

# REHEARSING HOSPITALITIES



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professional partnerships, and encourages  
critical development of the field through  
grants, visitor programme and curator  
residencies, seminars and talks, exhibition  
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## Reading List

Vidha Saumya

1. *Introduction to the History of the Indian Subcontinent* by John R. Heilbrunn  
2. *The History of the Indian Subcontinent* by John R. Heilbrunn

3. *The History of the Indian Subcontinent* by John R. Heilbrunn  
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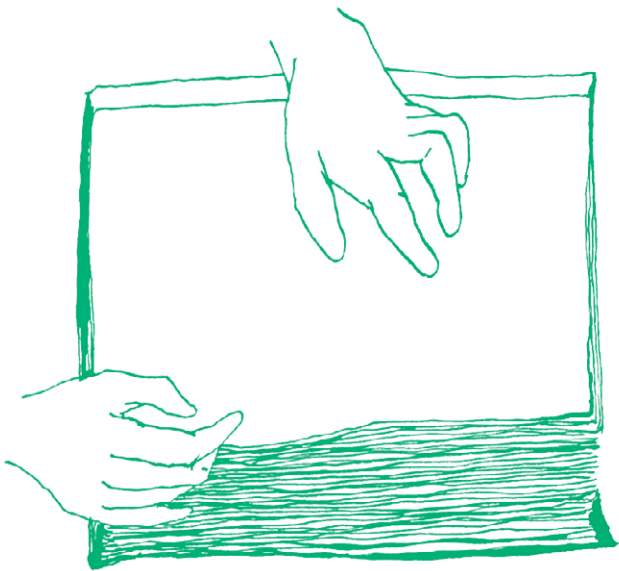
The poem, 'Reading List', painted as a wall mural, proposes a list of 96 authors from India who should be in global reading lists.

As I read my way through list after list, helpfully extended towards me by institutions, visiting lecturers, and seminars in Finland, I encountered many silences. And to mend those silences, these names were my instinctual response.

In the following pages, do feel free to add the authors you find missing in curatorial, artistic and institutional reading lists today. Because your silences will be different than mine.

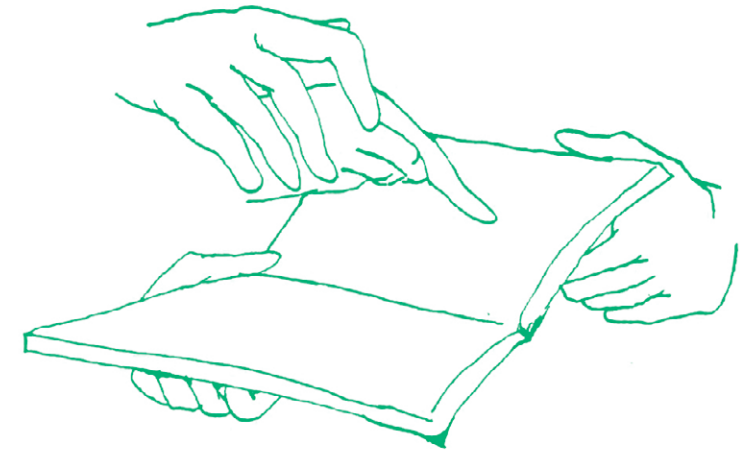
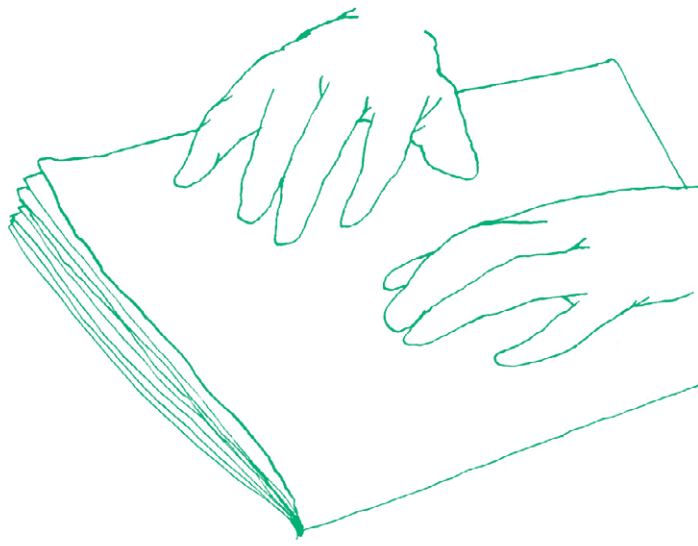


Fill these four pages with the names of your favourite obscure authors so that the books from these authors can be a part of Frame library.



Here is a new Reading List of

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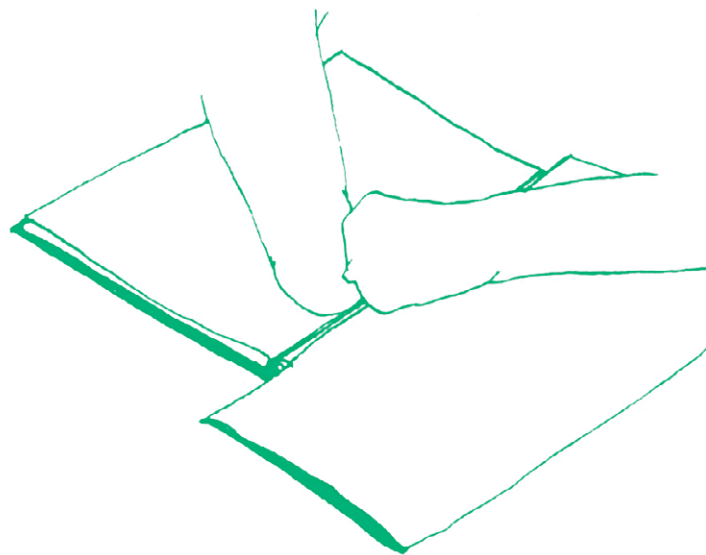
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# Introduction: Expanding our reading lists

Yvonne Billimore and Jussi Koitela



*Rehearsing Hospitalities* is Frame Contemporary Art Finland's public programme for 2019-2023. The programme connects artists, curators and other practitioners in the field of contemporary art and beyond, to build up and mediate new practices, understandings and engagements with diverse hospitalities. It fosters critical discourse, pluralistic sharing and collaboration between divergent (artistic) practitioners in contemporary societies. *Rehearsing Hospitalities* takes the form of yearly autumn gatherings, public dialogues, a series of publications and peer-to-peer learning situations. This far-reaching collaborative process supports the emergence of new paradigms and methods of political and cultural hospitality.

In 2019 the *Rehearsing Hospitalities* programme addresses the potential of art and (cultural) institutions to facilitate and mediate different epistemic hospitalities. It asks: upon what kind of power structures of knowledge and knowing are contemporary art and artistic institutions dependent? Do practitioners in the art field reproduce oppressive Western epistemic paradigms through artistic practices and institutional structures, and if so, is there space for emancipatory ways of knowing? What are the ways that intersectional subjectivities open up new epistemic processes within the artistic field? These are among the questions and considerations that will provide a critical lens for the 2019 public programme and publication.

*Rehearsing Hospitalities Companion 1* is the first publication in a series acting as a partner for Frame's *Rehearsing Hospitalities* public programme. This edition gives particular attention to providing a broader context for *Gathering for Rehearsing Hospitalities*—a cultural gathering held in Helsinki, during September 2019.

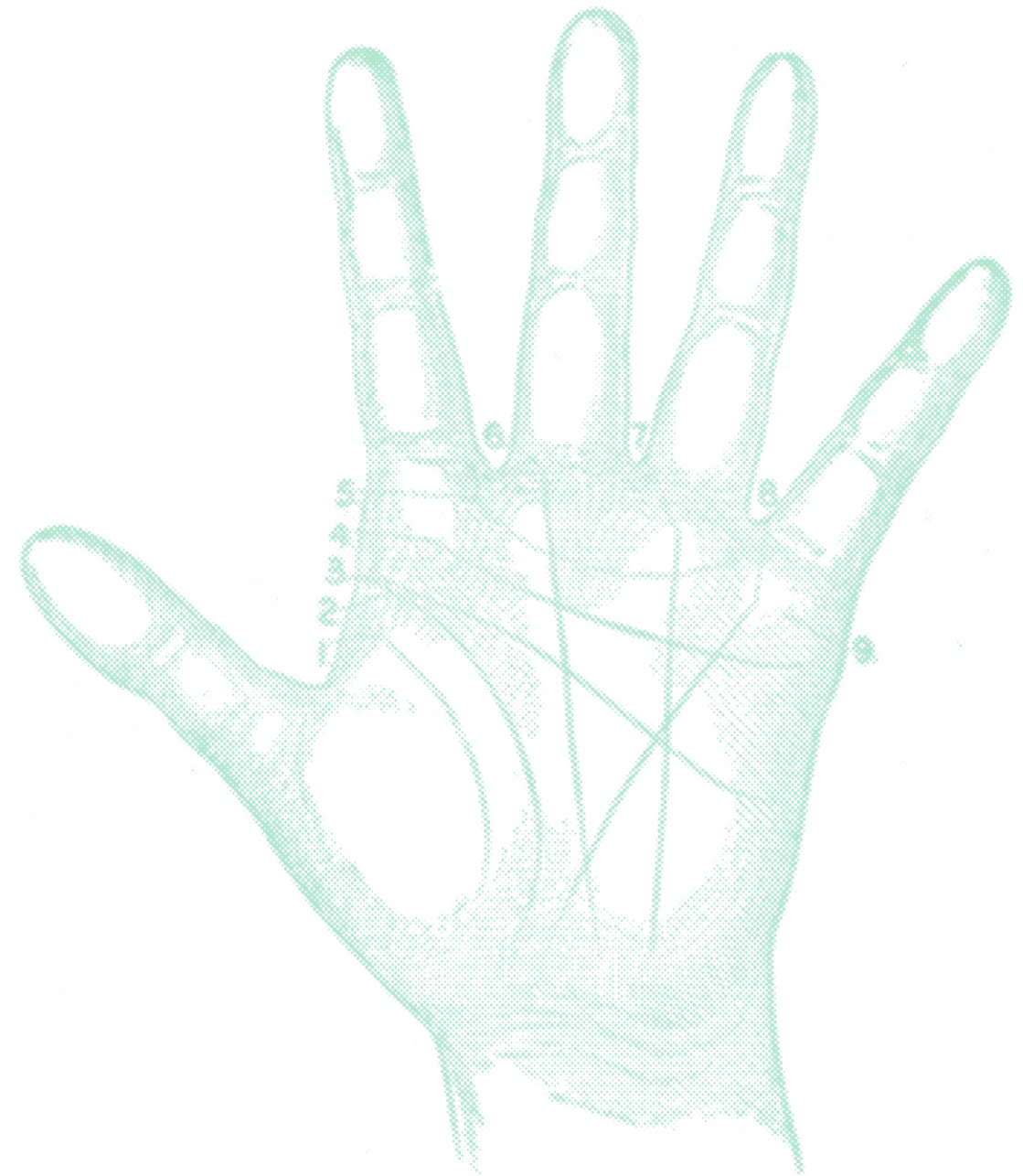
*Rehearsing Hospitalities Companion 1* performs as a complementary guide, accompanying a series of talks, performative dialogues, interventions and screenings which together form *Gathering for Rehearsing Hospitalities*. It makes visible the processes, dialogues and influences which have shaped the content and relations within the programme.

Including a deep range of references, contributions and collaborative dialogues, the editors offer a collective assemblage as a plurality of epistemologies, making the knowledges gathered through the programme and collaborations open and accessible.

By practising transparency and sharing our influences, this reader becomes a resource for those attending *Gathering for Rehearsing Hospitalities* and beyond: a reading list, an insight into practices, a reflective space, and a notebook for the inclusion of personal thoughts, drawings, or annotations.

*Rehearsing Hospitalities Companion 1* is comprised of contributions from artists, curators, thinkers and collaborating partners, participating in the 2019 *Gathering for Rehearsing Hospitalities*. These contributions include essays, drawings, reading lists, invitations, exercises, and dialogues by **Clelia Coussonnet**, **Rick Dolphijn**, **Pia Lindman**, **Rachael Rakes**, **Vidha Saumya**, **Sumugan Sivanesan** and **Irina Mutt**, artist-led collective Asematila, culture centre Museum of Impossible Forms and Frame's programming team **Yvonne Billimore** and **Jussi Koitela**.

The contributions sit side by side with a collection of contextual references which have informed *Rehearsing Hospitalities*. Amongst others, quotations from **Gloria E. Anzaldúa**, **Karen Barad**, **Maria Puig de la Bellacasa**, **Donna Haraway**, **Rauna Kuokkanen**, **Linda Tuhiwai Smith**, and **Boaventura de Sousa Santos** appear on the pages of this publication and constitute the *Rehearsing Hospitalities* 2019 reading list—a living archive that everyone can contribute to, and extend, via the work of **Vidha Saumya**.



La mestiza constantly has to shift out of habitual formations; from convergent thinking, analytical reasoning that tends to use rationality to move toward a single goal (a Western mode), to divergent thinking, characterized by movement away from set patterns and goals and toward a more whole perspective, one that includes rather than excludes.

The new mestiza copes by developing a tolerance for contradictions, a tolerance for ambiguity. She learns to be an Indian in Mexican culture, to be Mexican from an Anglo point of view. She learns to juggle cultures. She has a plural personality; she operates in a pluralistic mode—nothing is thrust out, the good the bad and the ugly, nothing rejected, nothing abandoned. Not only does she sustain contradictions, she turns the ambivalence into something else.

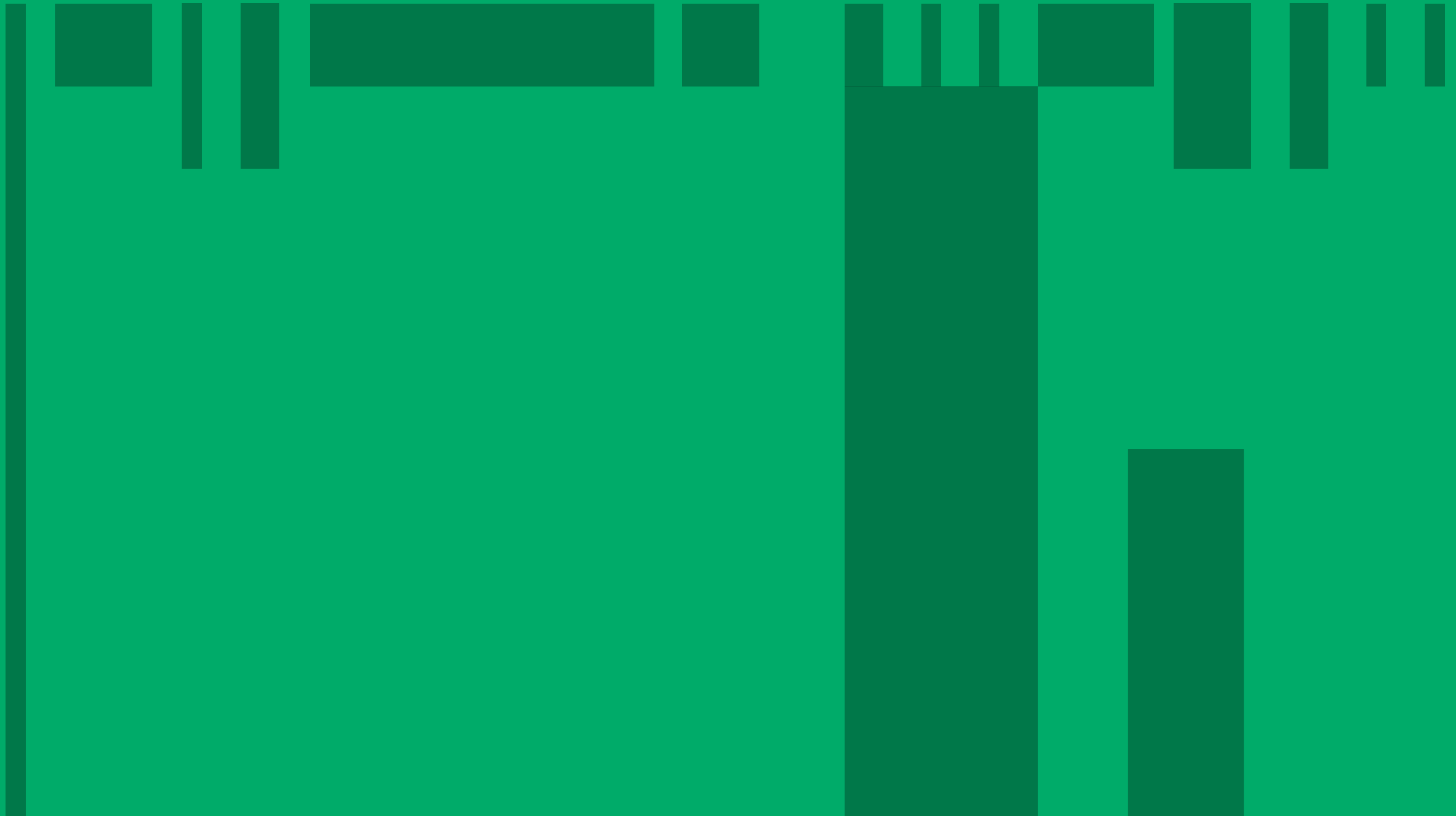
She can be jarred out of ambivalence by an intense, and often painful, emotional event which inverts or resolves the ambivalence. I'm not sure exactly how. The work takes place underground—subconsciously. It is work that the soul performs. That focal point or fulcrum, that juncture where the mestiza stands, is where phenomena tend to collide. It is where the possibility of uniting all that is separate occurs.

This assembly is not one where severed or separated pieces merely come together. Nor is it a balancing of opposing powers. In attempting to work out a synthesis, the self has added a third element which is greater than the sum of its severed parts. The third element is a new consciousness—a mestiza consciousness—and though it is a source of intense pain, its energy comes from continual creative motion that keeps breaking down the unitary aspect of each new paradigm.

En unas pocas centurias, the future will belong to the mestiza. Because the future depends on the breaking down of paradigms, it depends on the straddling of two or more cultures. By creating a new mythos—that is, a change in the way we perceive reality, the way we see ourselves, and the ways we behave—la mestiza creates a new consciousness. —Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera*, 1987.



Rehearsing Hospitalities, rehearsing  
ways of practicing and knowing  
Yvonne Billimore and Jussi Koitela



Frame Contemporary Art Finland's *Rehearsing Hospitalities (RH)* is a way of drafting and experimenting with new approaches to public programming in the arts. It fosters collaboration and co-agency, inviting a plurality of perspectives in a collective effort to create new practices of hospitality. It reaches out towards new and unknown forms of hospitality; ones that have the potential to (re)imagine socio-material-bodily connections and ways of being.

A parallel intention of *RH* is to respond to the practices of and production involved in public event-making within art and culture; therefore *RH* simultaneously functions as a critical intervention for Frame and how it acts with its collaborators as well as society at large. Through the lens of *RH*, we can practise how to embed public programmes into the internal structures of an institution, ensuring that discourses and relationships are not thematic but are assiduously ingrained in all of our work... in all of our hospitalities.

Hospitality can be seen as a core feature of an art organisation such as Frame, whose aim is to create and foster international networks and connections. Often hospitality can be seen simply as a way of inviting and hosting guest(s), but in addition to its domestic connotations, it can generate more complex considerations. *RH* broadens the concept of hospitality to include hosting and co-hosting a set of conditions, relations and relationships, and responsibilities. Our invitation to our partners, contributors, participants and friends, is to practise widening the potentiality of hospitalities with us.

In complicating hospitality, we place great value on intimate hospitalities but equally call for hospitality to be (re)considered on a larger scale. For example, on a national level, how hospitable are 'we' to ways of knowing that are not our own, that are unfamiliar, and that are foreign?

He has to ask for hospitality in a language which by definition is not his own, the one imposed on him by the master of the house, the host, the king, the lord, the authorities, the nation, the State, the father, etc. This personage imposes on him translation into their own language, and that's the first act of violence. That is where the question of hospitality begins: must we ask the foreigner to understand us, to speak our language, in all the senses of this term, in all its possible extensions, before being able and so as to be able to welcome him into our country?<sup>1</sup>

The foreigner allows you to be yourself by making a foreigner of you.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Jacques Derrida and Anne Dufourmantelle, *Of Hospitality* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000): 15.

<sup>2</sup> Edmond Jabès, *A Foreigner Carrying in the Crook of his Arm a Tiny Book* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1989): 1.

Within *RH*, hospitality is also acknowledged as a problem and not just an emancipatory openness towards the 'other.' We give attention to the invitations' inherent ability to divide—the 'abyssal line'<sup>3</sup> that make some hosts and 'others' guests. We ask, within Finnish society and its institutions, what are the knowledges and epistemologies that we require for a 'guest' to be familiar with before we can allow them to enter into the field of contemporary art? In hosting and being hosted—on a practical level Frame does not have a 'public' venue per se and so relies on the hospitality of others to host various events and happenings—we attempt to work with our partners to disrupt these roles and power dynamics of guest and host. We keep on rehearsing to practise the making of more reciprocal forms of collaboration.

As one of the outcomes of applying 'rehearsing of hospitalities' towards new ways of knowing, it is crucial to look into (artistic) practices that are hospitable towards an array of knowledges and ways of knowing; that challenge dominant, singular, and linear forms of knowing. In *RH*, we want to support contemporary art and its actors to rehearse and practise creating 'Ecologies of Knowledge'<sup>4</sup> instead of sustaining an approach of 'one' way of knowing that is generally based on epistemologies of Western science.

The *RH* programme and this publication attempt to understand hospitality and ways of knowing as something interconnected. In acknowledging how they are both inherently rooted in specific social, material, geographical, cultural and political situations, *RH* works with a variety of practitioners to make these connections visible.

<sup>3</sup> Legal sociologist Boaventura de Sousa Santos claims that the 'abyssal line' is a division of human and subhuman. Abyssal thinking produces divisions where something is thought to exist either on the (Western) human side of the line or on the non-existent subhuman 'other' side of the line. Boaventura de Sousa Santos, *Epistemologies of the South: Justice Against Epistemicide* (Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers, 2014).

<sup>4</sup> Boaventura de Sousa Santos, *Epistemologies of the South: Justice Against Epistemicide* (Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers, 2014).

Through this we begin to expand the knowledges and ways of knowing that should be considered valuable.

### Reappearing, repeating, revisiting: ways of knowing

With a common interest in caring for marginalised knowledges—the quieter, more sensitive, invisible, personal and everyday knowledges—there are threads weaving through the contributions in this publication (and the wider programme of RH) that emphasise the need to reconsider which knowledges should be hosted and fostered, both in arts and culture and within broader society.

### Healing

Emerging repeatedly through these pages is the call to care for knowledges and practices of healing, specifically those which have been neglected. Taking into consideration how health care systems (and their privatisation) and pharmaceutical industries rose out of capitalist, colonial and patriarchal societies, one can speculate as to why particular practices have been left behind. Care and healing are potential profit makers within these systems, but perhaps only specific approaches/ methods/ treatments/ medicines/ therapies/ concepts of health can be capitalised on? So which knowledges and practices don't fit the bill? And importantly, who holds these knowledges, who performs this care and are they players in the Western vision of development and progress? Which healers are a threat to this vision?

Without lapsing into romanticism or tokenism, there is an urgency to situate a wider range of healing practices

into the fabric of our societies, and to value the deep knowledges of practices which are (within Western science) considered to be 'alternative.'<sup>5</sup> In world(s) combusting with struggles and suffering—predominantly experienced by those, human and more-than-human, who aren't part of 'the vision' for a developed world—the need for engaging in processes of healing, old and new, is even more critical.

As part of his call for 'Ecologies of Knowledge' Boaventura de Sousa Santos speaks of 'The Epistemology of Absent Knowledges' and the knowledge and ways of knowing born through the struggles of modernity, born through (and in resistance to) violences of capitalism, colonialism and the patriarchy.<sup>6</sup> These knowledges can be deeply rooted, embodied and complex. They are often traumatic and pass from generation to generation, human and more-than-human, not through attention and attentiveness but in the form of shadows and silences: they have the capacity to haunt bodies and landscapes.<sup>7</sup>

There has been very little acknowledgment of the existence of these violences, traumas and extinctions, even less responsibility taken and almost no reparations made. Instead of remembering, we are urged to forget.

<sup>5</sup> Healing practices which are for instance but not limited to: embodied, local, located, natural, traditional, ancestral, indigenous, pagan, shamanist, meditative, holistic or integrated.

<sup>6</sup> Paraphrased from a talk by Boaventura de Sousa Santos at University of Helsinki, April 5th 2019, *The epistemologies of the South and the resistance against capitalism, colonialism and hetero-patriarchy*. See also Boaventura de Sousa Santos, *Epistemologies of the South: Justice Against Epistemicide* (Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers, 2014).

<sup>7</sup> "This refusal of the past, and even the present, will condemn us to continue fouling our own nests. How can we get back to the pasts we need to see the present more clearly? We call this return to multiple pasts, human and not human, "ghosts." Every landscape is haunted by past ways of life" *Arts of Living on a Damaged Planet*, eds. Anna Tsing, Heather Swanson, Elaine Gan, Nils Bubandt (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2017): 15.

The relationship between conflict and healing is not a simple one, but what could paying attention to struggle teach us about healing, and what could paying attention to healing teach us about struggle?

Healing is also full of complex and uncomfortable questions: what does it mean to be healed? Who can perform, claim and reclaim healing practices? Who can heal and/or be healed? What are the power relations between healer and 'patient'? How has healing been appropriated? In this sense, it is much like hospitality (in the above 'healing' could almost be replaced with 'hosting' or 'hosted'), but these questions are also transferable to arts and cultural practices.

Through direct and indirect attention, these questions can be found surfacing throughout various contributions in this publication and the *RH* programme. Many of the artists, curators, facilitators and thinkers participating engage with a range of approaches to arts of healing—several of whom have had formal training and obtained qualifications in fields of healing, while situating it within and applying it to their artistic research and practice. Throughout is an unwavering sensitivity not to claim this knowledge individually, but to open it up, make it visible and invite people (and sometimes non-humans) to rethink and perform these practices with them.

#### Relational and situated

In trying to become “objective,” Western culture made “objects” of things and people when it distanced itself from them, thereby losing

“touch” with them. This dichotomy is the root of all violence.<sup>8</sup>

Following the critique laid out by Anzaldúa, we think it would be useful to say that if knowledge and its production are not manifested from a distance (an extractive and a violent act), and if we are not reproducing these modalities, then we need to state that knowledge and knowing are always relational and situated. This is partly a paradoxical claim, that although it can seem emancipatory, also carries with it some dangers.

There are several ways of understanding relationality and the situatedness of knowing, some having socio-political implications. Relationality means that knowing always happens in relation to some 'other' kind of knowledge or knowing, and therefore knowledges need to be considered in relation to different epistemological systems and communities—ones which are not necessarily dominant or valorised. For example, this can mean that it is continuously useful to ask, what is the knowledge being produced, who is it useful to and why?

In her book *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, professor of indigenous education Linda Tuhiwai Smith summarises four models proposed by Maori academic Graham Smith on how non-indigenous researchers can undertake appropriate research. One of these models is a “*power sharing model*” where researchers “*seek the assistance of the community to meaningfully support the development of a research enterprise.*”<sup>9</sup> This form of relational knowledge production supports different kinds of communities, with their various ways of knowing, to enter into spaces and situations where the validity of knowledge is often contested. Enabling these communities

<sup>8</sup> Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera* (San Francisco, CA: Aunt Lute Books, 1987): 59.

<sup>9</sup> Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (London: Zed Books, 1999): 179.

One of the concepts through which Western ideas about the individual and community, about time and space, knowledge and research, imperialism and colonialism can be drawn together is the concept of distance. The individual can be distanced, or separated, from the physical environment, the community. Through the controls over time and space the individual can also operate at a distance from the universe. Both imperial and colonial rule were systems of rule which stretched from the centre outwards to places which were far and distant. Distance again separated the individuals in power from the subjects they governed. It was all so impersonal, rational and extremely effective. In research the concept of distance is most important as it implies a neutrality and objectivity on behalf of the researcher. Distance is measurable. What it has come to stand for is objectivity, which is not measurable to quite the same extent. —Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research And Indigenous Peoples*, 1999.

and groups to decide what kinds of knowing, as well as how and where, emerges into the public realm.

Within this, it is crucial to understand that individuals and communities have particular histories, traditions, and socio-political situations. They (who 'they' may be) are situated in specific socio-material conditions. Most crucial is to understand that it is not only 'their' knowledge that is situated but 'ours' too. We (whoever 'we' may be) are also situated in specific socio-political circumstances.

Knowledges emerge from specific situations and identities, but the danger would be to represent and essentialise—dominant or marginalised—communities into definitive structures of knowing or knowledge production. No individual or community can be purely represented by Western science or subaltern knowledges, nor can knowledge be produced through a solitary epistemic paradigm. Similarly, it is dangerous to think that all knowledges and ways of knowing are open for appropriation and extraction universally, for every individual and community to use as they wish. Moreover, some knowledges and ways of knowing are embodied within specific bodies and identities, and their histories. As Anzaldúa reminds us, distancing and separating these are acts of violence.

What relational and situated knowing 'should be' is under constant evaluation and re-evaluation when thinking about whose knowledge is valid: Who gets to research specific questions and how? Is the process of inquiry embodied through distinct bodies and identities? Relationality and situatedness can inform the making of ethical, reciprocal relationships between different knowledges in a way that does not reproduce 'the knowing subject' as a rigid and essentialised entity. At the same time, relationality and situatedness place emphasis on the importance of recognising the ownership and embodiment of certain kinds of knowledges.



## Hands

### *Spiritual meaning – you see with your hands*

‘It is horrible how our own history is so hidden, it influences everyone’s identity. Each nation has its own story... How duodji bears the knowledge, the traditions, and the history. You can read it all from one object, how much it tells it is quite fierce. They are our objects. They support us, they are for us. They are our ancestors and their heritage, and we want to have a relationship with them, also emotionally. They bear the spirit of the past and when you are in the same place you come together with your ancestors on a different level. It is very tangible and it does something to you when you can experience your history in such a tangible way.’<sup>10</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Artist Outi Pieski quoted by Eeva-Kristiina Harlin in “Returning home – the different ontologies of the Sami collections,” published in *Knowing from the Indigenous North, Sami approaches to History, Politics and Belonging*, eds. Thomas Hylland Eriksen, Sanna Valkonen and Jarno Valkonen (Abingdon: Routledge, 2019): 56.

Not only is it supreme among the organs of touch, the hand can also tell the stories of the world in its gestures and in the written or drawn traces they yield, or in the manipulation of threads as in weaving, lacemaking and embroidery. Indeed, the more gesturally animate the hand, the more it feels. Regarded anatomically, the hand is a marvelously intricate arrangement of skin, bone muscle tissue and nerves, fed with blood that pulses through the arteries of the wrist. But we should not make too much of the contrast between hand and head. —Tim Ingold, *Making, Anthropology, Archeology, Art And Architecture*, 2013.

In an important sense, in a breathtakingly intimate sense, touching, sensing, is what matter does, or rather, what matter is: matter is condensations of response-ability. Touching is a matter of response. Each of “us” is constituted in response-ability. Each of “us” is constituted as responsible for the other, as being in touch with the other. —Karen Barad, *On Touching—The Inhuman That Therefore I Am*, 2012.



Surfacing in the pages of this book, is consciousness towards tactility, touch and materially—giving particular attention to the knowledge that takes place in and through hands and bodies. Appearing more than once is an appreciation of knowledges spun from craft and traditional making processes. We see lace and textiles woven through several contributions and thinking processes; lace, a traditionally hand-made material, and an art form that has become largely unfashionable, discarded and devalued due to industrial textile production is brought back from our periphery as a site for exploring the intricacies of knowing and making.

### Knowledge as a struggle for alternative ends

By understanding knowledge production as a situational and relational practice, it should be noted that certain interests can also drive knowledge production. As stated previously, Andalzúa claims that knowing from a distance is violent. Violence would hardly exist if the interests of some were not served at the expense of others. There has been and continues to be an interest in drawing an ‘abyssal line’ between ‘them’ and ‘us’, nature and culture, North and South. In moving towards deconstructing these abyssal lines we should begin to see them as less binary, whilst also acknowledging (and in some cases taking responsibility for) how ‘bodies’ on each side of the line might experience the world differently. For example, the weight of epistemicides caused by colonial and extractive Western modernity are carried by some ‘bodies’ far more than others, and this should not be forgotten or denied.

Derrida has suggested that “the university professes the truth, and that is its profession. It declares and promises an unlimited commitment to the truth” This is not to suggest that there is only one truth. In terms of epistemic ignorance, an unlimited commitment to the truth means a recognition of multiple epistemes by the academy. But before it can recognise those epistemes, the academy will have to examine its practices and discourses of exclusion and foreclosure, its narrow intellectual Foundations, And Its Hierarchical, Hegemonic Structures Of Knowledge. —Rauna Kuokkanen, *Reshaping The University: Responsibility, Indigenous Epistemes, And The Logic Of The Gift*, 2007.

Could this be applied to other institutions? Try replacing university with arts institution.



The host is the habitat for the parasite, the condition of life and ongoingness for the parasite; this host is in the dangerous world-making contact zones of symbiogenesis and sympoiesis, where newly cobbled together, good-enough orders may or may not emerge from the ever so promiscuous and opportunistic associations of host and parasite. —Donna Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene*, 2016.

A figuring of The World nourished by the imagination would inspire us to rethink sociality without the abstract fixities produced by the Understanding and the partial and total violence they authorize – against humanity’s cultural (non-white/non-European) and physical (more-than-human) “Others.” —Denise Ferreira da Silva, *On Difference Without Separability*, 2016.

Boaventura de Sousa Santos says:

**As understood here, an equality of opportunities implies that each kind of knowledge participating in the conversation of mankind, as John Dewey would say, bring along its own idea of “another possible world”; the discussion involved has little to do with alternative means to reach the same ends and more to do with the alternative ends.<sup>11</sup>**

Producing knowledge should be seen then as a struggle for alternative ends. These ends should not be rooted in the abyssal violence that drives the interests of only those on Western side of the ‘abyssal line.’ Santos proposes a form of post-abyssal knowledge production, which he terms as ‘Ecologies of Knowledge’:

**The ecologies of knowledge assumes that all relational practices involving human beings and human beings and nature entail more than one kind of knowledge.<sup>12</sup>**

<sup>11</sup> Boaventura de Sousa Santos, *Epistemologies of the South: Justice Against Epistemicide* (Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers, 2014): 190.

<sup>12</sup> Boaventura de Sousa Santos, *Epistemologies of the South: Justice Against Epistemicide* (Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers, 2014): 188.



Thus post-abyssal knowledge production becomes an active struggle against the monoculture of Western scientific knowledge and its extractive nature.

### Refusal

The *RH* programme intends to embrace practices that refuse to be strictly categorised by the institutional conceptions of art, craft, research, creativity and so on. Refusal can be one of the most potent forms of resistance in both personal and political struggles. Numerous refusals to produce and reproduce knowledge in dominant ways—as undercurrents and waves—run through the *Rehearsing Hospitalities* programme and the contributions within this publication

Refusals including:

- refusal of universal positions and gazes;
- refusal of (re)representationalism of Western science;
- refusal of differentiating knowledge production from art and politics;
- refusal of an essentialised knowing subject that holds a rigid dualist position without possibility for change or hybridity;
- refusal of dualist thinking towards body and mind, individual and community, nature and culture, and South and North;
- refusal of the 'active' knowing subject as human and 'passive' object as a non-human.

After breaking through the glassy, formal fixed walls of the Understanding, released from the grip of certainty, the imagination may wonder about reassembling the fundamental components of everything to refigure the World as a complex whole without order. Let me consider a possibility: What if, instead of The Ordered World, we could image The World as a Plenum, an infinite composition in which each existant's singularity is contingent upon its becoming one possible expression of all the other existants, with which it is entangled beyond space and time. —Denise Ferreira da Silva, *On Difference Without Separability*, 2016.



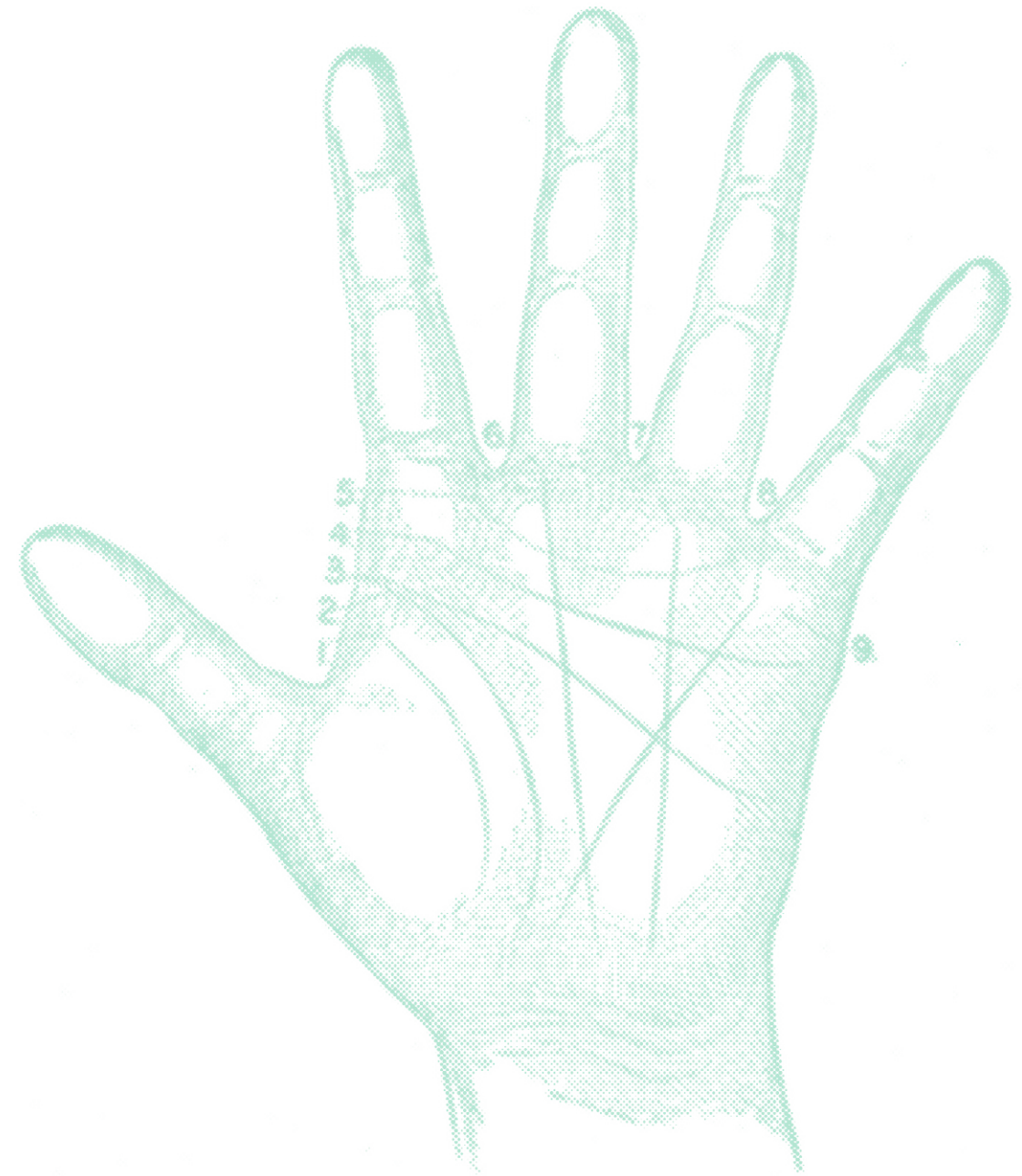
## Ecologies of knowledge

By looking into and practicing different ways of knowing, *Rehearsing Hospitalities* aims to open up space for ‘Ecologies of Knowledge’ to exist within contemporary art and wider society. It is critical to understand that in this work, we should not tacitly dismiss or discredit all Western epistemologies and scientific-based knowledge, but instead accept their partiality and limitations<sup>13</sup>. We aim to support not one way but many ways: a plurality of knowledges that can coexist and together contribute to an expanded understanding of what accounts for knowledge and ways of knowing. For *Rehearsing Hospitalities* fostering ‘Ecologies of Knowledge’ is about bringing together different learnings—from academic thinking to performative knowledge production, from healing practices to craft making—and position them without hierarchy.

‘Ecologies of Knowledge’ must be formulated and nurtured through collaborative and shared situations, in spaces that welcome the gathering and cross-pollination of knowledge—across local, national, and international boundaries. This means disparate individuals, groups, and disciplines (and non-disciplines) coming together to exchange knowledges in versatile spaces and situations—ones which are open to and welcoming of various and complex social, political, and cultural histories/presences/futures. Moreover, by convening through difference, not similarity, we can acknowledge the specific and divergent ways through which both material and embodied, human and non-human, agencies take part in acts of knowing.

‘Ecologies of Knowledge’ becomes the starting point for the collaborative exploration that is *Rehearsing Hospitalities*—a site from which we can practice hospitality differently. How do we host and/or be hospitable to different ways of knowing? How might we gather together to learn unfamiliar, unknown or emerging forms of knowledge? How might we collectively rehearse hospitalities towards action and expand our ways of knowing?

<sup>13</sup> For further thought on knowledge’s internal and external limits, see: Boaventura de Sousa Santos, *Epistemologies of the South: Justice Against Epistemicide* (Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers, 2014).



The future is always an open question, and our bodies must be understood as flowing beyond the bounds of what is knowable. Aqueous transcorporeality therefore demands of us a new ethics—a new way of being responsible and responsive to our others. On this “ever-changing landscape of continuous interplay, intra-action, emergence, and risk,” even as we insist upon accountability, we must also make decisions that eschew certainty and necessary courses of action. This is an ethics of unknowability. —Astrida Neimanis, *Hydrofeminism: Or, On Becoming a Body of Water*, 2012.



## Asematila and Frame Dialogues



With a shared interest in modes of hospitality, knowledge production and approaches of care and facilitation within curating (particularly in relation to the practicalities, actions and labour involved), artist-led collective Asematila and Frame Contemporary Art Finland have come together in cafés, libraries, offices and in written correspondence to open up dialogue on these subjects as part of an ongoing collaboration. The following dialogue is an excerpt from some of these conversations.

Asematila members Océane Bruel, Venla Helenius, Sandra Lindblom and Sanna Ritvanen have been participating in these dialogues and are collaboratively contributing to *Gathering for Rehearsing Hospitalities*.

FRAME                      Could you describe what you do, with a focus on your relationship to hospitality, how you define it and how do you practice it?

ASEMATILA                Founded in 2015, Asematila is a non-profit association and collective whose purpose has been to maintain the cultural space called Asematila, located at Huopalahti's old train station. Asematila ry is a grassroots actor whose goal has been to reflect on the politics and accessibility of a voluntarily run cultural space as well as to create a space for diverse and parallel cultural activities outside the city center of Helsinki.

In the summer of 2017, the collective made changes in the organisation of the artistic program and in the fall 2017 we invited applications to a new program called Asemalabra, a cultural laboratory.

Asemalabra was an experimentally motivated project where the space of Asematila was given to an operator or a group of makers for two weeks at a time. Within these two weeks, the space was a platform for the artists and their experimentations, thinking, idleness, suggestions, dreaming, questions and sharing practices. We had two seasons of Asemalabra and each of them had some keywords related to our values, principles and ways of doing: Kindness, Hospitality, Idleness (for the season 1) and Continuity, Gift (for the second). We invited the artists to approach these ideas in their proposal.

Hospitality was one of the keywords of the first season of Asemalabra because as it has always been in the core of Asematila's ways of working. One could say that it is one of the cornerstones of our "concept" and existence. The physical space in the old station's waiting hall was already really home-like. People visiting were invited to take off their shoes, creating a more intimate and warm feeling. Asematila wishes for all the actors of the space (artists, cultural workers, people using Asematila) to use the space as if it was their home while respecting our

Thinking has never been a disembodied or uniquely human activity. Stepping into the void, opening to possibilities, straying, going out of bounds, off the beaten path—diverging and touching down again, swerving and returning, not as consecutive moves but as experiments in in/determinacy. Spinning off in any old direction is neither theorizing nor viable; it loses the thread, the touch of entangled beings (be)coming together-apart. All life forms (including inanimate forms of liveliness) do theory. The idea is to do collaborative research, to be in touch, in ways that enable response-ability. —Karen Barad, *On Touching—The Inhuman That Therefore I AM*, 2012.

values for the inclusion, the respect and the care of everyone. Through different modes of programming activities, maintaining the space and due to our limited resources, we developed a fluid way of working based on listening, caring and supporting each other; sharing responsibilities and adapting them to the situation of each of us. Asemalabra is thought as a safer space where those using the space can work independently, embracing their process, without having the pressure of a final result.

**FRAME**                      What is your relationship to knowledge and ways of knowing? What kind of knowledge does Asematila/ or the artists you work with produce, and who is producing it?

**ASEMATILA**                      Asemalabra has been a space for artistic and collective knowledge formation processes. By that we mean giving space for artistic thinking processes without the pressure of product based artistic production. So the idea of Asemalabra is to offer a concentrated platform for working and thinking, but at the same time we wish that the people working in the space would share their practices with others by opening up the space one way or another. The knowledge created in Asemalabra can be seen as an artistic product/production. But we don't want to talk about it as product.

For *Gathering for Rehearsing Hospitalities* we wanted to bring a proposition grounded on experience-based knowledges, formed by material agencies, by hand, by time (slow pace) and involving sharing and gift giving. We see gift giving as a hospitable act. In *BreadOmens*, a project by artists Jani Purhonen and Elina Rantasuo, the bread becomes an embodiment of a gift. It serves also as an instrument for sharing knowledge, stories and experiences.

We think that questions of hospitality are very much related to whose voices and actions are being seen and heard. We see the structure of a cultural space elastic and ever-changing. To maintain that, we have



found it very important to reflect on our curatorial process continuously and renew it after every open call. We can critically observe our power position as facilitators/curators and trying to understand and question the structures we work in. For us Asemalabra has been a try out to explore what kind of forms the support we offer can take. At times we've been the ones buying toilet paper, some other time a person to rant with, to listen to, or just to be with. When talking about hospitality there is a question of who can be hospitable? We don't see hospitality only as an economical matter but first and foremost as an emotional and a social-political matter.

**FRAME** Your response opened up a lot of questions for us and led to a nice conversation between us at Frame. Thank you for 'hosting' this. We have come to recognise emotional labour and care work as being deeply ingrained in hospitality. In many cases this work is invisible but is the very foundations of our work as facilitators; economic hospitality for example is also built on the emotional labour of many invisible workers. And that makes it a socio-political matter, so we agree these are all happening together. We are interested in making the layers of hospitality explicit—within our programme and working practices, these layers are often not made visible. But with this, and your question of “who can be hospitable?” it is also important to ask who can perform emotional hospitality? Who has the energy and support, health and wellbeing to perform emotional hospitality? And can we work in a way that doesn't exploit emotional hospitality further but instead find ways to support it?

**ASEMATILA** We should strive towards a culture that doesn't exploit the emotional hospitality. It is important to make the emotional labour and hospitality visible and talk about it. Maybe then it will become more visible and we start to see its value more clearly.

Worlds seen through care accentuate a sense of interdependency and involvement. What challenges are posed to critical thinking by increased acute awareness of its material consequences? What happens when thinking about and with others is understood as living with them? When the effects of caring, or not, are brought closer? Here, knowledge that fosters caring for neglected things enters in tension between a critical stance against neglect and the fostering of speculative commitment to think how things could be different. —María Puig de la Bellacasa, *Matters of Care: Speculative Ethics in More Than Human Worlds*, 2017.



At Asematila talk a lot about this invisible labor. We are trying to keep being transparent about and support each other in our collective work too.

By our actions we wish to create a more hospitable and inclusive culture and spread it.

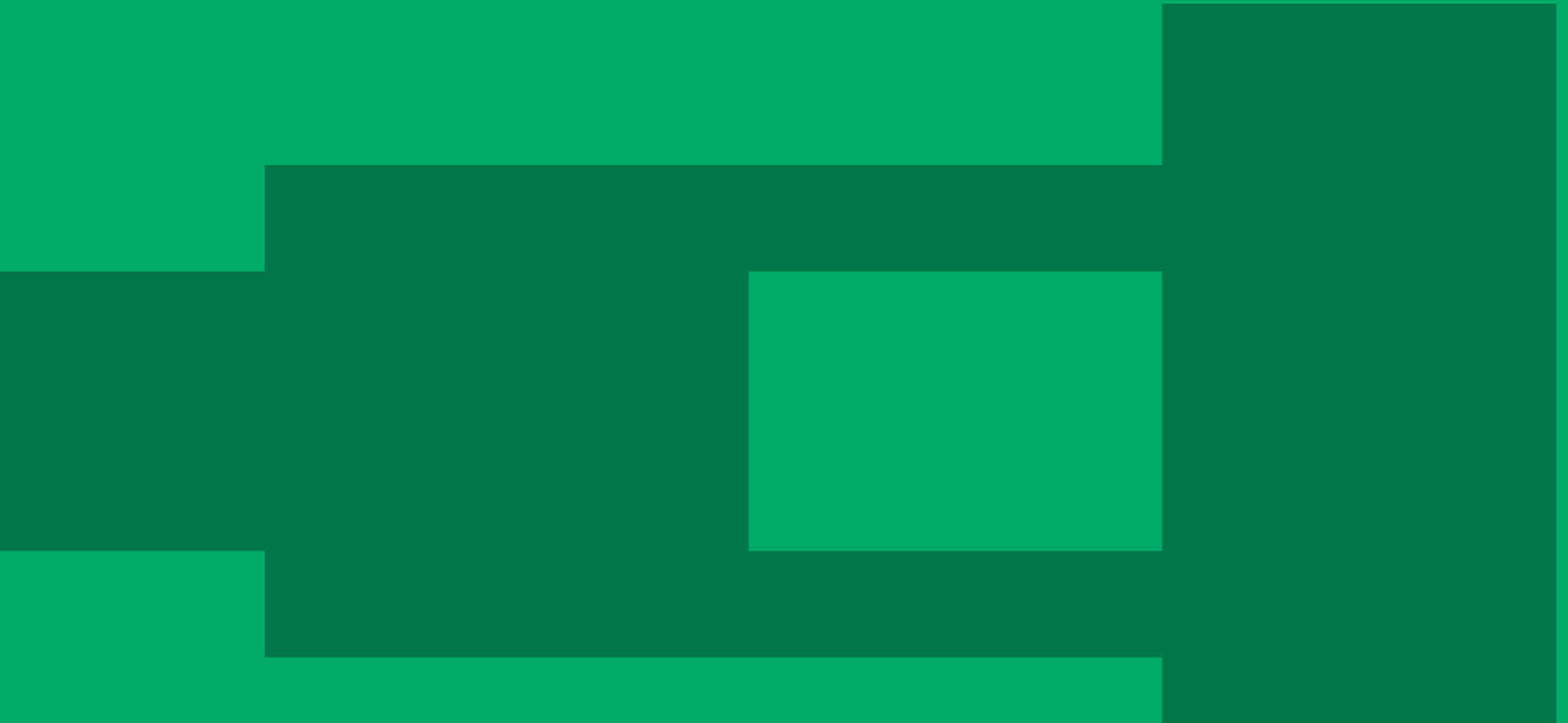
We think that “emotional hospitality” (we see emotional labour as included in hospitality) should be demanded from everyone, and even more if we talk about curatorial work.

Emotional labor should be more valued.

Care work becomes better when it is done again, creating the specificity of a relation through intensified involvement and knowledge. It requires attention and fine-tuning to the temporal rhythms of an “other” and to the specific relations that are being woven together. —María Puig de la Bellacasa, *Matters of Care: Speculative Ethics in More Than Human Worlds*, 2017.



**How to be a hospitable without  
being a motel—thinking hospitalities**  
Museum of Impossible Forms



Ideally, hospitality in the context of anthropological turn in curating should be humanism on the move, which according to Immanuel Kant, is a basis for cosmopolitanism. However, this hospitality is not implemented as a Western concept that ignores differences and is based on a Eurocentric worldview. Humanism on the move should articulate the entire dynamics of the post-Other. It should not be articulated through the Western perspective, because even when geographical distance is overcome, psychological difference remains. Curators as agents of circulation should be thinking in terms of the post-Other or, even more properly, in terms of the “unsame.” Not abusing hospitality would mean acknowledging the anthropological turn in curating, in the sense that one may find a way to avoid dealing with the Other, but should start, at least, to deal with the unsame. —Maja Ciric, *The (Un)spoken Abuse: Curatorial Hospitality through the Lens of Criticality*, 2016.

Museum of Impossible Forms (m{if}) is a cultural centre run by artists/activists/ curators/ philosophers/ hustlers located in Kontula, East-Helsinki. Within the method of exchange, we strive to work with the existing culture(s) of Kontula and East Helsinki, with specifically seeking to develop a relationship with the organisations, projects, commercial shops, and community nodes in the area. We equally wish to participate in the continuous flow of an emergent culture that develops daily inside and outside the premises of the Museum of Impossible Forms, and the Kontula mall spaces.

We are striving towards a para-institutional culture that focuses on ‘Alternate Pedagogy’ through the use of space at Museum of Impossible Forms which is essentially, a multilingual library and multimedia archive; as well as a workshop and exhibition space. m{if} facilitates curated discursive art programs, with an opportunity for norm-critical dialogue framed within the discourse of decoloniality, intersectional feminism, and queer theory. These equally create a complex mind-space fuelled by the socio-political ideologies that are shared by the members of m{if}, and that become visible through our various efforts. That is, we want to be hospitable, but we are not a motel, we want something in return. The basis of all our practice is that we are positioning ourselves within this specific political context and request that all whom we work with builds this basis with us, or are least is willing to engage with it.

Since its formation, the philosophy of m{if} as a collective and as a space has been concerned with issues of community, sharing, collaboration and hospitality. What is meant by hospitality pragmatically can take many forms. Essentially hospitality involves ‘care’ as a central node in the m{if} scheme. This often means addressing overlooked elements of practice such as thinking about creating a sustainable and welcoming environment at our events, including accessible facilities and food. The notion of care extends from these elemental aspects towards more complex issues of economics and labour politics.



Museum of Impossible Forms is a free space with the mandate to make available our resources (archive, library, workshop) and expertise to the surrounding communities. Furthermore, we compensate invited guests, artists, curators and speakers to support the integrity and ethics of cultural labour which is all too often underpaid, and underappreciated.

Care and consciousness towards ethical labour practices also means that Museum of Impossible Forms is a safer space in more ways than one. Not only does m{if} advocate for safer space in its usual articulations of “(a) a supportive, non-threatening environment that encourages open-mindedness, respect, a willingness to learn from others, as well as physical and mental safety; (b) a space that is critical of the power structures that affect our everyday lives, where power dynamics, backgrounds, and the effects of our behaviour on others are prioritized; and (c) a space that strives to respect and understand survivors’ specific needs”<sup>1</sup> – it is also a space that specifically entangles different realities and experiences with collaboration, participation and a space for audience that is prompted by ideas of utopia and oppression, history and the future, borders, time, art and technology, and, more importantly, community. Live conversations, travelogues, discussion sessions and performances, and exhibitions of new and archival material interrogate our shared histories and forge new collaborations across time and space.

<sup>1</sup> The m{if} safer space policy is intended to make Museum of Impossible Forms a supportive, non-threatening environment for all who attend. We strive to keep this place safe by formulating and following guidelines of consent: <https://museumofimpossibleforms.org/mif-safer-space-policy>.

All knowledges have internal and external limits. The internal limits concern restrictions regarding the kinds of intervention in the world they render possible. Such restrictions result from what is yet known, but eventually be known, by a given kind of knowledge. The external limits concern what is not and cannot known by given kind of knowledge. From the point of the ecology of knowledges, the external limits imply acknowledging alternative interventions only rendered possible by other kind of knowledge. One of the specific features of hegemonic knowledge is that they only recognize internal limits. The counterhegemonic use of modern science constitutes a parallel and simultaneous exploration of its internal and external limits. For this reason, the counterhegemonic use of science cannot be restricted to science alone. It only makes sense within the ecology of knowledges. —Boaventura de Sousa Santos, *Epistemologies of the South: Justice Against Epistemicide*, 2014.



The moral is simple: only partial perspective promises objective vision. All Western cultural narratives about objectivity are allegories of the ideologies governing the relations of what we call mind and body, distance and responsibility: Feminist objectivity is about limited location and situated knowledge, not about transcendence and splitting of subject and object. It allows us to become answerable for what we learn how to see. —Donna Haraway, *The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective*, 1988.

## Relationship to knowledge and ways of knowing

A desire to work within the ‘centre/margin’ binary, presented in a geographical and ideological case, and the increasing need for para-museums such as *m{if}* to facilitate platforms of alternate pedagogies, has been instrumental in defining the space and our collective praxis within it. Peter Mayo, who writes on both Antonio Gramsci and Paulo Freire, asks a simple question that all political education must ask itself: “what side are we on when [we] teach, educate and act?”<sup>2</sup> The question that we at Museum of Impossible Forms are asking is, “How can we propose an alternative?”

Where is our agency?

*To speak up*

*To speak out*

*To critique*

*To transform*

*To impact*

*To take space*

*To make space*

*To give way*

*To see*

*To listen*

*To be heard?*

We at Museum of Impossible Forms wish to complicate the words ‘Museum’, and ‘Impossible.’ For us, the word museum already contains within it the contemporary notions of the para-museum, the counter museum, the anti-museum. The Museum no longer represents the ivory towers and petrification machines, where objects are preserved and inventoried in

<sup>2</sup> Peter Mayo, cited in Nora Sternfeld, *Learning Unlearning* (CuMMA Papers#20): 3.



accordance with their cultural and historical 'value.' Rather, they must take upon themselves to (re)establish their relationship to society and take on the role of being educational. For us, the museums today must continue to ask on a regular basis, 'what must be done?' Not just for itself, but for us as members of a socio-political society. It must ask; how do we choose to act?

### **Towards *Gathering for Rehearsing Hospitalities***

For *Gathering for Rehearsing Hospitalities*, Museum of Impossible Forms will non-perform 'A Series of Soft Gestures Towards Hospitality.' These gestures will be the result of direct/indirect collaborations between Frame Contemporary Art Finland, Museum of Impossible Forms, nynnyt, Asematila, Artist Collective Bread Omens (consisting of Jani Anders Purhonen and Elena Rantasuo), Heidi Hänninen, bread makers from Tikke Restaurant, as well as other invited guests and participants from Kontula.

*1) The first gesture of hospitality is to invite and welcome people into one's own space, of relinquishing agency and authorship.*

Museum of Impossible Forms welcomes and opens its doors to the organisers, invited speakers, and guests of Frame's 'Rehearsing Dialogues', a series of conversations, discussions, presentations, and happenings performed daily.

*2) Devising together the tools required to counter institutional hegemony is the second gesture of hospitality.*

We will invite nynnyt, a queer feminist curatorial duo consisting of Selina Väliheikki and Orlan Ohtonen, to host a workshop on 'How to work responsibly with Imperfect Tools.' Opening up a conversation about concepts

such as language, quotas, criticism and care, nynnyt will invite the workshop participants to think about and share ways of organising around art responsibly, particularly in situations where this can sometimes be very difficult.

*3) The exploration of sustenance and sustainability is the third gesture of hospitality.*

In collaboration with Asematila, Museum of Impossible Forms will co-host Bread Omens as an installation and para-site event in Kontula Mall, in front of the Kontula Public Library; where we will be exploring bread-making as a method for building and sustaining communities.

*4) To participate with and involve those who live amongst us is the fourth gesture of hospitality.*

Along with artist and activist Heidi Hänninen, the project will work with sister institutions within Kontula to host a series of workshops aimed for residents of Kontula.

*5) Producing and transmitting knowledge is the fifth gesture of hospitality.*

Museum of Impossible Forms and Asematila will conceive and present a 'Bread Archive', a multi-sensory installation as a method to bridge the two spaces through epistemological knowledges, in this case of bread and its histories within Finnish cultural memories, within its contemporary fabric and the entanglements of purity, immigration, refuge, borderlessness, community and participatory knowledge gathering.

# Articulations of Forces at Play

Pia Lindman



Is there a being, beyond materiality and rationality of the body? Something beyond the physical web of needs and homeostasis? Is there a human?

## Background

In 2006, I discovered I had been poisoned by mercury. My bones, brain, kidneys, liver, and intestines were in pain. My cognition, autoimmune, and gastrointestinal systems were defunct. I began to react to indoor air, especially in houses infested with mold. Mold may produce mycotoxins, nerve toxins – similar to mercury. My nervous system, now sensitized, reacted to these toxins. In moldy houses, I experienced pain, electric shocks running through my nerves, and cognitive difficulties that eventually appeared to have a slight hallucinatory effect on my mind.

My heightened sensitivity is now a medium that allows for more signals from the cells of my body (of chemical and energetic events) to reach some sort of pre-conscious-consciousness of my mind. These are signals that are usually filtered out by the brain, but are now, in my mind, translated into various mind “things”, i.e., visuals, melodies, words, movements, and colors.

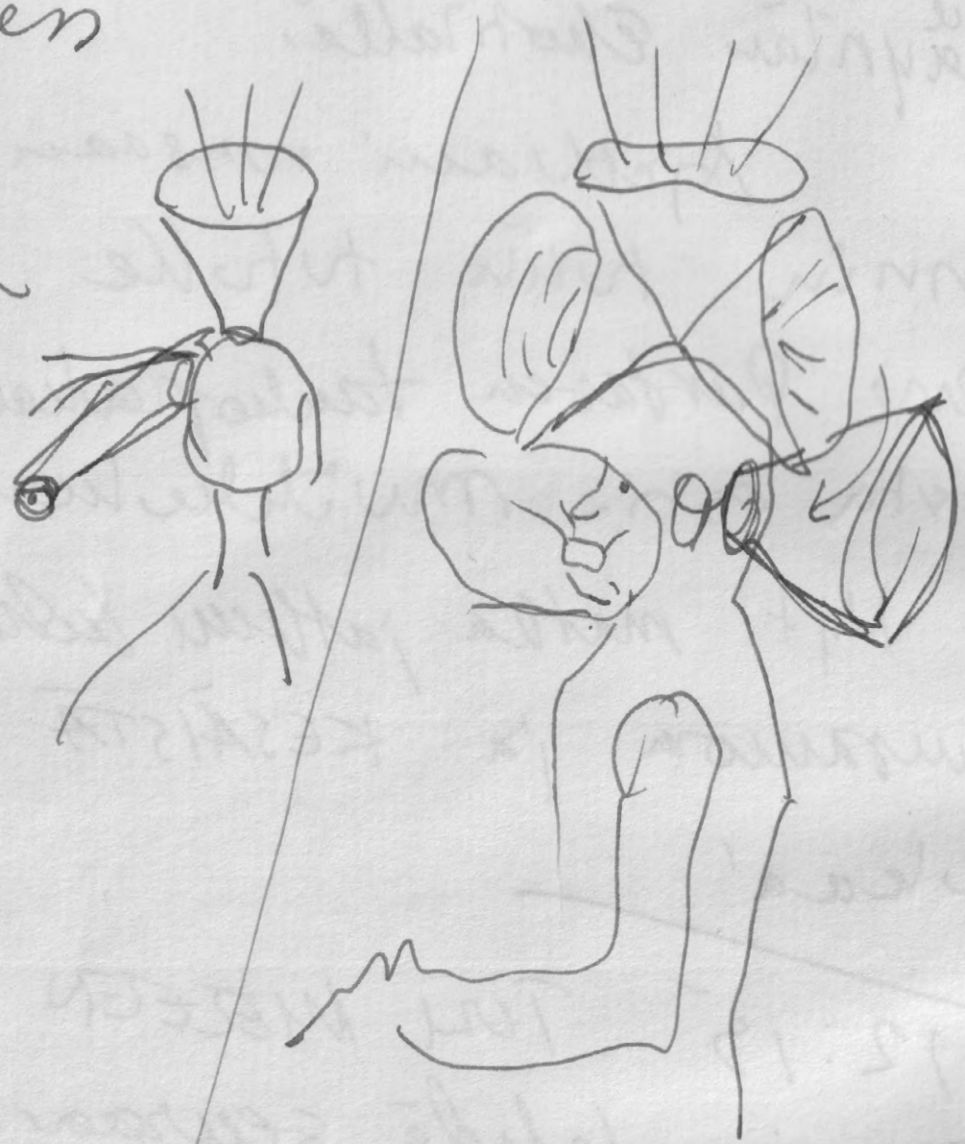
Since these events take place in all living bodies and organisms (and potentially non-living entities), but they usually are not sensed, i.e. they do not enter consciousness of a mind, it is difficult to talk about them.

Perhaps one could call this process a multiple-form-synesthesia. I call this interstitial work of mind and body, this intermediary space and time of signals and synesthesia, the subsensorial.

Becoming familiar and skilled with the subsensorial, I have turned this, sometimes debilitating, sensitivity into a capability and a tool for my art, that help me tune in and express human conditions and, for instance, the tensions and moods of another person, or the atmosphere of a space.

resounding / vibrating  
dress

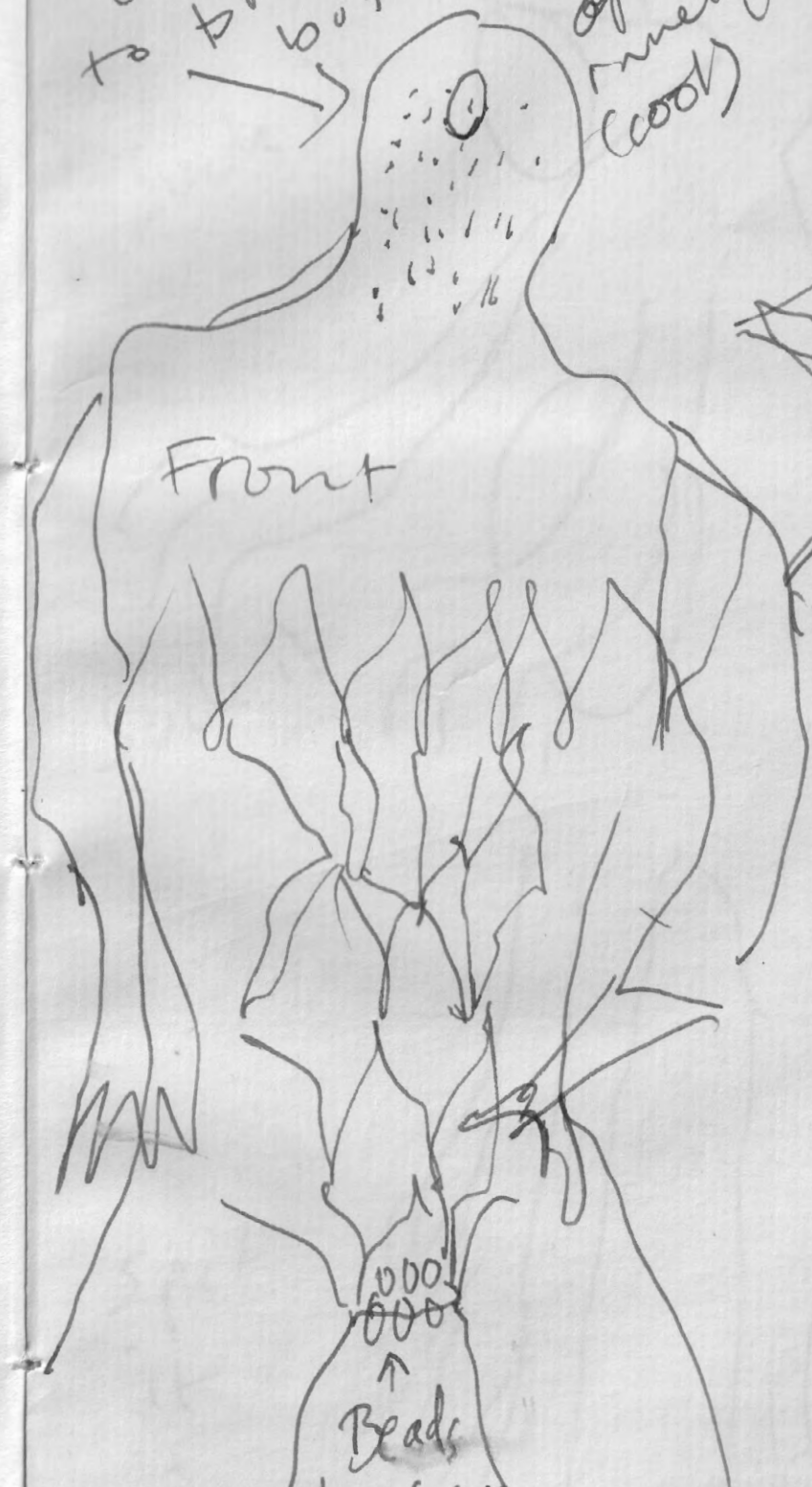
inner  
eye



Not ears  
but the part for  
spiritual channel  
two lobes on each  
side of atlas

chock  
to breathe  
but  
eye  
open  
inner eye  
(cool)

Back

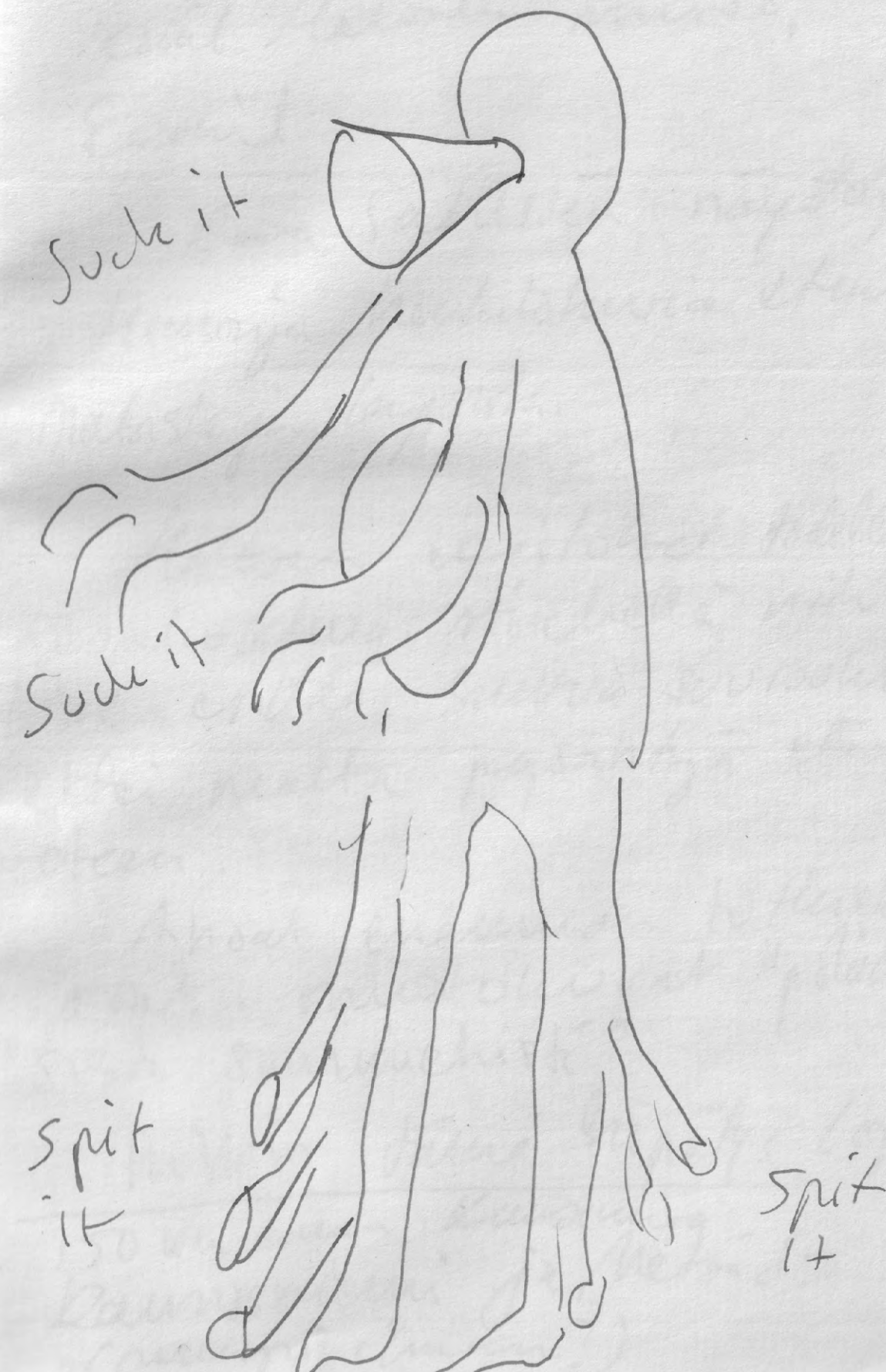


Front



pearls/  
crystals  
beads  
to focus  
stamina  
(cool with  
ONE warm  
in the  
middle)

↑  
Beads  
to focus  
perineum hot and cool (Diamond)



## ASSIGNMENT

### Suggestions about being subsensorial

Because I really have no idea what happens and why. But it happens.

Being is the result of intention – to be, to know, to feel. Intention pulls the systems of various entities (microbes, cells, organs, bones, ligaments, muscles, acids, salts, minerals,...) into unity of agency. Think of the myth of the resurrection of Lemminkäinen from the dead. After gathering the bones of her son from the river of Death, Lemminkäinen's mother reassembled them and asked the honeybee to bring the resurrective fermented drink from the sun (microbes – bringers of life – to the intentional rescue!) As microbes bring life, they also decompose it. The state of being is temporary and partial. It must be reassembled and integrated constantly. What we think of as sickness might appear when there is not enough integration and, instead, entities that should be “you” are pulled into other beings or non-beings. Being, death, and sickness appear on a sliding scale. They are matters of point of view – in place and time.

I suggest an exercise for each one of you readers, in which you familiarize yourselves with your potential parts, and finally, find what might be the intentions at play in any one moment. Needless to say, “your” parts and “your” intentions may vary at any given moment.

- 1) Getting to know some of the articulations of the forces at play
- 2) Build, draw, sing, imagine... the articulations
- 3) Watch your transformation
- 4) In this new articulation of forces, what might be the intention?
- 5) Let this intention play out its course

Image p. 70-71: *Articulations of Forces at Play 1*. In order to assist the process of transformations and to help recuperation post-session I have devised the following bodily implements. These implements articulate and enhance the subsensorial events taking place in and between bodies and spaces.

Image p. 72: *Articulations of Forces at Play 2*. This is particularly for the removal of toxins.



**Mummo** (direct translation into English: “Granny”).

Often used as pejorative or belittling term, “mummo” signifies not only a grandmother, but any aged woman who is perhaps not keeping up with contemporary life, but is a being of the past. A “mummo” is perceived to be gullible and soft. She is steered by her emotions, rather than rationality—and especially technical rationality.

A popular term in the world of Finnish ice-hockey, “ylämummo”, signifies the upper (left hand) corner of the goal. If a player can shoot the puck into this corner, the puck sinks in easily—as this is the hardest reach for a (right handed) goalie. I find the *contrapunto* image of twenty-something male ice-hockey players shooting into the “uppergranny” rich in layered meanings indeed. As the popularity of this term continued, some variations emerged. “I placed the puck where ‘mummo’ keeps her jars of jam”, boasts the Finnish Winnipeg Jets player Patrick Laine to journalists after he scored the deciding goal against the New Jersey Devils in 2016. This points to the bending/almost queering placement of “mummo” on the map of socio-sexual relations: she is respected precisely for her command of the soft and emotional. To reach her “jars of jam” is the biggest score. Might mummo also be respected for her wisdom: she is in the know as to where and how to keep the precious jars of jam.

I bring up “mummo” because I encountered another kind of “mummo-wisdom” in the flea markets in Kuusamo, in the form of exquisite, intricate, abstracted works of crochet. We know from architectural history, that in fact, women were the first mathematicians and architects. Women seem to have been engaged in the work of crochet and weaving throughout human history (a perception we might one day contest, but for now, this is the history we can observe). Women weaved

Image p. 74: *Articulations of Forces at Play 3*. When blocking eyes and ears, you can focus on the subsensorial events. Here it is an example of utilising the brilliance and wisdom of crocheted patterns, found at the flea markets in Kuusamo, in order to block sight and sound.

the tapestries that were used to cover tents, yurts, and teepees. Women wove, knitted, and crocheted the clothes and the carpets that travelled with nomadic caravans. In a society where books were not, these fabrics included imagery and patterns that recorded knowledge, stories, logs of many kinds. Not only recording collective memory, by this work, these women developed the abstract thinking that took human experience beyond the interlocking duality of homeostasis and need. Beyond death.

Today, here, “mummos” still crochet the same knowledges. Precious jars of jam. As a “mummo” in the know, I experiment with using the crocheted wisdom of other “mummos” as enhancing devices for my subsensorial studies and sessions.



*Articulations of Forces at Play 4.* Utilising the ingenuity of crocheted patterns, of work found in the Kuusamo flea markets.

Paper cannot tolerate humidity and humidity cannot be experienced through paper. In the tropical rainforest, thought is communicated through songs, stories, conversations, and mambeaderos. The transitory nature of sound opens a path to everything that is material and immaterial, visible and invisible, that lives within the rainforest and its rivers. Traditional knowledge is therefore constantly changing, expanding, digressing, and renewing itself. —Catalina Vargas Tovar and Abel Rodríguez, *Looking with Words, Looking with Stories*, 2014.



## Instructions to assignment

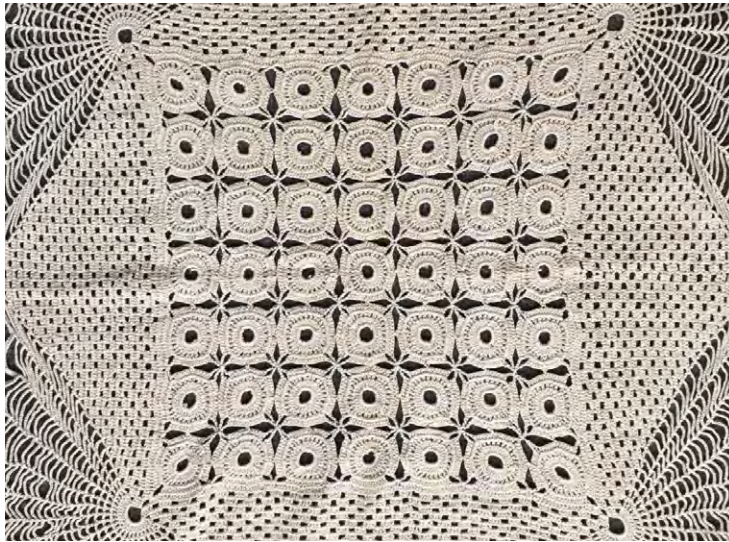
### Suggestions about being subsensorial

- 1) Focus on a part of your body that seems to—right now—be vibrating independently from the rest of your body. This might be a “glitch” in your homeostasis—an impulse that asks for attention, change, movement, or something else.
- 2) What does this “glitch” look like, sound like, ... or does it have some other kind of formulation or manifestation that you can maintain in your consciousness?
- 3) Holding it in your consciousness, watch, listen, feel it. Maybe it starts to transform, maybe not. Maybe it solidifies, or evaporates. Let it do what it does.
- 4) As you hold this transforming/not transforming “glitch” in your consciousness, can you become aware of any direction, will, or intention? Does it move or connect with something inside your body, or out of it? Does it resonate, sound, cut, cringe, bloat, color, or something else?
- 5) Let this intention play out its course. Follow.

Draw, write, note your process here....



*Articulations Experiment 1, close up.* Experimentation on how to build wearable subsensorial enhancement devices. Model: Ragnheiður Kolka Sigurjónsdóttir.



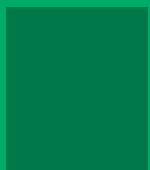
*Crochet no 1 Kuusamo July 2019.* This piece of crochet found in the flea markets in Kuusamo exemplifies the intricate abstract and dynamic patterns that carry wisdom beyond the rationality of daily functions. It is a mandala, it is original code, and it is the initiator of mental/spiritual journeying.

Image p. 81: *Articulations Experiment 1, profile.* Experimentation on how to build wearable subsensorial enhancement devices. Model: Ragnheiður Kolka Sigurjónsdóttir.



Be that as it may, together with the ‘witches,’ a world of social/cultural practices and beliefs that had been typical of precapitalist rural Europe, but which had come to be viewed as unproductive and potentially dangerous for the new economic order, was wiped out. It was a world that we now call superstitious but that at the same time alerts us to the existence of other possibilities in our relationship to the world. In this sense, we have to think of the enclosures as a broader phenomenon than simply the fencing off of land. We must think of an enclosure of knowledge, of our bodies, and of our relationship to other people and nature. —Silvia Federici, *Witches, Witch-Hunting, and Women*, 2018.





Film as animate object: on forms  
of learning through cinematic art  
Rachael Rakes



What follows is a series of loosely connected observations on communication or experiential learning that are innate to art exhibited in the cinema. The examples span the history of cinema but their ideas remain fundamentally consistent in terms of the possible, even as that sense of possible seems forever out of reach given cinema's historically co-extensive ties to entertainment and social control. For this contribution on the broad subject of rethinking epistemology, it seemed apt to offer a series of potential re-engagements with the beleaguered form.

#### On time &

Avant-garde artist and mentor Jonas Mekas inaugurated the film series Boring Masterpieces at Anthology Film Archives in 2010. Starting with “the boringest masterpiece of them all,”<sup>1</sup> Andy Warhol’s eight-hour portrait of the Empire State Building, *Empire*, the series proposed to take some of the pretentiousness out of the challenge of cinematic duration. It celebrated these difficult works while normalizing the fear of what experiencing them might be like and admitting it up front: indeed they would be boring. At the same time, the series proposed not being apprehensive of that boredom, but to adjust to different modes of experiential time and use the lack of stimulation to contemplate the nature of existence. (As a further deflation, in the case of *Empire*, those who lasted the entire duration were rewarded with a limited edition sleeping-length Anthology Film Archives t-shirt.) While I only took in a three or so hour chunk of it, I managed to catch the twilight moment when the top of the titular building’s lights go on for the night. Everyone in the theater gasped at this lone moment of action.

#### Animate experience

In his text *Narcolepsy Cinema*, underground cinema artist Bradley Eros proposes a creative engagement between projection and viewer that arises out of a commonplace side effect when going to the movies: We often fall asleep, at least for brief moments (maybe more now than before, as overwork seeps into our resting time; the cinema is a rare semi-public space that can be re-configured for nodding off). Rather than view this as the failure of a particular film to sufficiently entertain

<sup>1</sup> Anthology Film Archives June/July 2010 Calendar notes, accessed at <https://issuu.com/maxfenton/docs/2010-anthology-3>.

or captivate, *Narcolepsy Cinema* considers these moments of sleep, and especially of dreaming, as a participatory augmentation of film art. Eros proposes that the “secret sleep of cinema” can be used to create alternative plots and form new aesthetics with the film on view—or place new genres and perversions into the running plot. And, after a brief cine-nap, when we awaken again, the film is there for us, continuing on as a parade of time-images for our minds to re-join, but grafted newly with a faint memory of our mental-prosthetic narrative assistance.

### Frames

In Henri Bergson’s pivotal *Creative Evolution*, the Fin-de-siècle theorist imagines human comprehension as a series of captured images. Our formation of “practical understanding” breaks continuous reality into segments, and then processes these into hierarchically ordered pieces with which to comprehend it. The flow of continuous time can then be grasped as a broken series of still images that are collaged in memory. This process, Bergson notes, resembles the way that film projection animates images into an apparent flow, whereby film movement and practical understanding both treat space as immobile sections and time as a succession of moments. Cinema is employed here as a foil for how the mind operates, as we take snapshots of the passing reality. Bergson follows,

**We may therefore sum up...that the mechanism of our ordinary knowledge is of a cinematographic kind.<sup>2</sup>**

<sup>2</sup> Henri Bergson, *Creative evolution* (London: Macmillan, 1911): 377.

The frames of celluloid then also mimic the deficiency, or the deception of mental process, creating a kind of story of sensation, judgement, and recall.

(It should be noted that Bergson actually disliked and distrusted film, even if he was one of the first to anticipate its philosophizing, and he later dismissed any proposals to explore the metaphor of time-comprehension/cinema any further. But many, most consequentially Gilles Deleuze and Walter Benjamin, have ignored this suggestion, extending Bergson’s ideas on duration to influential theories of the movement image.)

Returning to an idea initiated with *Narcolepsy Cinema*, but applying it to the conscious mind in light of Bergson’s fundamental proposal, I’m curious about what might come forth if we imagine what the cinematographic mind could create when placed up against the animated frames and flickering light of the cinema. That rather than taking cinema passively, we consider it as a process of comprehension on view itself. That the engagement, the mental perception device, set in the dark, up against the mechanical (now digital) machine of understanding, new worlds could be created in this interaction. This might be a useful hijacking of what Jacques Rancière—talking about still images in the case—refers to as the *Pensive Image*, which is active in its role of interpretation in the mind.<sup>3</sup>

### Weaving

Imagining yet other possibilities for the mental perception of film, here on the side of its making, filmmaker and theorist Raul Ruiz’s *Poetics of Cinema* sketches some possibilities for a new form of non-linear “shamanic cinema,” primarily created through intricately involved editing processes:

<sup>3</sup> Jacques Rancière, *The Emancipated Spectator* (London/New York: Verso Books, 2009): 107-110.

Key to this process was the destruction of the magical conception of the body that had prevailed in the Middle Ages, which attributed to it powers that the capitalist class could not exploit, that were incompatible with the transformation of the laborers into work machines, and that could even enhance their resistance to it. These were the shamanic powers that precapitalist, agricultural societies have attributed to all or to special individuals, and that in Europe survived despite centuries of Christianization, often being assimilated into Christian rituals and beliefs. —Silvia Federici, *Witches, Witch-Hunting, and Women*, 2018.

**We can conceive a certain type of filming capable of treating each segment of the world and the objects it contains... Capable as well of letting us travel to the confines of creation through the simple juxtaposition of a small number of trembling images. In this radical impressionism, the never-seen would be within our grasp. The cinema would become the perfect instrument for the revelation of the possible worlds which coexist right alongside our own.<sup>4</sup>**

Cinema's communicative power has often been precluded by the compelling nature of that very power. The above-mentioned problematic condition of passive activity, coupled with the additional pervasion of standardized editing forms that homogenize nearly all moving image material, lead the cinema into an endless cycle of capacity dead ends. Editing, story lines, and the formal choices of mass audiovisual media has set up an expectation and failure for moving image media all at the same time.<sup>5</sup> This is why the mono-vectoral, feeding-fed essence of entertainment cinema has become the expected output, regardless of apparent genre outside the rarest peripheries. Moving image art is now often stuck in or short-circuited by the evacuation of the specificity of the cinema experience. One answer is, as Ruiz poetically implores, in breaking out of those forms, and insisting on the multiplicity inherently tied to the media itself.

<sup>4</sup> Raúl Ruiz, *Poetics of Cinema 1* (Chatou: Editions Des Voir, 1995): 90.

<sup>5</sup> The term mass audiovisual media (MAVM) was coined and has long been worked by filmmaker Peter Watkins. Much more on his own website: <http://pwatkins.mnsi.net/index.htm>.



## Materiality

Ruiz imagines one possible structural method for producing this multiverse cinema, alluding to editing as a process of weaving, “for example, ten themes or designs (like designs in a Persian carpet) of story lines which are both dramas and vectors.”<sup>6</sup>

Producing hand-made, artists’ cinema, Nazli Dinçel connects her practice to rug making as well—similar to the repetitive, detailed, and often boring feminized labors of craft. Dinçel works only with celluloid, and employs not only hand-processing and physical editing, but also inscribes all text and other aesthetic details by scratching, punching, or cutting directly on the film, frame-by-frame. Thinking of the average frame rate of twenty-four film frames per second of play helps to give a sense of just how arduous this task would be for a ten-minute long work. While this process is by choice, it reflects often ignored fact that the most painstaking and at the same time impactful part of filmmaking has long been left to women.<sup>7</sup>

The resulting films are more essayistic than a lot of avant-garde-film art, especially those that deal specifically with the materiality of film. But with their textual, theoretical examinations and use of tangible elements, they are also highly sensorial. That media-specific sensoriality is an intrinsic part of their essayism—they are then works of conceptual feeling. Art object and audience become caught up in a combination of the intellectual and haptic, the intimacy of which at times feels like a waking version of sleeping cinema. Further, for Dinçel, celluloid also mimics human

<sup>6</sup> Poetics of Cinema, 88.

<sup>7</sup> In a recent talk introducing the work of under-sung Soviet editor and filmmaker Esfir Shub at Light Industry in New York, Hito Steryl asked why Dziga Vertov’s iconic montage film *Man With a Movie Camera*, wasn’t called *The Woman At the Editing Desk*? “*The Man With a Movie Camera* is a film which takes most of its brilliance really not from its camera work—the title is camera man, right—but from being at that time, and still I think now, on the vanguard of editing.”

I am also intrigued by your works where you mention “talking nearby instead of talking about”—this is one of the techniques you mention to “make visible the invisible.”

How might indirect language do precisely that?

The link is nicely done; especially between “speaking nearby” and indirect language. In other words, a speaking that does not objectify, does not point to an object as if it is distant from the speaking subject or absent from the speaking place. A speaking that reflects on itself and can come very close to a subject without, however, seizing or claiming it. A speaking in brief, whose closures are only moments of transition opening up to other possible moments of transition—these are forms of indirectness well understood by anyone in tune with poetic language. — Nancy N. Chen and Trinh T. Minh-ha, *Speaking nearby: A Conversation With Trinh T. Minh-ha*, 1992.



experience, as volatile, short half-life organic matter. The film object is then an “ideal analogue to the body with its similar haptic qualities of texture, color, and the tractable emulsion of the 16mm material.”<sup>8</sup>

#### 5-minute political structuralisms

Anonymous radical Mexican group Colectivo Los Ingravidos use immersive avant garde practices towards incendiary political ends. Like other political “Boring Masterpieces” made in the service of political intervention such as Robert Kramer’s 1970 *ICE*, or Octavio Getino and Fernando Solanas’s 1974 *Hour of the Furnaces*, they embrace the act of countering expectations of entertainment and aesthetic stability, and tend to rely on the subtle editing of unsubtle images. But instead of going for duration in their works, they aim for focus and prolificness. In response to the killings of the forty-three students in Guerrero, Mexico the collective made seventeen short films. Their own manifesto relays a need for a total transformation of media communication’s form, reading as an update of radical cinema treatises of the 1960s and 1970s<sup>9</sup> (translated from the Spanish):

**The television empire solves its contradictions ideologically through a huge propaganda machine. The “neutral” aestheticization of immediacy is the generalized procedure by Televisa (TV Channel of Mexico) to formulate and promote a “self-consistent” totalitarian and “traditional” image.**

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.nazlidincel.com/manifesto>

<sup>9</sup> And very much resembling an updated version of Peter Watkins’s analysis of the MAVM (see comment 5).

**What means do we have to unmask the transference and concealment of the conflicts and contradictions that the “neutralized” immediacy implies?” We call for the ostensible degradation of television communication. Make inoperative any “original” and “traditional” message through the induction of different semiologies. To eliminate the meaning of his discourse by intervening in the grammar of his language, inoculating dis-understanding, stuttering and echolalia. Make illegible the preferred content that your speech should communicate.**

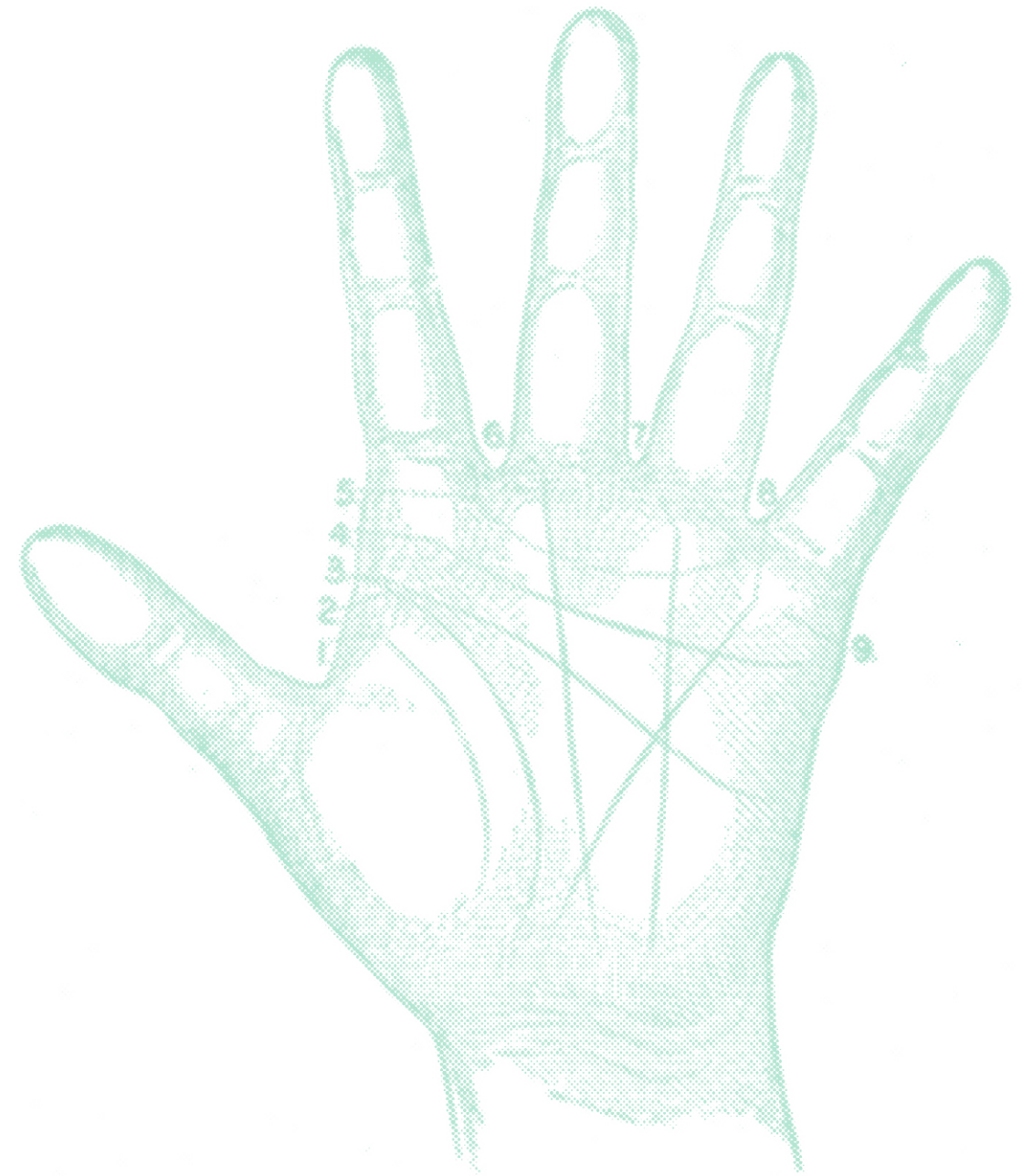
Imbued with the spirit of punk denial, for sure, but like a lot of punk, they are also undeniably correct.

In one of their recent works *Izcóatl* (named after the Aztec king) Los Ingravidos splits the image into segments, abstractly representing a serpent and at the same time making visible the moving frame operation of film. Their work then goes for a kind of full material transparency while maintaining its aesthetic challenge. In watching the frames move along, animating segments, we might register another, hardcore political version of Bergson’s mental metaphor.

Los Ingravidos’ mix of abstract structuralism and insurrectionary politics brings back the question of limited image employment, re-inscribing to celluloid a power thought lost with the digital stream, and leads us back to the cinema to dream.

Touch expresses a sense of material-embodied relationality that seemingly eschews abstractions and detachments that have been associated with dominant epistemologies of knowledge-as-vision. Touch becomes a metaphor of transformative knowledge at the same time as it intensifies awareness of the imports of speculative thinking. In other words, the haptic disrupts the prominence of vision as a metaphor for distant knowing as well the distance of critique, but it also calls for ethical questioning. What is caring touch in this context? —María Puig de la Bellacasa, *Matters of Care: Speculative Ethics in More Than Human Worlds*, 2017.

“When two hands touch, there is a sensuality of the flesh, an exchange of warmth, a feeling of pressure, of presence, a proximity of otherness that brings the other nearly as close as oneself. Perhaps closer. And if the two hands belong to one person, might this not enliven an uncanny sense of the otherness of the self, a literal holding oneself at a distance in the sensation of contact, the greeting of the stranger within? So much happens in a touch: an infinity of others—other beings, other spaces, other times—are aroused.” —Karen Barad, *On Touching—The Inhuman That Therefore I Am*, 2012.



Thoughts on textile, knowledge  
production and transmission  
Clelia Coussonnet



In May 2019, a resident at HIAP, Helsinki, I researched the use of textile in visual arts and design in Finland. Setting to investigate the question of knowledge transmission, I drifted, exploring different ways of knowing and meeting creatives who approach knowledge as tactile, wearable, embodied and symbolised. Free from dust, rust and categories, they caress a living knowledge that can't be contained in books, shelves and theories.

Working with textile means processing a *material that is alive* via your *physicality and body*. While techniques can be acquired in an academic way, most of this corporeal and gestural knowledge stems from both experimentation, and skills transmitted orally and/or through experience. With this publication, considering fabric in learning/unlearning contexts, I share meandering and abstract reflections around these ideas, as well as invite two practitioners to share a project involving these dynamics of process.

Our history with textile is one of necessity and poetry. It has been used to hold, assemble, cover, transport, wrap, protect, adorn. When little containers and materials were available, natural fibres were our associates. Intrinsically linked to seasons and an infinite cycle of growing, harvesting, parching and processing, threads and yarns were connected to light and dark, summer and winter. Raw pigments and dyes coloured fabrics left to dry under the sun. There was a strong tie between the outdoor and the indoor, textile navigating endlessly between spaces. In this, it measured time, recorded information, and became a vessel for storytelling thanks to the direct and emotional relation it spurred—touched, smelled, weighed up

Currently, after a clear dominance of the industrial turn, alternative techniques highlight newly the importance and potential of manual skills in a period of climate change and shrinking of available resources. Choosing a 'hand(y)' turn in production, again, textile could become the measure of time, the container of our future

## Of the loss of symbolic significance

In Western societies, the values of functionality and pure ornamentation are overarching. With them came the understanding of historical objects as items to be categorised, classified and stored according to a specific canon and perception of knowledge. Different interpretations exist of what ethnological and archaeological artefacts, ruins and craft are, but one current has been the tendency of the West to divest such pieces from their symbolic and spiritual functions, leaving them as empty vessels. With the industrial manufacturing of goods—a repetitive production where meaning became lost to machines—the value of craft and fabrication has relied more and more on the techniques used, the time devoted, the material chosen (noble or humble) and the perfection of the result and surfaces. Not to say that this didn't come into play before, but simply that the primal value was defined differently. It depended on the mean-

Have fabrics stopped being symbolic and spiritual? Have they turned to another good without a story? And what about this knowledge ancient textile pieces can share with us, how can we listen to it and adopt it in our own lives?

ing the objects and cloths conveyed, on the spirituality embedded within them, on how they were dialoguing with cycles. Textile-making was a meditative process in which signifiers were infused into the final result. Fabrics were used for rituals; they were carriers of wisdom. Think about shrouds, for instance: beside their functionality of wrapping or covering the dead, they were highly loaded with messages for the passage to the afterlife. Visualise embroidery now. Consider patterns of Mexican or Palestinian dresses or of Moroccan carpets: they can be read. The weaving becomes a coded language, full of symbols and narratives, conveying memories

In indigenous ways of knowing, we say that a thing cannot be understood until it is known by all four aspects of our being: mind, body, emotion, and spirit. The scientific way of knowing relies only on empirical information from the world, gathered by body and interpreted by mind. In order to tell the mosses' story I need both approaches, objective and subjective. —Robin Wall Kimmere, *Gathering Moss: a natural and cultural history of mosses*, 2003.



The alternative to relativism is not totalization and single vision, which is always finally the unmarked category whose power depends on systematic narrowing and obscuring. The alternative to relativisms partial, locatable, critical knowledges sustaining the possibility of webs of connections called solidarity in politics and shared conversations in epistemology. —Donna Haraway, *The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective*, 1988.

### Of conserving and caring differently

Most historical textile pieces are held in museums, a typical Western space. Out of tokenism, they are labelled national treasures or, owing to cultural imperialism, they are taken from other cultures. Sometimes, it is both: they were stolen and then claimed as items of State significance. Deprived of the links to their communities. Denied a living environment where to deliver their symbolism and spirituality for future generations to carry on. They aren't used in rituals any more so their meaning can't be experienced bodily. Giving communities access to textile pieces relevant to their history, memory and cosmogony is crucial. When museified, these pieces become a dead thing. When encapsulated, they lose their energy. Preserving and conserving fabrics is fundamental: fibres are paradoxically strong and fragile, and need to be taken care of

But, could we imagine a different way of caring? Through tactility, we-ar-ability, keeping up the knowledge of craft, the feeling of the material? Could museums invent new, and more sensual, relations to historical relics or would it undermine them irreversibly? Is destruction even an issue? Or could we envision that conservation is using artefacts and allowing them to die when they have shared their lot of signifiers? Such questions request that we define what to do with our heritage, how to revive it, appropriate it and keep it flowing. Our ancient aesthetic capital is a wealth of bounds that shouldn't be imprisoned



## Of ownership and collective-making

The very same way the production of textile pieces has been evolving is telling. We moved from communal gathering, where making was a collective process, to industrialisation; from personal and community production, for an 'internal' use, to global manufacturing, for an 'external' use. Collaboration could almost be considered inherent to weaving since, most often, groups of women would meet to embroider, sew, weave, prepare yarns. In many cultures and contexts, it is still the case, yet in Western societies, as practices and habits evolved, this has been dismissed and swept –even if currently, knitting circles are back, for instance, the trend is recent. Industries took over, TVs broke in, society changed with an increased pace of consumption, leading women to stop weaving *for and within* their communities.

An interesting point is to consider that previously no ownership on the fabric woven or embroidered was asserted and that the authorship was collective. It was impossible to copyright a specific pattern. Today, using ready-made patterns can be hard. The idea of value and success is also shifting with the rise of handmade products, limited editions and popup stores. Customers want unique pieces, with grain and stories, but for their individual use and from an individual creator

The idea of a shared collective ownership and authorship is covered in mist

## Of Learning and Unlearning

This being said, it would be unfair to consider only occasions in which patterns and techniques are kept for individual success, participating in the market of self-branding and consumption. On the contrary, there's a puzzling versatility and hybridity in how fabrics and skills are approached. So many creatives work at the intersection of art, design and craft, blurring the boundaries between these practices, and seek to revive traditions and talents that are either lost or disappearing. In keeping the tradition alive, they are actually trying to project it into the future. It isn't a repetition, it's a new invention. When drawing on an already existing technique or pattern, or when using a yarn someone else has prepared, the appropriation must come with respect because a legacy is entangled. You build on a heritage—this wealth of bounds I was mentioning—that you transcribe in your own language, bringing freshness, thinking about a future for the technique, infusing your inputs and ideas. A dialogue is created with time, cultures and lineages of makers

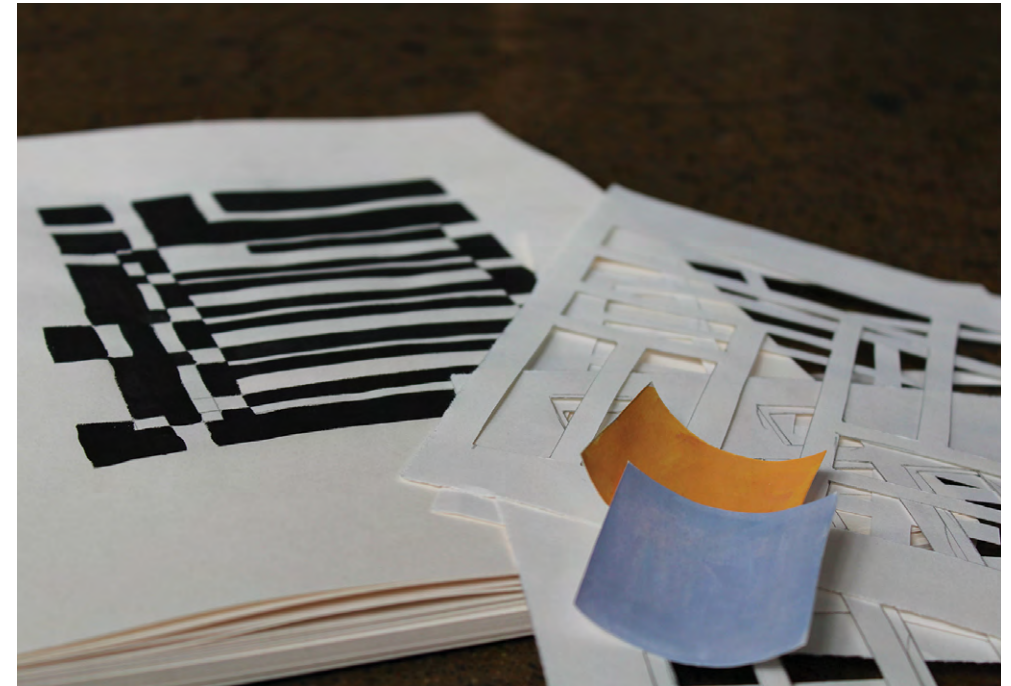
Yet, often, nowadays ancestors don't transfer their knowledge. Could it be because no one asks for it, or because precursors wonder who would need it in our world? Or, shifting our perspective, perhaps transmission is simply about sharing curiosity and the understanding that a different knowledge exists: bodily, sensual, manual? Or, maybe, previous generations test us, trying to see if we find the interest within ourselves, pushing us to unlearn in order to learn again?

Laura Spring  
textile designer, Scotland, UK

Täkänä is an ancient weaving technique that, like most handcrafts, requires time, skill and patience. Its last peak in popularity was over forty years ago, between the 1950s and 1970s, and it has since then fallen into decline as a technique used amongst Finnish weavers.

Typically, only two colours are used in Täkänä weaving, something that immediately appealed to my sensibilities as a contemporary textile designer.

Due to the complicated nature of the technique, the reverse of the cloth in the end result is as neat and presentable as its front, but being a printer rather than weaver, to work with this technique required a collaborative approach. Due to budget constraints of the project I had to rethink the way to work with Täkänä and the end result (a short exhibition at Helsinki's Design Museum in September 2018) was a series of screen-printed Täkänä inspired posters that the public could take away for free, allowing Täkänä to enter homes again, just not in the conventional way.



Sonia Kallel  
visual artist, Tunis, Tunisia

*TAFKIK* (disassembly) is a journey that restores the mystery and complexity of the chechia trades through various encounters. It highlights the poetry and the mysterious, nay mystic atmosphere maintained around its production. Furthermore, this project raises awareness on a heritage that has been forgotten and to the role of men and women who have contributed to its flourishing over the centuries. It is an aesthetic based on the idea of transmission and transformation...

#### Kabassa / Video Performance / Algorithm

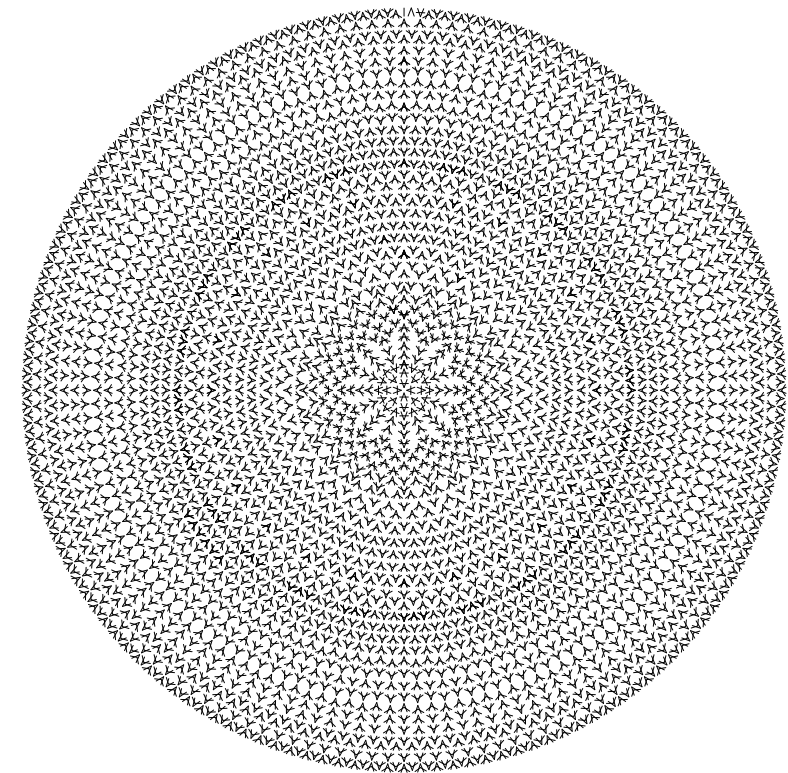
Making the *kabbous*<sup>1</sup> is the first step in the production process. The *kabbassas*<sup>2</sup>, who live in different regions a few kilometers from Tunis, repeat the same age-old gestures using large needles.

The perfect symbiosis between gesture and matter, repeated movements and “the musicality of work” is striking in the *kabassa*. Repetition becomes a need for the artisans...

The knitting of the *kabbous* is interpreted as an algorithm. Each sign represents the number of needles used and each point marks the mesh knitted by the *kabassa*. Temporality plays an important role: temporality of repetition, temporality of production (knitting a *kabbous* requires two to three hours), temporality that refers to infinity...

<sup>1</sup> *Kabbous*: A knitted woollen headdress.

<sup>2</sup> *Kabbassa*: The word *kabbassa* (knitter) comes from *kabbous* (beanie).



## The abuse of hospitality in curating in terms of curatorial geopolitics

1. reinforces existing relations
2. conceals the natural state of “war”
3. neglects the need to reflect on what has been left out
4. Neglects the dynamics of struggle
5. conceals the need to think in terms of post-Other (Homi Bhaba) or the “unsane”
6. does not transform or update the language used because the social and political have been already historicized
7. allows more powerful to play the card of desire
8. represents existing norms and regulations, which are reproduced without being questioned
9. leads to self-abuse when former guests (artists, curators) reproduce in their subsequent exhibitions the perspective they have been exposed to and/or the already power relations they have worked within

If the ground to our practice on internalized hospitality, the non-abusive situation would imply

1. finding a model to articulate cosmopolical recognition as the main pre-condition for cosmopolitan rights and universal hospitality
2. stimulating criticality
3. articulating existing ambivalence in a new way - not as a space of desires, but as spaces that accommodate the requirements of internalized hospitality in the curatorial
4. accepting one’s own limitations when unable to find a way to deal with ambivalence
5. following accurate requests for rearrangements
6. acting in the space of real needs; acting on what is unstructured.

— Maja Ciric, *The (Un)spoken Abuse: Curatorial Hospitality through the Lens of Criticality*, 2016.





Who's afraid of Stoicism?  
The art of healing your world  
Rick Dolphijn

Part 1:  
Rethinking Stoicism

**[The] thinking of death is not thinking about the future. The exercise, thinking about death, is only a means for taking this cross-section view of life which enables one to grasp the value of the present, or again to carry out the great loop of memorization, by which one totalizes one's life and reveals it as it is. Judgment on the present and evaluation of the past are carried out in this thought of death, which precisely must not be a thought of the future but rather a thought of myself in the process of dying.** —Michel Foucault, *The Hermeneutics of Subject*, 2005.

In the quotation above, Michel Foucault, then still a young man but nearing the end of his life, came to explore Stoic philosophy as it was practiced in Greece, around 300 BC. Stoicism signals the birth of materialist thinking (at least in the Western tradition) and especially given the contemporary interests in a series of new materialisms, it is of importance to stress how immensely different and radical Stoic thinking has been in relation to the more transcendental, Platonist philosophies, that have dominated Western thought from its very start. In this short contribution, my aim is to explore the (alternative) richness of Stoicism, especially in how it analyses the self, matter (or the earth), and art...

I begin by noting three particularities of Stoic thinking, that are hinted upon in Foucault's quote. This will then lead us to the materialist idea of art that I want to develop in the second part of this text. But let me first summarize Stoicism, in three statements:

a) Everything starts from death

It is said (see for instance Sellars 2006) that the young Zeno (of Citium), who is supposed to have started Stoicism in ancient Athens (by gathering his followers near a column (*stoa*) at the central square), got much of his inspiration from *the figure* of the late Socrates. Learning about him mainly through Xenophon's *Memorabilia*, Zeno learned how *the life* of the philosopher was made up of events and singularities. Most vividly, as we all know, is in that sense the self-chosen death of Socrates, for it is at that moment, the moment he himself chooses death over his life, *that his life 'takes place.'* Unwilling to subject himself to the possible verdicts of the people's court that had accused him of poisoning the youth, Socrates, by drinking the poison, celebrates *his* life, *id est*, the life that he led *on his conditions*.

In Stoic thinking the willingness to face one's own death, at every moment, in every time, is crucial. Facing death means that *at all times*, life is not a given, but a choice, and a choice that comes with responsibility. Unlike the Platonists and the Christians (soon to come) who place their life in the hands of either the philosopher/king or of their One God, and whose only relief is hope (for the Ideal world, for an afterlife), the Stoics are not afraid to take full responsibility for life, as a whole, and as it happens. And of course, that means facing its ultimate consequence (which is death), *at all times*.

Death, then, will not take place in the future, as Foucault also puts it above. It is also not to be feared. Rather, it is the *only* way to grasp the value of the present. Choose the life *you* want! Or not...

b) Search your great health

It is no coincidence that the two medical thinkers with the greatest impact on the Occidental discourse on health and well-being, namely Hippocrates and Galen, are both considered to be important contributors to the Stoic tradition (Hippocrates indirectly, Galen through many of his writings). But unfortunately, these medical practices have been deeply polluted by Christianity afterwards. This can be seen in the Hippocratic Oath, for instance, as it translates the very practical 'materialist and monist' statement "I will abstain from all intentional wrong-doing" into the 'transcendentalist and dualist' claim "I will do no harm" (see for instance 1943). Going back to the original texts and reading Hippocrates and Galen with care, we are witnessing a medical practice which comes much closer to the Stoicism that Foucault summarized. What they suggest has little to do with the generalised (and fundamentalist) "pro-life" ethics that is practiced in our hospitals today, in which one is by definition subjected to the General Rules of medical science (remember that etymologically speaking the guest is also the enemy (cf. *hostile*) who needs to be disciplined (-*pes* comes from *potestas*, power). In contrast to the sociology and the politics of the hospital, the Stoicist idea of health, emphasises what Foucault summarized with his plea for 'an aesthetics of the self'; rather than working with abstract (dualist) concepts that apply to everyone and everything (sane and insane, sick and healthy, doing good and doing harm, death and life), Stoic materialism emphasizes the ongoing *creation* of one's body and mind. This ongoing creation searched for in the ever-changing alliances with food/medicine, through exercise, through sexuality, etc., and as such in search of a good life. For the Stoic medic, a doctor cannot 'do good' or 'do harm' in a general sense. The doctor assists every individual patient in their search for a Great Health as Nietzsche put it (see Dolphijn 208/9) *on one's own conditions*.

We need the power of modern critical theories of how meanings and bodies get made, not in order to deny meanings and bodies, but in order to build meanings and bodies that have a chance for life. —Donna Haraway, *The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective*, 1988.

Health is the ongoing struggle that we are involved in. It is a difficult struggle, tiring, exhausting us even. So just as we need good food, and good exercise, we sometimes need good advice from others, to persevere in being, to continue the struggle. This is how Michel Serres, whom I would consider the Great Stoic of our times, proposes to rephrase health (1995, 135):

**Health is not silence, health is not harmony, health deals with every appeal, every cry, the caterwauling; from a meagre old melody, me today, weak, ignorant and craven, plus the clamour of circumstances, it creates a magnificent new orchestral display, its oeuvre. Health never stops beginning... Health negotiates the noise... Every living being is a survivor.**

#### c) The Physician *and* the Philosopher

Chrysippus once said that in Stoicism, the philosopher is the physician of the soul. With that he says that for the true Stoic Sage, distinguishing between the philosopher and the physician makes little sense in the end. Refusing the strict opposition between the body and the mind, the search for one's Great Health *necessarily* comes with the search for Great Ideas (that in a way 'fit' one's physique). Spinoza's formula that the mind is an idea of the body while the body is the object of the mind, fully fits this Stoic ideal. Creative thinking then, is a material practice that is deeply involved in the lives we live, in what matters to us and what does not. This time I seek the company of Gregory Bateson, who, when starting up cybernetics, knew very well that computers (/calculators) do not exist



in a virtual world, but, like all that matters, are part of us/our thinking and involved in our ideas (1972, 491):

**What thinks and engages in trial and error is the man plus the computer plus the environment. And the lines between man, computer and environment are purely artificial, fictitious lines. They are lines across the pathways along which information or difference is transmitted. They are not boundaries of the thinking system. What thinks is the total system which engages in trial and error, which is man plus environment.**

Part 2:

The materialist idea of art

**To become a work of art is the object of living.**

—Oscar Wilde

As we can read in the first part of this text, the notion of the self as proposed by Stoicism, is quite different from the modernist notion of the individual in that it *necessary involves that which lies outside of the individual*. The self in Stoicism is a relationality that comes into existence because of the negotiation between inside and outside. The Stoic Sage, the absolute hero of our story, can thus, on the basis of what we read above, be defined as the physician plus the philosopher *practicing aesthetics*. But this practicing of aesthetics is not limited to either the inside

Even while in constant motion, water is also a planetary archive of meaning and matter. To drink a glass of water is to ingest the ghosts of bodies that haunt that water. When “nature calls” some time later, we return to the cistern and the sea not only our antidepressants, our chemical estrogens, or our more commonplace excretions, but also the meanings that permeate those materialities: disposable culture, medicalized problem-solving, ecological disconnect. Just as the deep oceans harbor particulate records of former geological eras, water retains our more anthropomorphic secrets, even when we would rather forget. Our distant and more immediate pasts are returned to us in both trickles and floods. —Astrida Neimanis, *Hydrofeminism: Or, On Becoming a Body of Water*, 2012.

**Who's afraid of Stoicism?**  
**The art of healing your world**

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Personal thoughts, drawings, or annotations



of a body (the self) or to its outside (the world). And through practicing aesthetics, the Sage is not so much interested in the production of an artwork (the painting of a canvas, the composition of a score), although these can definitely be part of it. But what the Sage in the end is about, is the creation of a *life*. Through its death.

Over 2000 years after the death of Zeno, the Stoic Sage is still at work everywhere. We only need to recognize it, open our eyes to its work.

Talking about life. In his early years, Tom Waits proved himself a Stoic Sage when he foresaw the event of his life as a singer, claiming “Now I’m smoking cigarettes and I strive for purity” (Waits 1992).

He was obviously in search for his Great Health, and knew very well that he had to smoke cigarettes (and drink whiskey) in order to find the most beautiful, earthly and raspy voice that marked his life.

Talking about death. With his final album *Blackstar*, David Bowie prove himself a Stoic Sage when he sang to us “Where the fuck did Monday go?” knowing that, 48 hours after the album came out, he would step out of life on a Sunday... Though very ill, his choice for a life on his own conditions, because of the event of its last moments, shows the practicing aesthetics of Stoicism.

So let’s be very clear on this. Stoic aesthetics is not interested in individual artworks (objects) or in individual selves (subjects) as it doesn’t single out any of these bodies, forcing us to think of what a life creates instead. Stoicism is affirmative and inclusive which means that its aesthetics of the self, is an aesthetics that has to be open to all that matters to us. Stoicism does not call for a responsibility in the abstract sense of the word (for oneself, for one’s children, for one’s goods). One bears responsibility for a *life* (and all that comes with it).

When Patricia Piccinini introduces us to her scary-and-super-cute sculptures, that too reveals an aesthetics of the self, it reveals a Stoic life in the making. A life that cares, that affirmatively searches for alliances, that, in its creativity, gives form to the world anew. For the

craftsmanship that reveals itself with artworks like these, is all about giving form to oneself and the world.

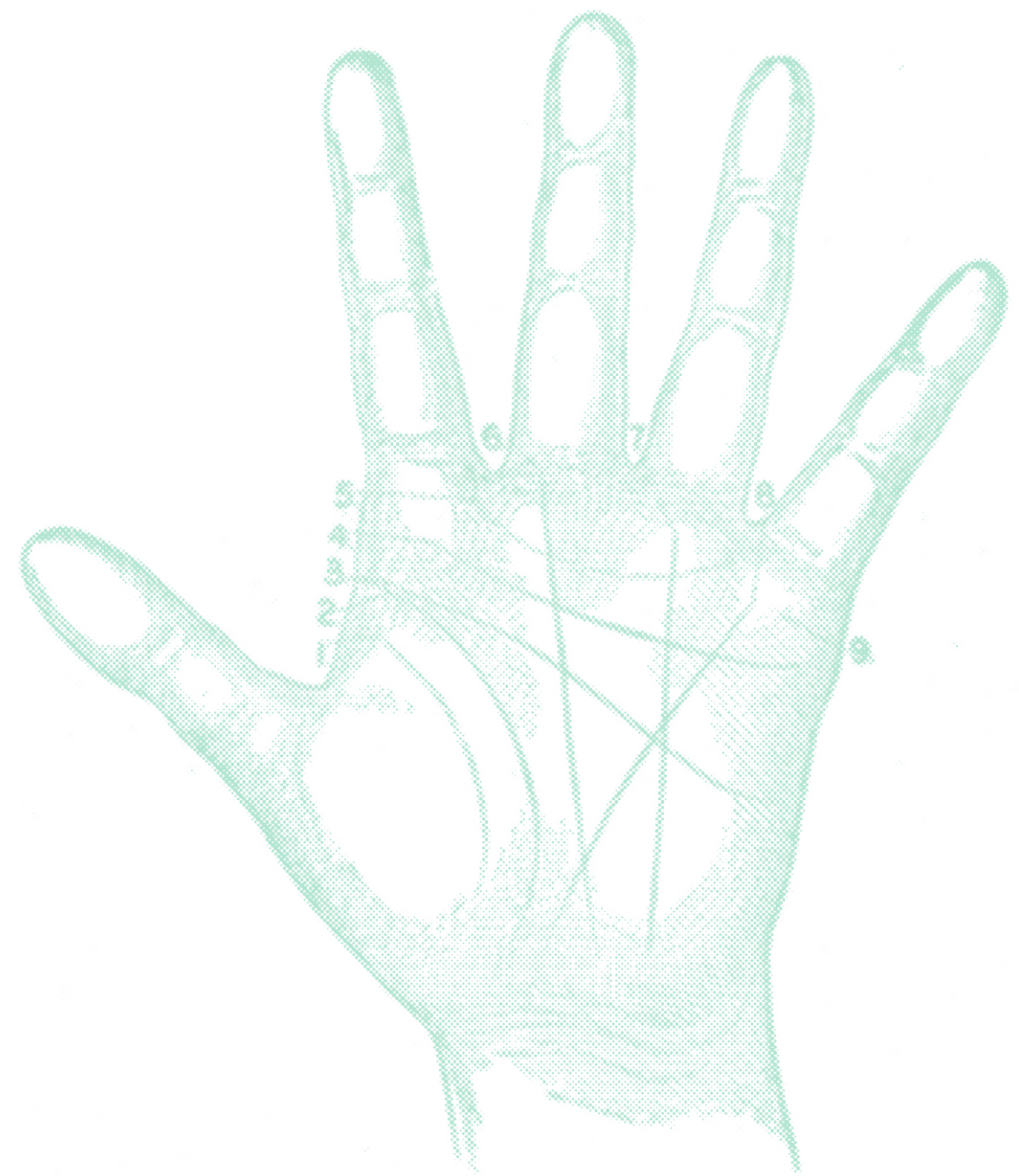
When Marina Abramovic slows down time with her durational performances, she is slowing down an environment. Exploring the limits of what her body can do, facing the other, facing Ulay, she is not just a physician of life but necessarily a philosopher too. As with *the Artist is Present*, for example, her never-ending presence touches everything that matters. All bodies, all ideas, not simply slow down, but transform, are moved by the particular life she proposes.

This is what the Sage is able to teach us; choosing to live a life, to create it, does not mean any less than to heal the world.

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Hippocrates, *Hippocrats and the Oath or the Hippocratic Oath* (Chicago: Ares Publishers, 1943).  
John Sellars, *Stoicism* (Chesham: Acumen / Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006).  
Michel Serres, *Genesis* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1995).

In what he calls a ‘sociology of absences’ legal sociologist Boaventura de Sousa Santos calls for ecology of knowledge/s that enables alternative ways of knowing and scientific knowledge to coexist, and argues that there can be no global social justice without global cognitive justice. At the heart of this engagement in social justice and indigenous research are questions about knowledge, education, participation and development. There are enduring questions about power relations, about agency and structure, ethics and methodologies. Research is simply one site at which these issues intersect. Research is important because it is the process of knowledge production; It is a way we constantly expand knowledge. Research for social justice expands and improves the conditions for justice: it is an intellectual, cognitive and moral project, often fraught, newer complete, but worthwhile. —Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, 2012.



## Rehearsing Hospitalities Companion 1 Contributors

## Asematila

Founded in 2015, Asematila ry is a non-profit association and collective

whose purpose has been to maintain the cultural space called Asematila, located at Huopalahti's old train station. Asematila ry is a grassroots actor whose goal has been to reflect on the politics and accessibility of a voluntarily run cultural space as well as to create a space for diverse and parallel cultural activities outside the city center of Helsinki.

Asematila members Océane Bruel, Venla Helenius, Sandra Lindblom and Sanna Ritvanen are collaboratively contributing to *Gathering for Rehearsing Hospitalities*.

## Yvonne Billimore

is an artist-curator, currently working as associate programme curator at

Frame Contemporary Art Finland. Previously she worked at Scottish Sculpture Workshop in rural Aberdeenshire, where she developed and produced their programme of residencies, projects, workshops and public events. Her work facilitates situations for collective learning, exchange and experiences with particular attention given to feminist and ecological practices.

## Clelia Coussonnet

is an independent curator, art editor and writer based Aix-en-Provence.

Coussonnet is interested in how visual cultures tackle political, social and spiritual issues in different, or complementary, ways than other disciplines. She also likes to create interdisciplinary projects outside of traditional art circuits, particularly in contexts linked to craft or heritage and in spaces previously unused for cultural projects.

## Rick Dolphijn

is an associate professor based at Humanities, Utrecht University, with an

interest in transdisciplinary research at large. He has published widely on

new materialism, ecology/ecosophy and art and is interested in the developments in continental philosophy and speculative thought. His academic work has appeared in journals like *Angelaki*, *Rhizomes*, *Collapse* and *Deleuze Studies*. Most recently he published an edited volume entitled *Michel Serres and the Crises of the Contemporary* with Bloomsbury Academic.

**Jussi Koitela** works currently as a Head of Program at Frame Contemporary Art Finland and independent curator. Lately his curatorial work has entangled art, critical thinking, feminist philosophy of science and materiality in different exhibitionary forms and knowledge production. His curatorial projects have been presented among others at Treignac Projet, Contemporary Art Museum of Estonia (EKKM), De Appel Arts Centre, SixtyEight Art Institute, Trøndelag Centre for Contemporary Art and Kiasma Theatre. Koitela was a participant of De Appel Curatorial Programme in 2015/2016.

**Pia Lindman** is doctoral candidate at the program of Nordic Cultures and Environmental Politics at Lapland University researching her concept of the subsensorial. A result of many years of investigation into the body and its place within the cultural space, Lindman's work responds to a contemporary desire to mend the fission between science and art, healing and creativity—and moves beyond the human body proper to multiple realms of life.

**Ali Akbar Mehta** is a founder member and current Artistic Director of Museum of Impossible Forms, Helsinki, and Artistic Producer at M-cult media residency, Helsinki. He is also pursuing a Doctoral Research program at the Contemporary Art Department at Aalto University, Helsinki. Through his research-based transmedia practice, he creates immersive archives that explore collective memetic histories, narratives of memory, identity, violence, and conflict.

**Museum of Impossible Forms (m{if})**, in Kontula, Helsinki, is a culture centre founded in 2017 by a group of artists/curators/philosophers/activists/pedagogists as an antiracist and queer-feminist project. m{if} manifests itself through its multilingual libraries, an ongoing archive, and events. It is a para-museum space representing a contact zone, a space of unlearning, formulating identity constructs, norm-critical consciousness and critical thinking.

**Irina Mutt** is a writer and curator from Barcelona currently based in Helsinki. Some of her curating projects, navigated the possibilities of mixing politics and pleasure through queer feminism, friendship, embodied writing and publishing: 'Undoing text' (Inéditos 2016, Casa Encendida Madrid) 'MICRO' (Nau Estruch 2015) or narratives around vulnerability as a position to share rather than overcoming: 'A break can be what we are aiming for' (BCN-Producció 2018). Since 2017 she's part of the public program commission at Hangar BCN.

**Rachael Rakes** is a curator, critic, and teacher from New York City. Rakes is currently the Head Curator and Manager of the Curatorial Programme at De Appel in Amsterdam, the Editor at Large for Verso Books, and Programmer at Large for the Film Society of Lincoln Center—where she co-curates the annual festival Art of the Real. Rakes has taught on social practice, aesthetics and documentary art at The New School and Harvard Summer School, and currently serves as Supervisor for the Sandberg Institute Critical Studies programme.

**Vidha Saumya** is a drawer, poet, cook and bookmaker. She is a founding member of the Museum of Impossible Forms, Helsinki and is working on the project, 'Monumentless Moments: Utopia of Figureless Plinths' supported by the Kone Foundation, Finland.

Marianne Savallampi is an art historian and curator based in Helsinki. She has a MA in art history from the University of Glasgow, UK, and a MA in Curating from Aalto University, Finland. She is currently co-artistic director at Museum of Impossible Forms culture centre in Kontula, Helsinki. Her practice involves operating in the crossings of art, politics and activism, with focus on queer and feminist concerns.

Sumugan Sivanesan is an anti-disciplinary researcher, writer and artist currently based in Berlin. Often working collaboratively his interests span migrant histories and minority politics, activist media, artist infrastructures and more-than-human rights. Recently he has produced projects for the The Floating University, Berlin (2019), Insituto Procomun LABxSantos, Brazil (2018) and Nida Art Colony (2018). [www.sivanesan.net](http://www.sivanesan.net)

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Upon what kind of power structures of knowledge and knowing are contemporary art and artistic institutions dependent? Do practitioners in the art field reproduce oppressive Western epistemic paradigms through artistic practices and institutional structures, and if so, is there space for emancipatory ways of knowing? What are the ways that intersectional subjectivities open up new epistemic processes within the artistic field? These are among the questions and considerations that provide a critical lens for the 2019 *Rehearsing Hospitalities* programme.