them; both are as singular as manifestos can be within the concept of a manifesto.

### **What happens within the frame: Manifesto of a Better Future**

The Manifesto of a Better Future consists of ten different taglines and statements. Every line frames an area of society and gives emphasis to a structural problem and a political view that a democratic society should not tolerate. Each phrase starts with the same form, by saying NO TO, e.g., Fascism. Each of the lines forms a statement independently and aims to deconstruct an existing political concept and structure. Together these ten different ideas form a larger concept and complete each other. When looking at each tagline within the context of Finnish society, they all show a challenge Finnish society is facing today.

If a manifest is saying NO TO ideas – to a material to construction something – can it then be said to construct anything in the first place? Looking at the question as a differentiation it is probably easier to get a clearer image. The world of ideas without any concepts would be just chaos, the totality of multi-layered and too complex structure impossible to grasp. If ten ideas, which deny ten existing ideas are collected together, we have a frame and a concept, which is an idea of ideas that it should not include. Therefore the foundation of the Manifesto of a Better Future is a declaration, which deconstructs already existing views and attempts to reframe them through deconstruction. In spite of

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being a frame and a concept that dismantle ideas, the structure of the Manifesto still formulates a frame as such. It is a frame and idea of not including. More precisely, it manifests the idea of excluding the non-open frames of society and therefore includes the opposite in a non-visible form.

Its concept seems to be crafted for de-framing ideas manifested before. This way the text draws an image within an image that it naturally is too. It is a kind of tabula rasa. Although the manifesto doesn't technically determine a concept, at least not a closed one, it determines a frame by leaving it partly open. The statement it states is the foundation of its concept. Without it, it would not exist. These ten NO TO-taglines are the ideas forming the main principle of the ideas the concept it does not accept and include. It is a specific type of empty frame, which aims to reframe new structures through de-framing.

This Manifesto manifests itself through deconstruction. By deconstructing already existing frames, it aims to create space for new thoughts to emerge. It creates space for alteration. Nevertheless, it is an open frame that leaves doors open for ideas to elaborate. It is a concept with an aim as such. Even though it says NO TO existing ideas, it still constructs new ones within its frame. The foundation of this Manifesto is in the deconstruction-reconstruction process.

## Frames and categories of the selected taglines

The taglines in the Manifesto of a Better Future are:

*No To Fascism*  
*No To Racism*  
*No To Nationalism*  
*No To Borders,*  
*No To Segregation,*  
*No To Islamophobia,*  
*No To Patriarchy,*  
*No To Neoliberalism,*  
*No To Surveillance,*  
*No To lies*

In this category, I am giving a closer look to the taglines included in the Manifesto, which are attempting to reframe ideas and concepts that are toxic and violent as ideologies. I am dividing the taglines into four frames and categories to be able to study them more carefully. Each tagline chosen into one category is sharing something similar to the other ones. My categories are as follows:

The first three taglines *No To Fascism*, *No To Racism*, *No To Nationalism* I have put under the title of Ideology, and calling the concept Ideologies as well.

Taglines *No To Borders* and *No To Segregation* are under a concept of Territories. What I mean by the term territories here is that I consider them to close frames.

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The third category *No to Islamophobia* and *No To Patriarchy* I am calling Mythological territories.

The final fourth category, which includes *No To Neoliberalism*, *No To Segregation* and *No To Lies*, is called Control and Chaos as tools of power.

Ideas and thoughts are abstract dimensions as such, but these ideologies are aggressive as they aim to create an order, which is violent towards some human beings. These ideologies are based on inequality and dominance of a selected group of people. And they manipulate people to think and act in certain ways. The division to four different categories in the Manifesto is based on an idea that each category is working on a particular level and as a specific frame. Together these frames create a larger concept of power and control. They show how these kinds of ideas work as abstract frames behind the structures of various society models.

The first category called Ideologies means abstract ideas and thoughts behind the structure and values of various society models. In the second category Territories, the conceptual ideas from the first category have been put in action. Space has been framed by creating a hard border for it.

The third category Mythological territories are based on the idea of religion or other belief systems, and how these systems are used to arrange the order in society to use control within a frame of religion to 'guide' people to behave in a certain way. Perhaps the systems have changed their form many times throughout history. Even though a system would not be a totalitarian system or system that mandates citizens to follow it is still an effective tool of control.

The fourth and final category is Control and Capitalism in the age of planetary civil war.<sup>5</sup> Taglines here are dealing with technology and economy more than any previous ones. In its frame, I am interested in thinking about how these systems are used to reduce our private space and ways to affect the political decision-making processes. How the actions that economic policy and technology take is changing the idea of a democratic state from inside, or creating a separate non-democratic state within a democratic state.

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5 Hito Steyerl, *Art in the Age of Planetary Civil War*, (London: Verso Books, 2017). 78.



## Conclusions

Studying frames and framing has been a thought-provoking journey through the factors forming various interpretations of images and artworks, and how these structures are constructed and operating together.<sup>1</sup> My three main research questions have been as follows: what are the frames, what is framing as an act? What kinds of connections frames create when placed in various contexts? All of the questions have been relevant and valuable to ask and to try to find answers to.<sup>2</sup> Throughout this thesis I am analysing frames and arguing that they are inevitably working as open-systems with other frames and unavoidably creating networks together.

**The first chapter** deals with a film clip of Rafael walking around in the city of Porto. This simple looking film turned out to reflect several frames that are not visible in the picture. These invisible frames can be ‘seen’ in the film as frames outside the camera’s frame. Through these ‘not represented frames,’ the frame of the camera and the surrounding environment create the context for the work. These hidden structures

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1 Judith Butler, Torture and the ethics of Photography, *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, Volume 25 (2007): 957.

2 T.J. Demos, *Against the Anthropocene – Visual Culture and Environment Today*, (Berlin: Sternberg Press), 2017, 65.



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could be said to be the actual frame – no matter the form. Through this invisibility, the film raises a critical question of who can walk in a city at night. Not everyone can walk around at night the same way as it is already framed in a particular way. All the frames create a network together. This network and labyrinth formulate the context for the work. Some of them are visible, some hidden and some are in between these two. Nevertheless, these frames exist as an inseparable part of the societal structure of an environment.

The hidden structures of the empty city exist between the place and Rafael's action and position. Something that is not able to see, which is missing in the picture turns visible in the film. One starts to see elements and structures outside the camera's frame. By recognizing the hiddenness of frames, they become visible. It is precisely the recognition that is needed to be able to see. These invisible frames support the idea of the spectator's frame. I am writing about it through the example of portraits in the Harry Potter novel series.<sup>3</sup> J.K. Rowling writes about portraits and passages these images possess. People portrayed in the pictures can travel to other places through different frames. I find

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3 J.K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Deadly Hallows*, (London: Bloomsbury, 2014).

her idea, as a perfect example of an interpretation of images and artworks in reality as well. Making an interpretation of an image is also a sort of travelling to another space. An image and artwork are seen somewhere between the frames, between the spectator and the artwork in reality as well. When all the structures are connected and passages created, the actual interpretation and the final contextualisation of an image can be made.

**In the second chapter** I was analysing the photographic series made in Greenland in June 2018. The structures of geopolitics also follow and frame images and artworks. Even if images or artworks were framed critically, they would not be completely free of the post-colonial structures of the world. Contemporary Art or Visual Cultures at large are working within the same political and economic system and are, therefore, affected of these structures as well. In spite of that, they do not necessarily address those structures directly either. It would be one-sided to say that they only support unequal structures as well. Perhaps images and artworks could be supposed to have both types of frames within their system, as these structures are not closed but looking to create new connections at all times. Staying open for alternative interpretations within an open frame-system.

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These photographs are also representing the history of humans neglecting nature. And they could also be seen as non-site specific. These pictures could have been taken anywhere. And I see them representing the history of oil-industries and capitalism, and the condition those actions have created on a planetary scale on Earth. In the current environmental situation of climate change, the general public perhaps sees these images differently than they would have been in the past. It is crucial to think how climate change is framed in the mass media context as it affects the opinion of how seriously climate change is taken. Images and moving images are predominantly the media by which climate change is seen globally; therefore the selected frame is highly crucial.

**The third chapter** analyses the Quite Cube installation-intervention, which was constructed behind the Finlandia Hall in the centre of Helsinki, Finland in August 2014. During the Trump-Putin presidential summit in 2018, almost the same place was used as a media centre for the international journalists visiting Helsinki. From this point of view, the area could be said forming the ideal image of Finland. Showing how it is framed by the State, hoping to be similarly framed internationally as well. At the time of the Quite Cube intervention-installation, the place was just a

wasteland. All that is left of that time is a tall birch tree. Birches can be considered iconic nature symbols of Finland. The artwork we created showed a very different image of Helsinki. It brought up hidden frames of society. The installation-intervention deals with the question of power and space and shows how artworks in the public space create new passages and windows to see social structures differently.

Quite Cube examined the frames of public space and how the interpretation of it can change when artworks and frames are placed into open city space. On the one hand, the surrounding area and environment affected the artwork, and on the other, the artwork brought up aspects of the space that would have otherwise stay hidden. This research process showed well both practically and theoretically how artworks and their surroundings inevitably create contexts together. Artworks create new connections, new frames-system, which endlessly make alternative networks outside the 'official' frame-networks.

**The fourth chapter** explored the concepts of deconstruction and reconstruction through the collective working process of Out 2. Out 2 was an artwork, which operated on several multi-layered levels at the same time. This opened its structure and made its

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frames easily noticeable. Working collectively in this kind of open system turned the work also researchable. Breaking down the Marilyn Wall was a crucial part of this thesis research process, and really open my eyes upon the subject of frames. Deconstruction and reconstruction are processes that are interconnected with de-framing and reframing. These structures operate inevitably together making constant connections between each other.

Frames are unstoppably deconstructed and reconstructed, which means that they are unstoppably de-framed and reframed as well. The Marilyn Wall was used to contextualize and create the film itself as well. The wall did not just represent a wall, but also a concrete structure of the film, both practically and contextually. These actions also have a fair share in inspiring me to start writing more about frames.

Out 2 as a shared working process reflects this kind of an open frame structure the best possible way. It represents a communal frame, which is open to anyone to come and go and freely reconstruct and reframe the work.<sup>4</sup> The film and artwork operate simultaneously

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4 Jacques Derrida, *Positions* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1981) 37-96.

on several different levels and is rarely precisely the same than in previous time. When the film-installation expands itself into live performances and events, it makes the artwork impossible for anyone to control alone. Frames are always contracted by an individual or a group of people. They are decisions and interpretations of events and situations. That said, frame-structures are not permanent and stay open for constant deconstruction and reframing. This happens within open frame-systems wherein frames are endlessly open for new interpretations.

**In the fifth chapter** I examined the Manifesto of a Better Future, and the frames manifestos create both as artworks and political tools. The ten taglines I had chosen said all no to a political view that I do not share. The year 2017 was a year of the hundredth anniversary of Finnish independence. The project approached critically the national identity of Finland and how it has been constructed on a single truth. Hundred different artists were invited to create their own 'truth' on an A4 paper. The national identity and the epoch of Finland are created from a narrow and oversimplified point of view. The project aimed to widen this view by showing how multi-layered and cultural Finland really is outside its 'official' frame. I approached the topic by saying No To the current

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political situation, e.g., racism is still a challenging problem both politically and in the day-to-day level in Finland. I wanted to write a manifesto for open and accessible future and reframe Finland in this sense.

The Manifesto is an artwork made of ten different taglines, all saying NO TO –views existing in Finland today. Each tagline operates as a frame of its own having its particular statement. Together they form a new bigger frame and picture aiming not just to be, but also to have a direct impact on society at large. A manifesto is a frame and collection of frames, an active art medium, and a political tool, which aims to impact the world around. It is a political tool and effective form of art and visual culture, a political frame to make a change.

Throughout this thesis, I have been exploring the questions of frames and framing and how the interpretation of artworks changes when placed in various contexts. Moreover, I have analysed how framing and de-framing can turn hidden structures of society visible and how these processes operate together. It has also been inspiring to analyse how images one sees do not exist within the image but within the frames outside and in-between the two. The framing that renders an image and artwork is constructed of much more

than just an artwork itself. One constructs frames of the entire social sphere, environment, and situation, and spectator's experiences and thoughts and the constantly reframed interpretation of art.<sup>5</sup>

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5 Judith Butler, Torture and the ethics of Photography, Environment and Planning D: Society and Space, Volume 25 (2007): 957





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*Films:*

OUT 1: Noli Me Tangere. Directed by Jacques Rivette. France, 1971.

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