

**TINFO News –
Sustainability,
Resilience and
Performance
Utopias**



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Europaeus | The Finnish National Theatre 2014 | Directed by Juha Hurme | Photo Tuomo Mäkelä



Utopias of Resilience

“It is a society of laborers which is about to be liberated from the fetters of labor, and this society does no longer know of those other higher and more meaningful activities for the sake of which this freedom would deserve to be won.” Hannah Arendt 2002

We live in a world (in Finland, Europe, on Earth, in the prevailing social and economic system) where citizenship is measured in purchase power, in consumption that is a goal in and of itself, and where consumerism is a religion. At the same time, the earth has exceeded its tolerance and teeters on the brink of ecological and social catastrophe. A growing number of excluded precariats are increasingly susceptible to latching onto populism, racism and xenophobia. According to Professor **Guy Standing**, an economist and advocate of guaranteed basic income, we are at a historical turning point. Instead of citizens, we have increasing numbers of ‘denizens’: uneducated people who fall between the cracks, societal dropouts, those who exist on the fringes of society, immigrants or minorities – or educated people, primarily among the young, to whom the rights of citizenship are denied.

Practitioners of theater are, through artistic methods, presenting alternative views of the kind of world in which we would like to create art. They are presenting growth-critical works, approaches and methods that are marked by an awareness of what it means to live in a world of scant resources and decreasing energy and materials. Many practitioners do not want to settle for being nothing more than ‘animal laborans’ (**Hannah Arendt**), gasping for breath as they churn out branded artistic products into the markets’ maw at a forced pace. These artists defend their right to create slow art, to sustainable and long-term processing. They are, rather ‘homo fabers’, for whom (artistic) work is not simply labor, but rather collective preparation and shared activity. In Hannah Arendt’s thinking, an active life consists specifically of the confluence of these three factors – labor, preparation and activity – in which a more resilient and sustainable world is created.

The questions that guide such artistic activity are linked to the possibilities offered by ethics and resistance – doing things differently. Increasingly, performances and artistic acts emerge from the interfaces of art and life. They make visible a situationalistic aim of how art could happen in people’s everyday lives.

Utopia (Greek, ū=no, topos=place) meant a place that doesn’t exist. Since **Thomas Moore**’s novel *Utopia* (1516), artists have created various utopias that have exhibited a strong critical dimension.



Utopias are a combination of utopic imagination and wishing. According to **Fredric Jameson**, a utopia as a societal-political utopia is a theoretical wish, it is a mix of imagination and wishing.

In the 2015 edition of TINFO News – Sustainability, Resilience and Performance Utopias, we are interested in utopic thinking that reveals the potential for (sustainable) change. We are also interested in exploring coping strategies in the artistic process, how critical meanings are articulated in artistic performances.

We want to introduce artists and works that strive to expose the prevailing practices and rules governing speech, beliefs and activity, present critiques of arts institutions and pose entirely new problems and questions to be solved through means of performance and representation.

The stage, when viewed in a Guénouian sense as a place of coming together, is, at its deepest essence, radically utopian. We want to discover how the performer and performances – the field in general – can practice the politics of social empathy.

Hanna Helavuori





Animal Here, Animal There

‘Art emerges from a human wound and entertainment from presenting human superiority’, **Leea Klemola** says, and quickly continues: ‘Theatre tends towards entertainment if the spectator doesn’t end up surprised, if it reinforces prejudices and human sufficiency. Entertainment is pornography, and if it doesn’t titillate, it fails.’

Klemola speaks self-confidently. There is no question about what is art and what is entertainment. In entertainment, two beautiful people kiss in the rain and it’s love. Whereas in art, love – or anything else for that matter – is not so simple. Art is defined by the unknown, and uncertainty in the face of it.

‘My art is born out of a curiosity towards what I don’t know, but I know exists,’ Klemola explains. ‘Sentimentality is offensive. It’s offensive that we want to feel feelings that are safe – that two beautiful people kiss in the rain and that’s love. The critic is enchanted! What the fuck?’

As writer or director, Klemola’s plays are neither safe nor comfortable. They are uncomfortable terrain populated by humans and animals. The plays have a black humour, northern oddity, unpredictability and raunch. Taboos appear and are broken.

I don’t know if it’s better, but at least it’s a hell of a lot richer. Before Christianity, you didn’t have to be human to have a personality. Animals were gods! Christianity sets God above man and animals below – and we’re totally alone here.



An incredible threshold

Leea Klemola has written 10 plays, four with her brother **Klaus Klemola**. In many of them, animals play a significant role.

‘I use animals on stage because it’s an opportunity to address otherness,’ Klemola says. On the stage, Klemola’s animal characters say nothing about animals, however, but about humans: ‘In theatre, animals always transform into metaphors. Animals tell of our relationship to them or our relationship to our own humanity. But as far as animals themselves, there’s nothing theatre can say about them except they’re always here with us.’

Her first play featuring animal characters was a tough spot.

‘It was an incredible threshold: here are these dogs and can they talk. I was ashamed and afraid,’ Klemola says, indicating that until that point, the stage had been, in all of its absurdity, ultra-realistic: making coffee took as long as it took for the water to drip through the filter. ‘And then you realize it’s fantastic that Minna the dog is reciting Shakespeare!’

When writing the third part of her Arctic Trilogy, Klemola dreamed of a play that would have nothing but animal roles. ‘But then they would have become too much like metaphors for people. In order for them to stay animals, I also had to put humans in the play’.

She describes that some animals spark dramatic situations through their very appearance: the spotted hyena, dog, or warthog.

‘But pigs are impossible. It’s impossible to present them as anything but the victims of human exploitation. It’s as hard to put a pig on stage as it is to put a young, nice-looking woman on stage. And have her be not simply a victim, let her have human dignity.’

Animals of different roles

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The relationship to animal characters is determined play by play. Animals play different roles: production animal, companion, partner, employee.

For instance, her play *Into the Cold* features a herd of different animals, where communication is possible only within each species, not between species. The sled dogs do speak, but the humans don’t understand what they’re saying.

In *New Karleby*, where the spotted hyenas have come to the north as migrant workers, humans and spotted hyenas can talk to each other, but their cultures are so mutually repulsive that there is very little desire for conversation.

In the play, the spotted hyenas are alien, much more alien than the other animals. ‘The males are in a tough position in the spotted hyena hierarchy,’ Klemola says. ‘The females have a penis and they’re bigger; the packs are headed by matriarchs. Their customs and habits are utterly baffling, they can arouse disgust, and they come to compare to our fear of the unknown. Spotted hyenas are a fruitful species in this regard.’

Plays form far away

Many of Klemola’s plays have started with the core artistic team embarking on an expedition somewhere remote, for instance, Greenland, as in *Into the Cold*, or Tanzania, as in *New Karleby*. For the play *The Future of the Countryside*, the artistic group went to Mongolia for a month.

‘In Mongolia, over half the population are shepherds, and they move a few times a year following their animals. We were bewildered by their special relationship to animals, that they don’t talk about goats as a group, but “that goat’s like that and that one’s like that”. The shepherds saw the animals as individuals! Non-human creatures have personalities,’ Klemola says, and continues that the same relation-





ship would appear in Finland, too, if we scratched beneath the surface. It's a matter of a completely different relationship to nature.

'I don't know if it's better, but at least it's a hell of a lot richer. Before Christianity, you didn't have to be human to have a personality. Animals were gods! Christianity sets God above man and animals below – and we're totally alone here. When animals had souls and personae, the worldview of humans was much richer. The fact that I get so angry – angry that I can't go back to that, means something,' Klemola says.

Leea Klemola's plays are just that. An attempt to grasp something that, if not better, is at least a hell of a lot richer.

Sanna Uttu

But pigs are impossible. It's impossible to present them as anything but the victims of human exploitation. It's as hard to put a pig on stage as it is to put a young, nice-looking woman on stage. And have her be not simply a victim, let her have human dignity.





Leea Klemola (b. 1965) is a well-known director as well as a prize-winning playwright and actor.

Klemola has written ten plays, four with her brother Klaus Klemola and three early ones with the actor-playwright Pentti Halonen. Klemola has directed the premieres of her plays and two operas for the Kokkola Opera. She has also appeared in numerous award-winning films, such as *The Collector* (1997), *The Geography of Fear* (2001) and *Open Up to Me* (2013).

Leea Klemola was artistic director of Aurinkoteatteri for almost ten years. While there, Klemola developed her distinct, bawdy dramatic idiom, typified by an idiosyncratic, no-holds-barred everyday realism, provocation and black humour.

As a playwright, Klemola is particularly well known for her Arctic Trilogy, which includes the plays *Kokkola* (2004), *Into the Cold* (2008) and *New Karleby* (2011).

Her latest play is *The Future of the Countryside* (2014) co-written with Klaus Klemola.

Leea Klemola's plays have been translated into 9 languages.



Photo Eva Persson





Look to the Animal

In Western philosophy and culture, the question of humans' relationship to animals became significant in the late 1900s. The question of animals is also always a question of what it means to be human. Art makes it possible to test, dissolve and cross the boundary between humans and animals.

Animals have increasingly appeared as topics of and agents in theatre throughout the 2000s. In Finnish theatre, Leea Klemola's plays and their animal characters have a special status, because these animal characters strive to maintain their species-specific traits. They test their humanity.

Animal and queer

Leea Klemola's plays do not reinforce the prevailing values.

In Western culture, attempts have generally been made to use animals to support what is considered 'natural' according to the prevailing values of any era. Animal societies are presumed to share the same taboos as human societies. Animals have been viewed as committed partners and parents, patriarchal and heterosexual, and these assumptions have been abandoned only when too much evidence to the contrary has accumulated to be ignored.

In Klemola's plays, taboos are laughed at. Love or sexual relationships between close relatives or different species are repeated from play to play in scenes punctuated by swearing.

The depictions of 'somekind-ness' in her plays can readily be compared to depictions of genderedness from feminism or queer radicalism.

Definitions are always about historical habituations. The definition of human has, during various eras, excluded new-borns, the ill, the disabled or those from different ethnic groups. The line between humans and animals of other species still stand as a final boundary of sorts. A spotted hyena is not a human, that's for sure.

In Leea Klemola's plays, species are seen as adaptable and diverse – in other words, in the same way gender is viewed in queer theory. Species are on the move and susceptible to change. For instance, in *New Karleby*, a character changes species from human to spotted hyena.

Animals need man

The image of animals proposed by Leea Klemola's plays is not directly linked to the current discussion of animal rights. Klemola does not, for instance, understand refusing to use animal products. And yet her relationship to animals is one of respect.

In an interview, Klemola says she finds it impossible to believe that, throughout our joint history, animal species adapted to humans without the reverse happening as well. Klemola's plays claim that humans and human genetics have equally adapted to animals.

Klemola's most recent play, *The Future of the Countryside*, presents the notion that people and production animals struck a bargain at the beginning of history: a human promises a wild cow security in exchange for its milk and eventually its flesh. But by the end, the human has unilaterally broken all of the agreements.

In the play, both parties re-enter the contract. It states that humans can still kill animals if they only respect animals throughout their lifespan.

In this play and Klemola's other plays, a relationship of mutual dependency prevails. Humans need animals and animals need humans. If no one needed anything, would we lose our relationship with animals for good?

Sanna Uuttu





The Future of the Countryside | The Finnish National Theatre 2014 | Directed by Leea Klemola | Text by Leea Klemola and Klaus Klemola | Photo Tuomo Manninen



Into the Cold | Tampere Theatre 2008 | Directed by Leea Klemola | Text by Leea Klemola and Klaus Klemola | Photo Harri Hinkka



3261 Characters on the Responsibility of Art

when i'm hungry, i eat the ground beneath my feet
i give birth to butterflies, i murder elephants

hi there's no logic to this, nothing in particular you need to know or know how to do
as long as you get up and fall down beautifully for a few decades

it can drive you batshit
well luckily there are those tenets
and structures and supports
geniuses, gurus, role models
prizes and acknowledgements (of guilt/commiseration)
universities of the arts that hire advertising agencies to remind everyone
that they're universities of the arts because they've forgotten it themselves
artists that are putting up this one show because etc

note! this is art
my everyday work is something different
privately, i'm something different

let us remember
(hands crossed)
that we're doing all this so professionally
so we don't have to think every day
that art is total chaos and no one is good or bad at it
and that a splinter on a wall is just as much a work of art as a 12-hour megaproduction
yeah and quality and creativity are jargon borrowed from the business world

just about anything will make sense if you let it make sense
the same goes for e.g. the heart



let us also remember
(hands limply at the sides)
that the art of self-deprecating incompetence is the privilege of white cis men
i should know
next up: self-respect

well maybe not respect after all
respect is tribal thinking
respect is always awarding worth to one and taking it away from others
the culture of respect is the same as the chronically depressed and the superstars
respect is a capitalist karaoke version of love

interlude
ext. helsinki. grants rain down.
kimmo modig (fearfully): the ecology of theatre is the courage to be born and die
every day
and in between earn a couple of grand a month
to fly to festivals in Germany to smash one's union and repair one's networks

idea: grants, picked by lot for anyone who's interested in living for one year
in utter existential crisis & bringing that crisis to the stage for others to see

i look at art
because i want to see how people survive that or anything else
the totally normal people* who get up on stage in front of others

^as idiotic a gesture as, say, falling in love
except without the biological drive
or well maybe some dna-driven notion of continuing the species is blossoming there in the back-
ground, too,
yeah and maybe in this case too it's a question of dedication, empathy and trust

*they're never just anybody
see paragraph seven line three

in one of spike lee's movies it says that people didn't come to see your gig
not because they wouldn't understand it but because they're just not interested in what you do
for me that means you should create performances for people close to you
but i find myself creating them for someone way off on the horizon in front of me or behind my back
or for those vertically above me

i prefer to communicate with ghosts than those i'm close to
i think the Caspers are waving at me but I can't be sure

i never stop waving back at them because if i stopped moving i'd vanish into the background
that could be kind of fun, too
to disappear into the haze of Helsinki
or paragraph four line three

Kimmo Modig

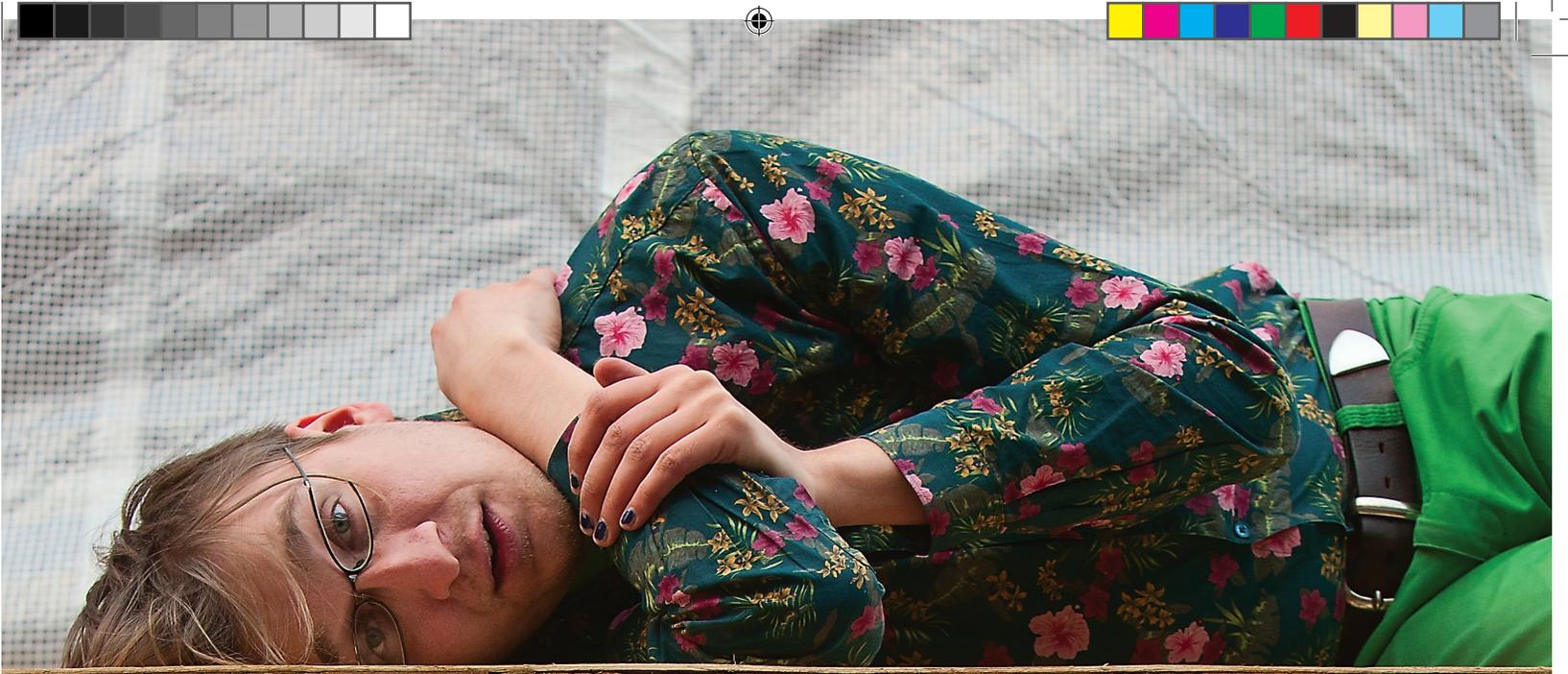
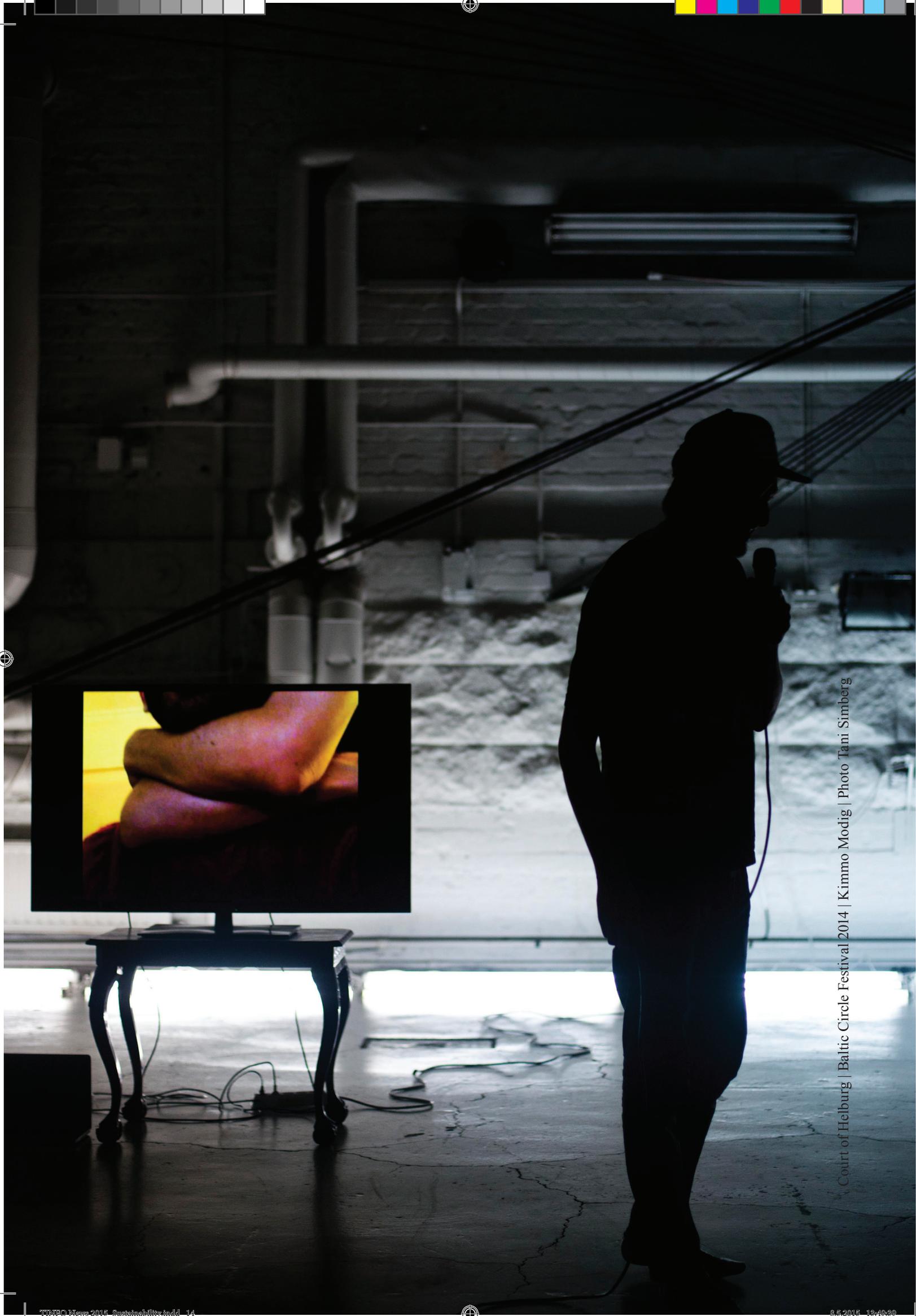


Photo Eva Persson

Kimmo Modig (b. 1981) is an artist who lives in Helsinki. His focuses primarily on theatre productions and audio and video pieces intended for the internet. Modig generally uses his own voice as his instrument; his preferred format is monologue.

Modig has a MA in theatre arts (Theatre Academy Helsinki, 2009). Last year he was seen at the Baltic Circle Festival in Court of Helburg, a solo performance. Many of his works are collaborations, for instance Landlording, a series of video shorts created with Tuomas A. Laitinen, and G and K, an artistic duo who did versions of Kylie Minogue and the Ronettes among others, created with Georges Jacotey.

Modig is currently working at the Finnish National Theatre as an advisor to Kristian Smeds on his upcoming work for the stage.



Court of Helburg | Baltic Circle Festival 2014 | Kimmo Modig | Photo Tani Simberg





The Sustainable Actor?

Last autumn, after beginning my work as the head of the acting programme at the University of Tampere, I started to ponder how we could discuss climate change and ecological crisis during actor training. Working on the new actor curriculum, I felt an urge to incorporate a thorough discussion of ecology. I also noticed a growing interest in environmental questions among colleagues elsewhere. Soon after, I attended an event called ‘I, Consumer: Shopping, the Climate and Us’. This meeting took place at the end of September 2014, in Riga, Latvia, and it was organized by the New Theatre Institute of Latvia in collaboration with their partners, one of which was the British Art and Climate organisation TippingPoint (www.tippingpoint.org.uk). The aim of this international gathering was to address climatic issues in relation to consumer culture through multidisciplinary workshops, discussions and performances.

The speed of global warming in particular and its radical impact on natural systems have taken us all by surprise. Since the turn of the millennium, we have woken up to the fact that Mother Earth has fallen into a much worse state than predicted forty years ago – which is when these themes first entered my consciousness. The 2014 Synthesis Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change notes: ‘Warming of the climate system is unequivocal, and since the 1950s, many of the observed changes are unprecedented over decades to millennia’ (www.ipcc.ch/pdf/assessment-report/ar5/syr/SYR_AR5_SPMcorr2.pdf). Since, as the report continues, the risks caused by climate change ‘are unevenly distributed and are generally greater for disadvantaged people and communities in countries at all levels of development’ (ibid.), we are now faced with the fact that immediate and radical measures are required if we wish to save our planet and its creatures. This call to action often seems so insurmountable as to be paralyzing. However – and this is my fundamental claim – instead of feeling demoralized and as if action is futile, we artists should move on to the level of real action. My question is: How can these measures (such as ‘Adaptation, Mitigation and Sustainable Development’, listed by the IPCC) be put into practice by means of theatre? Could they be generated through actor training? And, more generally: How should we teach acting in the age of environmental catastrophe and ecological crisis?

I approach these questions from three directions, namely through artistic, professional and societal viewpoints. In terms of actor training, artistic refers to the very ‘art’ of acting, including its technical



and dramaturgical aspects, as well as its contents and materials. Professional alludes to the structural and institutional aspects of actor's work, the environments and circumstances in which it occurs. Societal connects acting, together with the theatre it produces, to the larger political sphere. While revealing how abstract and practical aspects of acting are always intertwined, these three viewpoints also form the basic foci of the future curriculum at Tampere. This is why I – instead of confronting this huge problem all on my own – decided to pose it, and the challenge of climate change, to an international group of colleagues working with performer training in higher education.

A fundamental change in the actor's manner of orienting towards the planet is the only way to a bigger change in humankind.

This group gathered last January in Zurich for the second International Platform for Performer Training IPPT (performertrainingplatform.wordpress.com), where we discussed performer curricula under the title “‘Once Upon A Voice’ – Contents and Schedules of Contemporary Theatre Education.’ During the meeting, I invited these fifty colleagues from eleven countries to a one-hour workshop where actor training and climate change were discussed through the above-mentioned viewpoints. After presenting some facts from the IPCC's gloomy report, I divided the group into three thematic discussions. The discussions were led by a secretary, who also took notes. Afterwards, the discussions were briefed to all participants by the secretary, whom I also asked to send me the minutes so I could share them with everyone involved (these notes can be found online at performertrainingplatform.wordpress.com/past-events/zurich-2015/proceedings/). To my mind, this was an attempt at an ethical or even ecological procedure that could enrich our common thinking and help us redesign our individual training programmes.

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The proceedings from Zurich bear witness to the differences between the various acting and actor training cultures and professionals that emerge from them. In the notes of the ‘professional’ discussion group, ethics is seen primarily as an essential part of acting. ‘Acting should not be a job/skill, but an ethical practice.’ ‘Actor training is training for a new way to live.’ Moreover, because ‘actor is the mirror of community’, s/he should have ‘commitment to sustainability as a way of life’.

The ‘professional’ discussion group asks questions about sustainability: ‘How do I organise my practice in sustainable terms?’ They suggest sustainability should be a core value that extends ‘from business, to marketing, to acting: for instance, only travel by public transport when performing, only use inflatable/portable set & props, or what can be found at the performance location’. Artists should be empowered ‘to make a choice’ regarding their working conditions. The group proceeds to a critical debate on the very notion of sustainability. If values such as sustainability are to be stressed, how do we know whose values they are? ‘What are we sustaining,’ they ask: ‘climate, artistic vision, the economy, something else?’ Finally, the ‘professional’ discussion group argues that ‘theatres could be a place of imaginary waste, to model where things should not be wasted, where [not wasting] counts’.

The group focusing on the ‘societal’ aspects of actor training comes up with several suggestions. They ask, ‘What sort of human beings are we helping to construct through our training processes?’ They believe training should not only aim at teaching students ‘the specifics of acting, but to become critical thinkers’. One participant proposes that students should ‘ask awkward questions, be provocateurs’. They suggest ‘creating something with the actors that is of the same value as ecological discussion’.

In terms of climate change, this group envisions a future with ‘diminished resources, migration and wars’. This dystopia necessarily changes the actor's work. ‘What would be the actor's task during societal turmoil?’ they ask, and answer: ‘peace mediator, person who calms down the situation’ or ‘actor

Continued on page 18





Dr. **Pauliina Hulkko** (b. 1966) is a theatre director, dramaturg and Professor of Theatre Work, acting programme, at the School of Communication, Media and Theatre, University of Tampere.

Her current research interests are related to materiality, ethics, dramaturgy, document and performer training.

Photo Eva Persson



as adaptor helping people adapt to different situations'. Someone in the group claims that because 'we don't have society anymore', training should 'help people relearn "the societal", teach students to talk with different sorts of people, new ways of performance and collaborations, with economists, for example'.

Interestingly, the 'artistic' discussion group seems to be more sceptical about bringing ecology and climatic themes into acting curricula. Questions such as, 'Do we need trendy research and future research?' and 'Should art be functionalized, and what does that mean?' are asked. One participant wonders, 'Why should ecology be more important than other issues like racism, poverty? Why should it play a central role in teaching theatre?' Another says that 'students get bored with themes that are brought to them from the teachers,' and therefore 'have to pick their subjects themselves'.

Just like any political phenomenon, climatic issues must become part of every actor student's common knowledge.

However, there are also positive responses to the task in the 'artistic' discussion group. One participant points out that 'in art you can invent and be bold and provocative' and therefore 'an artist should really be informed about what he wants to say; intelligence is required'. Another highlights the students' need for knowledge of ecological and other important issues, which means experts should be introduced into the acting curriculum. Someone notes that the notion of an 'ecological actor' remains unclear. This reminds me of the question of sustainability that was discussed in the 'professional' group. Maybe an ecological actor has to practice ecological acting that demands some kind of reduced technique. As someone suggests: 'Reduced acting is anti-performative.'

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Now, getting back to my original concern about climate change and ecological crisis as something essential to acting and actor training. Personally, I am sure that both climate change and ecological catastrophe, as well as measures against their expansion, should be taught and learned during actor training. I believe this can be achieved in at least three ways – which again, can be seen through the division into artistic, professional and societal aspects. First, just like any political phenomenon, climatic issues must become part of every actor student's common knowledge. This can be ensured through strong theoretical studies. Second, we must begin to create new artistic contents (plays, texts, materials) out of which new kinds of performances can arise. This demands a wider understanding of the scale and nature of climatic issues. Third – and this is the most inspiring and challenging part – ecology and climate change must be translated into a corporeal language, i.e. we must begin to examine techniques and dramaturgies based on our intellectual and experiential understanding of them.

This, I argue, could finally offer a new kind of attitude towards the Earth and its creatures. A fundamental change in the actor's manner of orienting towards the planet is the only way to a bigger change in humankind. As one member of the 'artistic' discussion group in Zurich points out, 'actors deal with atmospheres, they create and manipulate atmospheres' – a thought that, I believe, in terms of climate and ecology should be understood literally.

Pauliina Hulkko





You Have to Be a Many – the Political in Performance

'To be a one at all, you have to be a many and it is not a metaphor. That it is about the tissues to be anything at all, and those who are, have been in relationality all the way down.' Donna Haraway¹

In performances, the political is always visible in a variety of ways. In this context, we understand a performance to be political if it makes room for self-organization, either as the 'inner' reality of the performance or as a broader condition. We examine the ontology of performance and reflect on what sort of lived utopias performances create and make real.

Self-organization and its relationship to utopia also open up a performance-ecological perspective. Understandings of the world have changed, approaches and working methods have changed, and this being the case, performance – its forms and functions – are in flux. Performances and artistic activism demand above all time spent together, spaces occupied together, and thinking that happens together. As one example, we could mention the 'Art in Between' pilot project that formed at the University of the Arts Helsinki through free association of students: it is a non-hierarchical, open platform for many simultaneous processes and projects that examine the spaces and phenomena between structures and worlds. Within the framework we have defined, a political performance is comparable to contemporaneous political micro-movements and activism, in which utopia is a lived, shared, processual reality. The same thoughts move both artists and activists.

All artists, all performances and all processes are constructed in relation to and in relationships; there is nothing before others; there is nothing without others.

As an ontological premise for our thus-described understanding of the political (in performance, activism, the world), at the beginning of this article we introduced 'many...is not a metaphor', a direct quote from a lecture, 'Anthropocene, Capitalocene and Cthulucene: Staying with the Trouble' presented by the researcher and feminist **Donna Haraway**. In order to be something, we must be a many. All artists, all performances and all processes are constructed in relation to and in relationships; there is nothing before others; there is nothing without others. Existing in the world is a matter of shared think-





ing and shared agencies, of understanding one's own entanglement in the plural. In this day, numerous performances and artistic processes start off from these questions. At the end of this article, we examine two performances from this perspective.

Thoughts think actors, performances, and processes.

Utopia becomes inter-ness, connection, collaboration – no more and no less.

If a utopia is realized in this moment (of performance, of activism), if it is lived into reality now, a revolution is constantly underway. Utopia is no longer far off in the distance, somewhere else; it is not something to strive towards. Utopia becomes inter-ness, connection, collaboration – no more and no less. This condition of entanglement has been awarded by no one, nor does it depend upon invitation. It is not the same as participating or being included. Whereas those entail a choice, entanglement is a given circumstance at conception, how one is in the world. Existence is fundamentally pluralistic.

Self-organization (once again: in the fields of both the arts and activism) challenges us to redefine agency. It coaxes out agency that is not only doing but also sensing and breathing, thinking thoughts, frailty, porous structures. Fragile or weak agents need each other, develop, grow and live in relation to each other. Weakness does not assume a position as the opposite of resilience, tenacity. A weak actor has to be resilient because s/he is dependent, to the extent s/he is dependent. The issue of resilience is always in the plural, a question of community and the political. Weak actors form unstable communities, bleeding boundaries, porous being. These communities are continuously re-organizing themselves; they are resilient because they are unstable.

At this point, it must also be noted that agency is not limited solely to human actors, nor to what we perceive as living. Complex relationships form only when diversity is taken seriously; we cannot limit agency to apply solely to ourselves.

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Fragile or weak agents need each other, develop, grow and live in relation to each other.

Self-organization is not a one-time event, but a process in which all actors at a given place at a given time take part. It forms through root systems of negotiations, choices, agreements and activities that no 'one' governs or controls. It is radical politics that does not demand unanimity or consensus, but it does demand shared space-times, duration and resilience.

What is required for self-organization to even be possible in a performance? In what senses is it possible?

A performance can self-organize inasmuch it does not attempt to examine its subject (the self, the world, the ecological crisis) from the outside, in other words whenever it does not have a subject and it is itself not the subject of working, processing or understanding. Inasmuch as the performance has opened up to conditions where there is no attempt to maintain some predefined meaning, it can open up to self-organization and allow materials and beings to generate endless new forms of coexistence.

A performance can also be realized as an unstable situation where materials that do not belong together mix, or can do so if they desire. The dynamism that is born of the bringing together of materials does not produce causality or a chain of interpretations, but rather such a complex entity that it once again contains within it the possibility of reorganization.

How is a performance limited, however, and what is limited within it? How can limiting be an open process, and how can it take place again and again during a performance?





*Afterwards, someone asked how the performance ended.
I don't know; I feel as if it still inhabits me.*

Dirty Dancing was performed at the Zodiak Center for New Dance, in a big white rectangular tub around which the audience sat in two rows. The performance had clear boundaries: it had a beginning and an end; the group of performers was limited; and it was the same group from one performance to the next. The performance consisted of five human bodies, a white floor that rose underneath the audience's feet, light, sound, the gloppy brown Finnish Easter delicacy *mämmi* and copious amounts of liquids, including buttermilk dyed various shades and fruit soup.

And yet the inner dramaturgy of the performance suggested something else. The performers poured an incredible amount of liquid over the floor and on themselves and moved in various configurations, manipulating the liquids: massaging, wiping, adding, splashing, drinking, spitting, heaping. The organization of the performance materials was not agreed in advance, nor was the order of the performance's sound material. Movement and sound emerged in relationship to each other, from one performance to the next, always anew. So within the performance, the boundaries swayed and shimmered, before long it was unclear where the boundaries between body and liquid ran, where the boundaries between sound and movement ran. Were they intended to bring together or keep separate? The materials did not transform into each other, but no longer was it possible to distinguish them from each other. The inner freedom of the dramaturgy, the improvised durations and undefined organization within the agreed framework created a platform, surface or field where negotiation between materials happened specifically from the performance's place and duration. The limits, the limitations, set at the beginning formed a condition within the framework of which the action took place, but which could no longer completely define it.

Dirty Dancing did not give spectators the opportunity to read the body, liquid, sound as simplistic and limited, through their assumed meanings or contents. The combinations that emerged through self-organization produced such great diversity that the whole could not be managed from the auditorium, or from the stage either. Materials became visible only through each other, how they organized in relation to each other and what sort of relations/conditions they generated. The liquid and the performers can envelop each other, but they do not meld into one. The relationship between them does not happen between two, but among many. The performance defines its premises, but it does not know itself in advance, or the combinations that emerge in each case.

*How is a performance limited, however,
and what is limited within it?*

STILL! formed in the spring of 2014 at the University Theatre of Helsinki studio as a momentary lifestyle, a certain permissive coexistence that shook and faded the boundaries of performance and the creating of performance. The artistic team come together to plant and tend a garden, to sanctify spaces through play, to share food it had gathered from dumpsters, to be still and get silly, to transform into skeletons. At several instances during the process, the doors opened and any and all were welcomed in – not to participate in an existing framework or preconceived ways of doing things, not to watch a run-through or comment on the performance that was being constructed, but to live together, to negotiate and agree as a plurality and as many, as a temporary community.

The performance took shape as a weakly bounded field. After a relatively traditional inclusive beginning, in which the spectator's body and mind was fluffed and softened within limits s/he set, the audience was ushered into the studio at the *Ylioppilasteatteri*, 'into' the performance where lack of definition and the shaking of norms had become a norm. The performance did not suggest to the audience





a single position, but opened up an anarchistic playground where various levels of participation and agencies intersected and were intentionally weakly defined. No one was particularly strongly manipulated, coaxed, or pressured into being more or less involved, but it was clear that, as a spectator, I am free to reorganize at any moment in relation to the others without a demand for unanimity or simultaneity. The sticks and stones carried into the studio; the broken bathtub; the tent, the mattress and the piece of crispbread; the scissors a performer used to cut my hair; the wind that blew through the space and made the performers cheer and formed because the performers cheered; the spectator who fell asleep in the corner and the performer who fell asleep in the bathtub; the director of the performance who was stripped, bound, and placed in a cauldron; the lap where I rested – all contributed to creating a whole that was built from the inside out, and whose boundaries we never came to know.

The artistic team had limited, organized and arranged the conditions; it had rehearsed, repeated and removed; it had built a performance that began, lasted as long as it did, and then ended at some point, but: the artistic team did not own the performance it had created or that had created the artistic team. This being the case, there was nothing to sell, nothing to guard, nothing to sit on. A performance was born that invited the audience to organize with it within weak, given boundaries that it was always possible to topple or renegotiate.

The director of the performance, **Lauri Mattila**, writes: ‘What remains in life during the afterglow of the performances that took place during the performance season – what remains of the manifesting, sparking, bubbling, foaming, squeezing, playing, challenging, hunting, hopping, aimless coexistence on the stage, of the practices, of the experiences of good and bad – form the unique ethics of each temporary community.’ Afterwards, someone asked how the performance ended. I don’t know; I feel as if it still inhabits me.

In our examples, change and plurality are not hypotheses, they are not something that flee into the future; they are continuously present in our entanglement. Utopia is realized in the performances through the self-organization of materials. A porous structure offers the potential for porous action. It does not suggest that self-organization demands agency, that is based on self-objectification or a demand for similarity, or that agency realizes a pre-defined way of doing things. It coaxes out the weak agent, whose strength and resilience are resilience in relation to others, shared but not concentrated power. No one or nothing needs to maintain or carry the structure or meaning of the performance.

Inasmuch as the performance organizes itself, it doesn’t assume that the experiencer of the performance won’t have the resilience to endure it.

Hannah Gullichsen and Aune Kallinen

¹Donna Haraway: Anthropocene, Capitalocene and Cthulucene: Staying with the trouble, September 5, 2014, University of California, Santa Cruz, <https://vimeo.com/97663518>



Dirty Dancing | Zodiak – Center for New Dance | Direction and Concept by Anni Klein and Jarkko Partanen | Photos Katri Naukkarinen





STILL! – An Evening of Regeneration | The University Theatre of Helsinki 2014 | Directed by Lauri Mattila | Photo Cyril Sjöström





I Have a Dream, Too

At the end of the performance, eleven members of the audience are sentenced to a minimum eight years in prison for killing a wolf. In addition, the surviving members of the wolf pack are guaranteed safe range throughout their habitat and greater security through a ban preventing information on their whereabouts being disseminated. In the light of the evidence presented, the case is undeniably one of murder, but the sentence is light, perhaps because this is the first instance in which the new law is being applied.

The History of Others is a cooperative artistic and research project conceived by myself and the visual artist **Terike Haapoja**, where society, culture, history and also humanity are viewed from the perspectives of other species. The project started from a heartfelt need to create a Museum of the History of Others, a place where the realities of representatives of species other than human are recognized in an official institution like a museum. Much as in Jewish museums the main emphasis is on the holocaust, such a Museum of Others would presumably cover wide-scale persecution of other species. The focus would not, however, lie in the presentation of catalogued images of suffering characteristic of animal rights movement, nor would the goal be as straightforwardly political. Due to the large number of other species, we have begun our activity from smaller-scale projects.

The History of Others produced the Museum of the History of Cattle -installation at the Cable Factory in Helsinki in 2013. Following museum conventions, the work was a primarily textual survey of how *Bos taurus* could study its culture and its shared history with its closest companion species, humans and flies. The museum introduced visitors to constructions of breeding and racial doctrines as well as ideologies involved in industrialization. No images, videos, or sculptures of cattle were presented at the museum.

Things do not need protection, but as legislation reveals, we understand that animals are not things.

In its next project, *The History of Others* experimented with performance art. The drafting of a new, belated, Animal Welfare Act in Finland and medieval criminal trials of animals inspired us to investigate the relationship between non-humans and the law. *The Trial* premiered at the Baltic Circle Festival





in 2014, in the stately Consistory Hall at the University of Helsinki, where the walls are adorned with the images of human men who lived in various centuries. Animals are also present in the auditorium: the sumptuous leather chairs have been tooled from their skins.

Persons and things

The notion has come down to us from Roman law that two types of entities exist: persons and things. In the legislation of most countries, those beings classified as animals share the juridical status of things. Apparently the things in question possess some special traits that complicate matters; otherwise the notion of animal welfare would be completely absurd.

Things do not need protection, but as legislation reveals, we understand that animals are not things. In the EU statutes on the killing of animals, animals are recognized as sentient beings capable of feeling pain. This is followed by a presentation of numerous ways that slaughtering animals is acceptable (crushing them alive, gassing, shooting them in the head, etc.). Finland's animal welfare laws forbid the hunting of any animal farmed for production purposes (with the exception of reindeer) because it causes undue suffering. And yet according to the law, animals can be subjected to surgical procedures such as the removal of testicles without anaesthesia. Such laws offer precious little comfort for the targets of their protection.

History teaches us that the line between animals and humans is not biological, but ideological.

The Trial dealt with the incompatibilities between the alleged intent of the law and the practices allowed under the letter of the law. We rejected legislation focusing on welfare and, during the performances, wrote a new law in which we made animals of other species legal persons and granted them basic civil rights, such as the right to life and liberty. If corporations, nations, and universities can be legal persons, then why can't beings that are so much closer to us?



Legal rights for animals sound utopic. But so did rights for women, once upon a time. In the United States, the decision wasn't made in the 19th century to improve conditions for slaves by creating laws ensuring the welfare of the African American populace; it was decided that they were persons with inalienable rights. Enslaving a person is illegal – albeit that these days the world has more slaves than ever.

The sphere of legal persons is inevitably expanding: In January 2015, an Argentinian court decided that the orang-utan Sandra has legal rights and her illegal captivity at a Buenos Aires zoo must end. Such precedents will gradually chip away at artificial boundaries between humans and animals. If the line isn't arbitrarily drawn between species, what is the determining factor? Intelligence and sociability? Or, in a Benthamian sense, a capacity for suffering? Tearing down this boundary is not only beneficial for other species, but for humans as well. History teaches us that the line between animals and humans is not biological, but ideological: as long as there are 'animals', there will be people who consider it their right to name other human groups 'cockroaches', 'rats' or 'crocodiles', 'animals', lower than 'us', and oppress, enslave, and destroy them because of it. As long as the line exists, no one is guaranteed a spot on the bright side of it.

Laura Gustafsson

Information about the author on next page

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The Museum of the History of Cattle – installation |
Laura Gustafsson and Terrike Haapoja 2013 |
www.historyofothers.org | Photo Terrike Haapoja



Laura Gustafsson (b. 1983) is a Helsinki-based author, theatre-maker, feminist and vegan. She has published two novels, *Whore Story* (2011, Into) and *Anomaly* (2013, Into), and is currently working on a third. She has written plays and the radio play series *Pet Shop* for YLE Finnish public broadcasting.

In her works, Laura Gustafsson has dealt with language, structural violence and the perspectives of the otherized as well as themes of motherhood and power. Her texts draw on everything from mythologies to contemporary media. Together with the visual artist Terike Haapoja, she established the History of Others project in 2012, which won the Kiila prize for cultural act of the year. Gustafsson graduated from the Theatre Academy in Helsinki.

www.historyofothers.org

Photo Eva Persson



An Interaction with an Illusionless Idealist

Emilia Pöyhönen writes women into the canon of holy madmen

Emilia Pöyhönen, 33, took five years to write her play *Princess Hamlet*. The result is an exceptional work, a comic-strip tragedy that is both stubbornly free of illusions and relentlessly utopic, and that engages in a dialogue with the marginal art of the comic book.

Through crystalline language, it examines madness in contemporary society. It also opens up the relationship between art and reality.

Maria Säkö: Rewriting a classic is a form of preservation. What is it you wanted to hold on to?

Emilia Pöyhönen: I want to reinterpret tradition, update it. The most important thing is to engage in a dialogue. I'm a dialogic person and a dialogic writer. Truly interesting art is born of dialogue. In Finland, works that refer to other artistic works are sometimes considered elitist, but I think references can bring depth.

Maria: My view is that the other plays you have written, especially *Chosen*, *Bread Line Ballad*, *Gate-crashers* and *any one of us – a documentary* take their meaning from a dialogic nature. Do you agree?

Emilia: During the writing process, the works of other authors often take on incredible significance for me, and I really enjoy being able to engage in conversations with these other authors. Dialogue makes creating art less like crying into the void and more like sharing themes and thinking together, even if it's a text that I'm sharing my thoughts with. In theatre performances, of course, people come together to think, but the work itself can also participate in the thinking process.

In the play, Princess Hamlet goes mad and ends up at a Buckingham Palace reminiscent of a psychiatric hospital. Nevertheless, she doesn't receive any treatment there; monotonous choral singing is offered as therapy. Her friend Horatia tries to help, while a male fan Ophelio revels in the princess' fate. He invites Elton John to the psychiatric ward to sing 'Candle in the Wind'. At the end of the performance, Ophelio is the only one left who still believes in the legend of Princess Hamlet. He is a neo-Nazi king, who stalks in satisfaction among the smouldering ruins of the castle – or the welfare state.





Maria: Why such a major work?

Emilia: I knew there was no point trying to piggyback on Shakespeare with just any work. This is a staking out of political territory. Our holy madmen, who have revealed the truth about our society and humanity, have traditionally been male figures: Hamlets and Woyzecks. Women's madness has been seen as personal, or as a female problem. That's why I wanted to create *Princess Hamlet*.

Princess Hamlet says: We remember those princesses who kill themselves, who leave/ on time / forcefully / go down in flames. / The rest / they are nothing but women / who weren't capable of living / no one remembers them, they are/ erased by wind and sand from the pages of history until no trace remains. / This will not happen to me.

Maria: What does this excerpt speak to?

Emilia: I decided to, through the character of Princess Hamlet, address a topic that has been bothering me for a while. Why do we remember Virginia Woolf, Marilyn Monroe, Amy Winehouse, Sylvia Plath? Why do they become part of our cultural canon, but not, say, the American Jane Bowles, who was an equally important artist? All of these canonized female artists that I listed have committed suicide or died of an overdose. And what is chosen for the canon is no accident. My thesis is that a female artist pays for her place in the canon with her life.

Maria: So you consciously wanted to attach new images to the canon?

Emilia: Yes. I wanted to offer an image of our society in which a madwoman was the subject of her own life, not a hysterical or sexualized object.

Maria: On the other hand, you also write images into the canon in which a contemporary woman embodies the myth; one of the reference materials, is, after all, the biography of Britney Spears.

Emilia: I want to show what sorts of consequences maintaining the myth has in our era, in the everyday lives of these artists. A lifestyle like that isn't very sustainable for an artist.

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Maria: It's been my impression that in your other plays as well, you've avoided shock value and appealed to the audience's intelligence and sense of beauty. You also know how to use the grotesque without stooping to melodrama. For instance, in one of the scenes *Princess Hamlet* plucks at her pubic hairs 'without the slightest trace of exhibitionism'.

Emilia: I don't want to just rewrite self-destructive stories, but add new images to them. I loved *Tiny Furniture*, the movie by Lena Dunham of *Girls* fame, where a twenty-year old young adult moves back to her childhood home to ponder what she would like to do with her life. It's radical that a girl claims that her questions are important to all of us.

Maria: This play is also about how you can keep on going after the illness and death of a loved one. What did you want to say?

Emilia: Do Hamlet's mother and friends have to do penance for the rest of their lives, or could there be more constructive ways of learning to live with loss?

Maria: I liked it that, unlike many rewritings of the classics, *Princess Hamlet* is not a machine-like deconstruction.

Emilia: Many concept-driven works are superb, but that kind of thinking doesn't really work for me. When it comes down to it, I think of myself as being a subject-centred writer. Before I got into the theatre, I studied sociology, and I think it's one of the reasons I'm interested in focusing on things other than aesthetics. During the process of writing *Princess Hamlet*, I investigated the history of psychiatric treatment and I found shocking data on how lobotomies didn't really go anywhere, it's just that nowadays patients are treated with chemical lobotomies.

Maria: A central theme in many of your plays is the welfare state.





Emilia: I'm old enough to have seen the decline of the notion of the welfare state in Finland. I was privileged to enjoy many of the benefits that are no longer offered to those younger than me.

Maria: So although at the start of our conversation you took issue with the Finnish cultural environment, you've also experienced its good aspects.

Emilia: Absolutely! Grants and the existing remnants of the welfare state make it possible to create art. Art can only be created if the artist doesn't have to harness herself to the service of anything. I couldn't have written this play in just about any other country on earth. Because of my illness, it has been my experience from an early age that life is short. I write the way I write because what has been possible for me hasn't been possible for many others.

Emilia Pöyhönen spoke to Maria Säkö

Emilia Pöyhönen (b. 1982) studied playwriting in Finland at the Theatre Academy Helsinki and in Germany at the Hochschule für Schauspielkunst Ernst Busch. She has also studied sociology at the University of Helsinki. She has been a freelance writer, dramaturg, translator and as the playwright-in-residence for the Kotka City Theatre. She has worked as a dramaturg at YLE Finnish public broadcasting, for their radio play series, and at KOM-teatteri. Her plays have been performed at such venues as the Finnish National Theatre, the Tampere Workers' Theatre and Teatteri Takomo.

Emilia Pöyhönen's plays have been translated into seven languages, and in 2014 one of her works had its Australian premiere. Pöyhönen is interested in new forms of drama, ethical questions and the relationship between the individual and society. Her plays include *Chosen* (2009), *Gate-crashers* (2007), *Bread Line Ballad* (2008), *The Tsar's Brats* (2011), *any one of us – a documentary* (2011) and *Princess Hamlet* (2015).



Photo Eva Persson

Elk Hunt | The University of the Arts Helsinki's Theatre Academy 2015 | Directed by Ilmari Pursiainen | Text by Elli Salo | Photo Panu Poutanen



anyone of us – a document | Theatre 2.0 and The Finnish National Theatre 2013 | Directed by Saana Lavaste | Text by Emilia Pöyhönen | Photo Jonni Pantzar





The Art of Self-Exposure

The question of art's ability to have an impact has never been a difficult one for me; it's obvious that art has an impact. As a form of public performance, art is always political, even when a work skirts stances, involvement, or "political" topics. My view is that living is a political act. Walking is political. Sitting is political. Breathing is political. Thinking is political. Art is political. In this piece, I investigate political art through my performance *My Palestine*. What kinds of art are being made in the conflict area, in Israel and Palestine?

Israeli art is European, postmodern, conceptual, intelligent. And yet in the Israeli art I have seen, the country's prevailing political situation is glaringly absent. Nevertheless, the violence, fear and guilt of a subjugating culture is easy to read under many of the works, at least if the viewer chooses to. Every museum sighs with the past, with the ghosts of the holocaust and history. Questions float by, but they are not asked directly. Due perhaps to the untenable present circumstances, the future appears so terrifying that no one even glances in that direction. Spending time in the presence of such art is thrilling; there is room for thought; the structures of the world flash past through little windows that open and close. At least momentarily, dealing with the present feels almost possible. And yet in all of its fascination and recognisability, Israeli art is annoying. Especially for someone oriented to the everyday reality of the occupation – for me – it sometimes strikes me as almost incomprehensible how fearful and avoidant so much Israeli art seems.

*Simply by showing, by exposing the existing structures,
we spark change, we correct something.*

In his book I saw Ramallah, the Palestinian author and poet **Mourid Barghouti** writes: "People like direct poetry only on times of injustice, times when they are unable to speak or to act, times of communal silence. Poetry that whispers or suggests can only be felt by free men."

This statement is not necessarily wholly true, but to my mind it nicely crystallises a fundamental difference between Israeli and Palestinian art, poetry in particular. When preparing *My Palestine*, I sought out Palestinian poetry to read. Almost all the examples I found were problematic: the world depicted in them was overly simple and emotional. The same character, a victim, appeared over and over in





most of the poems. And every victim's story was the same: longing and love for a lost land, sorrow, depictions of violence and endless, infinite hatred for and defiance of the thieves and occupiers. The victim feels he would be capable of living the perfect life if only he hadn't been robbed of it. In doing so, the victim relinquishes responsibility for his own life. He clings to this paradise of his imagination so tenaciously that he ceases to see the reality surrounding him, becomes blind to his own flaws and opportunities. This victim is a vaguely dull character, and difficult to identify with.

Palestinian poetry rarely looks inwards. Can it be blamed? Can a free woman's thoughts be demanded of a woman who is imprisoned? Can responsibility, guilt, and introspection be demanded of a victim? Maybe not. Maybe they should be.

Half-Palestinian actor Noora Dadu's My Palestine is, aside from a performance of identity and documentary theatre, also a revamp of Finnishness. Her private brainstorm and autobiography are exceedingly identifiable and excruciatingly painful.

When exactly did I become Palestinian? Dadu asks. As a child, or not until I posted a link to the mutilated body of a Palestinian baby on my Facebook page? When one's own life doesn't take clear narrative form, how can we frame an inflammatory decades-long conflict shadowed by superpower politics, one that has driven millions from their homes?

Dadu investigates, rises to the barricades, her frustration mounts. Her ruminations are condensed – the audience gets one crumb of information at a time. The performance illuminates nearly all possible sides of the Middle Eastern conflict: the propaganda, the facts, and the weight of history.

Maria Säkö / Helsingin Sanomat, April 2, 2015

Many of the Palestinians I know are tired of the identity of victim. This is evident as a seething, a simmering in the arts: in theatre, cinema, stand up, street art, breakdance, rap, even parkour. The youth want a voice, they want to be strong, they want to re-create their own identity. New Palestinian art is in constant motion. In addition to resisting the occupation and correcting a subjugated identity, the arts are engaged in an open, rich conversation on Palestine's internal state and her societal problems. The field is creating a new culture of discussion, which is no simple task in a conservative society. Artists alternately fear the Israeli army and their own authorities.

Israel's Jews also grew tired of a paralyzing victimhood once upon a time. In Israel, there is a double standard, perhaps perplexing to outside eyes, in how the country speaks of the victims of the holocaust. On the one hand, their fate proves the necessity of Israel's existence; their memory is sacred, crystallising the collective pain of the entire nation. On the other hand, much disparagement is directed their way: why didn't they leave, why did they trust the enemy, they should have left for Palestine when everyone else did. Those who remained in Europe were weak, Yiddish is the language of the weak, the founders of Israel were strong, Hebrew, the new Jews. One Israeli psychologist told me in Tel Aviv that the orphans who arrived in Israel alone from the holocaust were called "soap" in some Jewish circles, in part because it was so difficult to get a grip in them. Against the backdrop of such a brutal history, it is easy to lose oneself in the presence of Jewish and Israeli art – and at the same time forget the current situation in the country, the reality in which we live right now.

Do as you want others to do

I'm writing about Israelis and Palestinians, but I'm thinking mostly about myself and Finns in general. Where is my place on this axis? In which ways am I a victim? In which ways am I culpable? What am I responsible for? What am I responsible for as an artist?

At a lecture that the Israeli curator **Roy Brandt** gave in Helsinki, I realized that observation is, in and of itself, political. We don't need to try to change the world with our art, or make the world a different

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Noora Dadu (b. 1981) is a Kuusankoski-raised, Helsinki-based freelance actor who also writes, directs and edits. Dadu is half-Palestinian, half-Finnish, but sees herself above all as a citizen of the theatre.

In recent years, she has been involved in the Teatteri Takomo productions of *Compassion*, *The Best Possible World* *Good Suggestions of an Even Better One*, *Theorem*, *Estella* and the *Sofia* trilogy of plays on friendship (2010–2014) as well as *My Palestine*, which she wrote and directed.

Dadu has also appeared at the Finnish National Theatre and in Parliament, a trilogy of spectacles whose final sequence will premiere at Ryhmäteatteri in autumn 2015.



Foto: Persson



place through action; simply by showing, by exposing the existing structures, we spark change, we correct something. If our observations are precise, we are being very political indeed. This assumption or insight is based on the notion of truth in some modernist sense: truth produces good; lies produce evil; war, injustice, ecological catastrophe and the rest of it need enormous amounts of falsehood, fear, and misperception in order to endure. So by simply daring to see what we see and show it to others, we are changing the world.

In a workshop led by another Israeli artist, **Dana Yahalomi**, I learned about a group she leads, Public Movement, and their conceptual, inspirational performance events. Yahalomi is known for making existing structures visible. She also talks about opinions; she even asks the audience for their views, but she side-lines herself and her own perspectives. Her strategy is to turn her views towards the audience, to force it to look at itself as part of the structures it is maintaining.

I like these two as artists and people, but I was left craving stronger stances from both, especially in terms of the situation in their own country. I wasn't the only one. At their lectures, the audience questions dealt with and only with Israeli politics, the Israeli identity and moral questions, not their art. I am by no means envious.

Eventually, I realized I need to do what I'm demanding of them. Preparing *My Palestine* was a test of sorts, both for me as an actor and for the stage, at least in terms of my relationship to the stage. Can the Finnish stage in 2015 withstand direct assertions? What would happen if I "exposed myself"? What becomes fiction on the stage? What becomes real? How will this performance affect reality, and who is responsible for that? The audience or me?

Noora Dadu

*What would happen if I „exposed myself“?
What becomes fiction on the stage? What becomes real?
How will this performance affect reality,
and who is responsible for that?
The audience or me?*





If I Had Roots

In the autumn of 2014, the Theatre Academy of the University of the Arts Helsinki held a master class in Dramaturgy and Ecology. During the course, participants delved into questions of drama, theatre, and dramaturgy in an era of environmental crisis. The students taking the course, the dramaturgs **Elina Minn** and **Elli Salo**, and the director **Lauri Mattila** came together to discuss issues of ecology in their own artistic activities.

Elli Salo: The environmental crisis places drama and theatre, as person- and human-centred genres, in an utterly new horizon. It feels like the accustomed forms, structures, and roles are not in proportion to the change in consciousness that the environmental crisis is inevitably propelling us towards. The old narratives too easily bolster the sensations of rejection and paralysis that the environmental crisis arouses. One key question would seem to be what sort of thinking could show us a path beyond guilt and the loss of meaning.

Elina Minn: In my own artistic work, comparing ecology and dramaturgy has made room for new ways of thinking and enriched conceptions of various agents and perspectives. I think that ecology means coexistence and interaction, dramaturgy – relationships, structures and connections. Concepts combine fruitfully. As an artist, I see ecology in a variety of ways, for instance as content, form and an approach to doing things.

Lauri Mattila: I find it annoying that in everyday speech, the word ecology is automatically associated with environmental organizations and nature conservation and nothing else. That constricts and compartmentalizes the concept. I'm inspired by **Felix Guattari's** notion that ecological crisis is a dominating force not only through the environmental crisis, but at the mental and societal levels as well. Capitalism strips thinking of diversity, subsumes practices to its own logic. I approach this theme in my theatre work at the practical level – how we treat each other, how and where we come together. Some sort of backdrop of a good life, of how we could be or should be together sensibly, sustainably, and in harmony.

In my production *STILL! – An Evening of Regeneration* we practiced, studied and sanctified coexistence. The performance included a garden that we tended. The audience was invited to explore the practices of communal life that we had developed. In my art, I want to emphasise that issues of the

ecological crisis are collective, so there's no point letting yourself be crushed by them in solitude.

Elli: It's interesting to examine the ways in which a collective approach expands thinking. My play *Elk Hunt* is a contemporary wilderness story that investigates our relationship to nature. During the writing process, I read a lot of old wilderness literature. The wilderness stories started to seep into the language of the play, as intertexts, as material that I then played with. I started recycling the old traditions in my own story.

The writing process felt like conversations with the wilderness explorers of the past, and the voices of many generations were written into the play. During the writing process, I came to see my responsibility for my own ways of telling and their relationship to the current era. For instance, hero stories that highlight the human illusion of one's self as an autonomous master of nature don't feel the least bit relevant. I believe that culture, art and science have an essential impact on our notion of humanity and its development. As an artist, I feel I am responsible for re-evaluating our conceptions of humanity in this time of drastic change.

Elina: I'm working on a puppet theatre piece titled *The Secret Life of Plants*. In it, I study the forms of consciousness and sensation that plants may possess. I'm fascinated by what identification produces. What happens when I place myself in the perspective of another being? I've imagined what it would feel like if I had roots. If I'm a plant and it's early March now, what happens inside me? What do I long for?



Plants have a very different relationship to time and the resolution of time than humans do. I want to investigate what this could mean in the context of a performance. It has felt refreshing to shift the human out of the centre. Doing so has created space and produced new relationships to places and other creatures. The danger is, of course, that you start to humanize everything.

Elli: That danger always exists. In *Elk Hunt*, there's a talking elk, and through identification I tried to come up with a distinct language and consciousness for it. I learned that the human perspective is impossible to modify, my own voice reverberates everywhere, but it is possible to modify hierarchies.

Elina: Puppet theatre is an interesting form in that regard, because in it we animate objects, we try to imbue them with a spirit the same way we do with people, and they are completely equal, living participants. In the performance *The Secret Life of Plants*, we're building technological plant devices that are also instruments. We want to give plants their own voice. It is, of course, a fictive voice, but I believe the communicative power of imagination.

Lauri: It also generates flexibility and a sense of hope, that, wow, I can play with these gigantic, crushing themes. The ecological crisis puts us in a position where you have to dare to think for yourself and thereby create diversity of thinking and language. These days the language of economics has permeated all thinking and acts as some sort of totalizing force. I believe that through diversities of language, we can create more individual and shared space.

Lauri Mattila (b. 1988) is a director and performance artist who will soon be receiving his MA from the University of the Arts Helsinki's Theatre Academy. Recent works include *Valentin, A Sensitive Beast – A 50k Monologue* and his artistic thesis project, *STILL! – An Evening of Regeneration* for Ylioppilasteatteri (2014).

Elli Salo (b. 1983) received her MA in Russian literature from the University of Helsinki in 2011. She is currently enrolled in the MA program in dramaturgy at the Theatre Academy. She is a member of the Operation Paulaharju ensemble that rehearses and performs theatre in the wilds of Lapland. Her most recent play, *Elk Hunt*, premiered at the Theatre Academy in spring 2015 and is being adapted for radio for YLE, Finnish public broadcasting.

Elina Minn (b. 1984) roots lie in animation and fine art; now she is working towards an MA in dramaturgy. She is currently tackling conceptions of beauty in *Vanitas*, a work by the dancer-choreographer Anna Torkkeli, as well as pondering broader interspecies connections with the puppet theatre performance *The Secret Life of Plants*.

Photo Eva Persson



Elina: Rethinking dramaturgy can make new thought paths possible. Dramaturgy is a way of perceiving the prevailing thought structures and the relationships between various agents. It acts as a playing field on which you can examine and clarify potential new alternatives.

Lauri: In my own art, it feels essential that I don't nail any structures or approaches to the wall, you know, 'things have to be this way and this way'. I try out different models and forms of building things, blueprints, or why not dynamic, growing models.

Elli: At this moment, I'm fascinated by the possibility of creating varied, complex dramaturgies that correspond to living organisms. How can I create a forest, as opposed to stacks of lumber?

Elli Salo



Suggestions for an Ecological Dramaturgy

Ecological dramaturgy:

Takes current circumstances and the environmental crisis seriously.

Opens up perspectives towards the environment and other species, rather than focusing exclusively on humans.

Proposes and rehearses new practices.

Creates a new reality, as opposed to making the current circumstances or narrative visible.

Creates stories of regeneration.

Understands the possibilities presented by death, finiteness, decomposition, and decay as opposed to the illusion of immortality.

Doesn't strive for newness for newness' sake, but can organize meaning of what exists through perceptive observation.

Sees art as an environment in which performances and ideas are disseminated as part of broader systems.

Recognizes diversity in dramaturgies and variety in viewpoints.

Dramaturgy is varied ways of being in proximity, living in proximity. Revealing variously rhythmical and routed movements, simultaneous life, overlapping and parallel embroidering, embroidering between, caring, impactful, identifying, contagious, clinging.

In a new situation, before the new, in awe.

Paths, networks, routes, the trace in me sings, settles, fidgets, flies. Inhales and exhales. There is no end to causes and effects. Grows and dies continuously

Find lightness in heavy topics.

Make language a path into a world where there is still room to live.

Make the stage a utopic space where many can be heard.

Make for the senses, trust in intuition.

Language is not yours alone; it is also the herd's. So write with the herd, towards it, against it, and think carefully about how far the boundaries of your herd can extend.

Approach nothing with disdain, as

- 1) conversation is a must.
- 2) the most random issues may prove critical.

Whereas material resources may be scant, the profusion of immaterial and social resources have yet to be investigated.

October 30, 2014

Art and Nature Centre Mustarinda, Hyrynsalmi, Finland

Susanna Airaksinen, Lauri Mattila, Elina Minn, Katariina Numminen, Elli Salo, Laura Valkama, Johannes Vartola, Eira Virekoski

Master class in dramaturgy: Dramaturgy and Ecology



Elk Hunt | The University of the Arts Helsinki's Theatre Academy2015 | Directed by Ilmari Pursiainen | Text by Elli Salo | Photo Panu Poutanen





The Art of Metamorphosis – Other Spaces

I first saw the collective Other Spaces one summer day at a seaside park in Helsinki. I witnessed a performance in which a group of people running around a circular track gradually transformed into apes walking on two legs. Next they rose onto the balls of their feet and started running like quadrupeds up on their hind legs, continuously falling forward. Then they went wild, transforming into a troop of bizarre, grunting creatures. Each performer seemed to be engaged in an internal dialogue with the creature s/he was imagining.

The creatures were like fantastic replications from the animal world. A moment later, the performers looked like apes again, and then they returned to themselves. Next, they arranged themselves into a configuration that I was allowed to test out myself. In this configuration, two members of the group supported me as I leaned backwards. I let my head fall back; my field of vision turned upside down, the flowers approached me. My face was caressed by puffs of air that two plastic glider-sleds reminiscent of butterfly wings were fanning at the extreme edges of my field of vision. A straw appeared at my mouth, and I tasted sweet nectar.

Running around in circles

A couple of years after this performance, I participated in an event organized by Other Spaces, *The Secret Retraining Camp*, where participants were instructed to engage in similar metamorphoses into the experiential world of various natural phenomena and creatures from the plant and animal kingdoms. My head turned into an asteroid, my hands emitted radiation, I curled up into a snail. Pretty soon I found myself running around the same circle I had seen them running around that one summer.

When practicing Animal Track, I gather myself into a whole animal by transforming various body parts. I was able to experience horns on my head or hooves on my limbs, but what about a horned, hooved animal? By the time I was able to form one body part, the other one, when my attention was occupied elsewhere, had surreptitiously continued its metamorphosis. I was coming up against the limits of a corporal experience diverging from the human experience. Is it possible to access the animal only when it's up on its hind legs? We discussed the experiences generated by the exercises, and that made me feel equal with the other participants.



After the workshop, I was invited to join the group. I was studying documentary filmmaking and didn't have any performance experience. This wasn't a problem from the collective's perspective, because the collective's performances don't really involve performing; rather, we lead and demonstrate exercises, or else we rehearse, either publicly or as a group. The group consisted of people from very different backgrounds: actors, dancers, fine artists, writers, musicians, a bank teller and a mathematician. We met each other weekly in free-form rehearsals where we repeated the existing exercises and developed new ones. Before long, I was able to join the collective's performing group: the projects at the time were *Golem Variations* and *Reindeer Safari*.

Rehearsal as performance

Other Spaces develops exercises around the theme of metamorphoses into forms of existence and manifestation that are foreign to humans, in other words into 'other spaces'. In our performances, we perform the exercises we've developed for an audience. The essential thing is the experience created by the exercises. The participants in the exercise include both the performers and the observer-experiencers.

Metamorphosis demands giving up a human-centred attitude and striving for the experiential world of another creature. This frees us from the human figure and the social identity it establishes. The otherness of the creature so encountered does not, however, completely dominate the rehearsal's awareness. Paradoxically, a reflective distance to one's own actions is retained. These metamorphoses are maintained by a technique that can be interrupted, if desired.

The exercises are collective by nature. They are performed in a shared space and simultaneously. In the exercises, we may touch on touch, for instance, poke another participant with a stick (the worm exercise). In the altered state, the participants encounter each other corporally transformed according to the conditions set by the technique. The exercise doesn't free the participant from responsibility for her/himself or from others as people. At the end, the exercise is dismantled together, and the experiences it has produced are discussed with the other participants.

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The humanoid experience

Other Spaces was founded in 2004. Our collective, ten-year journey into non-human forms of existence and manifestation has led us in 2015 to question how rehearsal can transform us – as people. Our reflections resulted in the creation of a performance called *The Humanoid Hypothesis*. The hypothesis is the assumption of the possibility of a human-like extra-terrestrial being. The hypothesis, which springs from modernism, challenges the conception, dominant to the present day, of man as the highest form of creation. As a consequence of the hypothesis, the ways in which we encounter other forms of life begin to affect us, too. In the performance, this hypothesis was tested experimentally and experientially. The 'humanoid space' is formed through psychophysical exercises that alienate us from the human experience. The ways in which we as humans connect the relationships between various phenomena to each other break down.

As background work for the project, we brought our humanoid selves into contact with humans, in private homes and a public space. My visit as a humanoid to one home made a friendly moment over a cup of tea incomprehensible. Why do we eat and drink if the purpose is not to nourish ourselves? What sort of message is hidden in a pie that tastes of artificial flavouring? During the visit, my host ended up in a position where he represented humanity while I represented humanoids. And yet from the humanoid's perspective, the urban space sparked the question of the functioning subject. Is it to be found in the spine formed of stone, steel and cement that steers the temporarily living human creatures in their channels, or perhaps in these creatures' spherical limbs?





The participants in *The Humanoid Hypothesis* performances used the exercises we developed as inspiration for their visits to the central library of the University of Helsinki. How can you recognize a humanoid in human form? How are people viewed from the humanoid perspective? Simple exercises were followed by instructions for the visit. During this guidance, we emphasised techniques that made it possible to visit the library undetected by customers and staff. The techniques of infiltration, such as mimicking human gestures and ways of doing things, fed into the experience of alienation. The visit itself lasted 35-50 minutes and took place independently, reflecting on one's own experience.

At the end of the visit, we returned to the agreed place, where we dismantled the psycho-physical space together and ensured that all performers returned to their human state. The performance ended with a discussion wherein the participants were able to share their most acute experiences.

Based on what we heard, the experience of a humanoid, in other words a human-like extra-terrestrial, was within the spectators' grasp. The group's rehearsed encounter with alien forms of existence and manifestation led to a performance in which one eventually encounters oneself as a foreign creature.

Jaakko Ruuska

Jaakko Ruuska (b. 1981) is a Helsinki-based filmmaker, photographer, video and performance artist and now a father. He is a documentarian by training (BA, University of Art and Design Helsinki 2008; MA Aalto University 2012) and documentary-ness plays a key role in all of his artistic activity. Ruuska joined Other Spaces in 2010 and has since then participated in the group's works:

Reindeer Safari (premiered at the Museum of Contemporary Art Kiasma, /teatteri.NYT festival, Helsinki 2010)

Golem Variations (premiered at the Kiasma theatre, Helsinki 2011)

Olives and Stones (Nordic countries' Aalto pavilion, Venice Biennale 2013)

Car Park (premiered at the URB13 festival, Helsinki 2013)

Wolf Safari (premiered in Helsinki 2014)

The Humanoid Hypothesis (premiered at the University of Helsinki, 2015)

Photo Eva Persson





Operation Paulaharju, 2014 | Direction and Concept Juha Hurme | Photo Matti Rasi



Reindeer Safari | Other Spaces 2012 | The guest performance in Italy, Il Giardino delle Esperidi Festival | Photo Jaakko Ruuska



Theatre of the Reindeer

Samuli Paulaharju (1875-1944) was a legendary Finnish ethnologist, folklorist and author. Paulaharju scoured Lapland (and not only Finnish Lapland, but the Lappish areas of Sweden, Norway, and Russia as well), recording how the people of the north live, think, believe, hope, and fear.

In 1934, he stunned everyone, even his friends, by publishing a work of fiction. A collection of fifteen short stories, *The Night Side of the Fells* draws on folk tales, northern ghost stories, while remaining taut, artistically constructed contemporary short prose.

Paulaharju's attitudes towards the aboriginal populace and untouched wilderness are deeply empathetic and respectful, as well as ecologically advanced. In the Arctic, the human lot is determined by nature's enormous charge, by the darkness of winter and the nightlessness of summer. There's no point trying to wriggle out from under it. A fresh, ironic current colours his stories: the reader gets to decide whether the main characters suffer from fear-induced psychoses or are being tormented by supernatural phenomena.

Each short story is a humorously told tragedy where the laughs aren't cheap and the tragic isn't melodramatic.

The representatives of civilization and the south, the priests and authorities, are hollow, weak men, sad puppets among these eternal forces. Christianity ends up being one belief system among others.

In the Arctic, the human lot is determined by nature's enormous charge, by the darkness of winter and the nightlessness of summer. There's no point trying to wriggle out from under it.

This is amazing stuff!

I discovered these short stories at the turn of the millennium and decided that some sort of theatrical adaptation was in order. Thirteen years passed while I mulled it over. This material wasn't crying out to be surrounded within the shell of an institution.





In July 2013, I woke up in a tent on the island of Hailuoto and understood that Paulaharju's short stories need to be taken back to their birthplace. On that very day, I put together the *Operation Paulaharju* production team for summer 2014.

Operation Paulaharju is performing at five wilderness venues in the Augusts of 2014–2018. The first summer, three hundred people hiked to Hannukuru, a wilderness cabin in western Lapland, to watch the play. The free performance lasted 29 minutes, while the hike to the performance venue and back lasted an average of four days.

We trekked to the site ourselves two weeks before the premiere and rehearsed the play until it was ready. We slept in tents and cooked on portable stoves and campfires. We replenished our food supplies by orienteering through the fells to the cabin of a friend of a friend, where there were reserves – an excursion that took eight hours.

There were seven performances at Hannukuru. After the final one, we hiked northwards to the village of Hetta, where we performed the play at the nature centre for seven spectators who, due to advanced age or some other physical constraint, were prevented from hiking to Hannukuru. They had informed me of their attendance by letter.

Following this same logic, we will continue for another four years. I will mix up the stories so the performance changes from year to year. In order to see the entire series, spectators must go hiking in Lapland for five consecutive summers, a total of hundreds of gorgeous kilometres.

The budgeted profit of *Operation Paulaharju* is zero. The professional performers do not want nor do they receive any pay. We get something else from this. We spend our own money on travel, food and gear, and this modest sum is gathered annually from partners and grants. If we don't find the help we need, I will fund the project myself.

Operation Paulaharju directs attention to the endangered national parks in Finland and around the world. We move through the terrain without leaving a trace, and our theatre has no permanent structures. The spectators sit on the ground. We don't disturb those wayfarers who are solely interested in the wilderness and not in wilderness theatre.

We offer a completely different kind of opportunity to travel around Lapland, where the tourist industry is generally brutal, brutish and indifferent to environmental values. Without preaching, we remind people of the alarming state of a world gripped by climate change, corrosion and extinction.

Our activity also inherently entails art-political criticism. We demonstrate that it is possible to develop high-culture activities almost completely detached from the money economy and commercialism. I can assure you that, for us artists, our adventure in the fells is reward enough.

Operation Paulaharju coaxes arts lovers on unique excursions and, conversely, surprises hiking enthusiasts with art. The audience at Hannukuru is split roughly into two camps: the culture crowd that is in the wilds of Lapland for the first time and trekkers who have never been to the theatre before.

Perfect.

Operation Paulaharju is the most fun thing I've ever come up with.

Juha Hurme





Juha Hurme (b. 1959) works as an author, dramaturg, director, actor, radio journalist, festival director, columnist, speech-giver and teacher of literature and theatre arts.

Hurme is a natural scientist by training; he only discovered theatre as an adult, in the mid-1980s. He has never taken theatre completely seriously, preferring to test its potential as fun activism and conduit for communicating literary themes.

Hurme works in amateur theatre, university theatre, freelance theatre groups and municipal theatres. In addition to writing dramatizations and directing, he publishes books now and again.

Hurme either writes his own plays or selects one of the pinnacles of world literature (Shakespeare, Dostoyevsky, Hamsun, Kafka, Aleksis Kivi, Volter Kilpi).

Hurme specializes in outdoor theatre. The Volter Kilpi series that was performed in the Turku archipelago has brought performances to seashores and meadows since 1999. The Hailuoto festival, which occurs further north in a unique, ecologically sensitive natural setting, has taken on increasingly ecological emphases since 2007.

A six-part series stretching from 2013-18 and based on the texts of Algot Untola (Maiju Lassila), an anarchist writer executed in 1918 during the Finnish civil war, will also take place outside, primarily because no one wanted to fund such a problematic project.

Operation Paulaharju is a natural continuation for these aims, and officially falls under the umbrella of the Hailuoto festival organization.

Photo Eva Persson



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Meritullinkatu 33 A 2
FIN - 00170 Helsinki
tel. +358 9 2511 2120
tinfo@tinfo.fi
www.tinfo.fi

Editors:

Sari Havukainen, Hanna Helavuori
Editing assistance: Jukka Hyde Hytti
Design:
Sari Havukainen, Piia Volmari
Layout: Piia Volmari
Translator: Kristian London

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Other Contributors to This Issue:

Hannah Gullichsen is a Helsinki-based performance-maker currently completing a master's degree in Live Art and Performance Studies at the Theatre Academy at the University of the Arts Helsinki. She works solo as well as in several theatre and live art collectives. Her interests lie in performance ecology and the posthuman, and her practice draws on questions around representation, body politics, collaborative process, polyphony, feedback loops and social movement.

Sari Havukainen is the press & communications officer of Theatre Info Finland (TINFO).

Hanna Helavuori is the director of Theatre Info Finland (TINFO). Helavuori is also a theatre researcher who has written several articles and exhibition scripts on Finnish performing arts. She has published books and lectured on the history of Finnish drama and theatre and the history of contemporary theatre at the University of the Arts Helsinki, Theatre Academy.

Aune Kallinen is a performance artist and director. She is an assistant professor of the performing arts at the Theatre Academy at the University of the Arts Helsinki, where she teaches contemporary theatre. Kallinen works primarily in collaborations, for instance with the musician Laura Murtomaa, the choreographer Jenni Koistinen and the painter Jaana Kokko. At the moment, she is moved by the vistas and processes opened up by posthumanist thinking and the politics of the body.

Maria Säkö is a theatre critic and freelance journalist living in Helsinki. She has also a degree as a cultural curator, with a focus on environmental art. Articles by Säkö have been published in nonfiction works on theatre. In 2013 Maria Säkö was awarded by TINFO Prize for her work as a theatre critic.

Sanna Uttu writes about performance, performance art and theatre for various publications. A Helsinki resident, she is currently studying dramaturgy at the Theatre Academy of the University of the Arts Helsinki and working at the Live Art Society.

TINFO – Theatre Info Finland | Meritullinkatu 33 A 2 | FIN-00170 Helsinki | www.tinfo.fi/en



We know or we'll find out

