

Fabian Nyberg

*the open-ended space*

*– A perspective on the art piece's space*

MA Thesis

30 ECTS credits

Master's Programme in Design for Theatre, Film and Television

Design for the Performing Arts

School of Arts, Design and Architecture

Aalto University

2017

Fabian Nyberg

the open-ended space

– A perspective on the art piece's space

# Table of contents

Introduction	6	The Art Piece as a Phenomenon	32
The relation to scenography?	8	Towards another objectivity	32
The art piece's space	10	Where does the art piece end?	37
The form	12	As a matter of art?	46
Setting the scene – another perspective on the world?	14	Creating potential – How do you want to raise your child?	47
Perspectives on space	15	Artistic agency and authorship	49
Perspectives on the art piece's space – an entity or a phenomenon?	20	Structures and ethical aspects	52
A material arrangement	21	Conclusion	58
A habit of mind?	24	References	60
Diffraction or reflection?	26	Published	60
		Unpublished	60

# Introduction

...understanding humans and nonhumans in their mutual constitution, as integral parts of the universe – not as beings in the universe...

– Karen Barad in *Meeting the Universe Halfway* (2007, 169)

This MA thesis is a reflection (pun intended, you will get it later) on the boundaries of an art piece. I am interested in "the space" or "the sphere" that the art piece is as a phenomenon in its becoming as different agencies interact in the world. The term "art piece" can here be understood as any work that has been created in a human artistic purpose. I am aware that this is a very broad definition, but for the task at hand it is important to keep the definition open. All other approaches would entail a great risk to forget some important perspectives on the subject.

In this thesis I use the metaphor of space to talk about the sphere that I imagine exists around every art piece as a phenomenon in the world. This space is not limited to the immediate physical surroundings of the art piece, nor to any one place in the world (eg.

a building, a server, etc.) where it is "placed" or where it is experienced. It is something far more multifaceted and some of its levels exists in the social and imaginary parts of the world. (These physical and social/imaginary-spheres can be compared to the terms "actual" and "virtual" used by the French philosopher Gilles Deleuze (1994, 208), where the "virtual is opposed not to the real but to the actual" and "*is fully real in so far as it is virtual*". I do not approach the questions in this essay through Deleuze and I also try to stay away from dichotomies in general, but it is a good reference point for the way I think about space in this essay.) I also claim that there is no art piece without this space. Without it the art piece is only material without context and cannot form the phenomenon that a piece of art is. Therefore this space is what makes an art piece an art piece and it is extremely interesting and important to think about how we can relate to this space and its boundaries.

## Dialogi The Dialogue

**Teos yrittää saada kokijan kysymään "Missä minä olen?"  
Teos antaa ymmärtää, että olet sekä siellä että täällä**

**The art piece tries to make the experiencer to ask "Where am I?"  
The art piece suggests that you ar both here and there**

On a personal level, I see this thesis as an attempt to clarify the process I've been through during my studies in scenography. It is an attempt to grasp and get a perspective on the deeper questions that have risen during these years. It is an attempt to verbalize my own changing thought patterns, as well as the sometimes paradoxical ways to think about art. The changing ways of working, the new working methods, non-hierarchical thinking inside working groups, among other phenomena in the field have led me to think that the questions addressed in this text are important also in a broader context than on a personal level.

In this thesis I will not be looking at how I got here or where I am going, but rather accepting that I am here right now, trying to make sense of it. But I feel obligated to explain my perspective of why I think this is a relevant work in the field of scenography and why I feel it is a relevant work as a thesis in our field.

## The relation to scenography?

In the article “The Power of Space in a Virtual World”, the theatre historian Arnold Aronson (2008, 23) claims that ”scenography is perhaps less well-defined than it ever has been” and that the whole field of performing arts is changing in a profound way. To state it shortly: not every performance production needs a scenographer, and every scenographer does not need to work in performing arts. If we would like to find the lowest common denominator that covers all of these working roles, it could be something like claiming that the work is about being a spatial dramaturg; an expert on space; a spatial designer; or something similar. The lowest common denominator is space – understood in a way that the project at hand needs.

As Aronson suggests, the working roles and projects that a scenographer can be involved in can be very different these days. It is not obvious that a scenographer works with set design in a more traditional theatre, dance or opera production where the role is pretty specific and framed inside the institutionalised model of how the work should be done. The scenographer's role inside the field of performing arts has become more multifaceted and fluid. For example, it is not rare to talk about immaterial scenography. And besides this there are many kinds of different projects outside the field of performing arts that suit a scenographer's professionalism well. In the year 2017, the first “definition” of scenography that a potential future student of scenography in Finland probably will have a look at was this introduction on the Aalto University web page:

Lavastajan luoma tila on täynnä merkityksiä. Se puhuu materiaaleillaan, väreillään ja muodoillaan. Tila kertoo, missä esitys tapahtuu, se antaa tiedoksemme ajan, paikan ja sijainnin tai herättää kysymyksen niistä. Se sytyttää tunnelman ja luo erityisen läsnäolemisen tavan. Esittävässä taiteissa lavastaja on tilan asiantuntija, joka työskentelee yhdessä muiden taiteilijoiden ja suunnittelijoiden kanssa. Lavastajan työ perustuu ymmärrykseen tilan estetiikasta, dramaturgiasta ja siitä, miten tila vaikuttaa toimintaan. Esittävien taiteiden alue koostuu teatterista, oopperasta, performanssista, tanssitaiteesta ja sirkuksesta sekä uusista vasta kehittyvistä esitysmuodoista. Esitystaiteen ohella lavastus on laajenemassa myös museo- ja näyttelysuunnitteluun, erilaisiin tapahtumiin ja peleihin sekä ympäristö- ja yhteisötaiteeseen. (Esittävien taiteiden lavastus, 2017)

*My translation: “The space created by the scenographer is full of meanings. It speaks with its materials, colors and shapes. Space tells where the performance is placed, it gives us information about the time, place, and location or raises a question about them. It gives birth to the atmosphere and creates a special presence. In performing arts, the scenographer is an expert of space, working with other artists and designers. The scenographer's work is based on an understanding of aesthetics of space, dramaturgy, and how space affects actions. The field of performing arts consists of theatre, opera, performance art, dance and circus, as well as new emerging forms of performance. Additionally, the field of scenography is expanding to museum and exhibition design, various events and games as well as environmental and community art.”*

The Canadian communications theorist Marshall McLuhan (2001, 8) writes: ”This fact, characteristic of all media, means that the ‘content’ of any medium is always another medium”. In this sense, we can think of space as a medium that always relates to another medium – either in the sense of being the ”content” of another medium or in the sense that it ”contains” other media. And usually the relations are even more complex than this, but I'll get back to this later. If we try to think of space as a medium, we can understand it as something abstract but also as something concrete. For the scenographer, space is not a tangible material or medium in the same manner as for example light or sound is for a lighting or sound designer. Scenographers can work through both the abstract and the concrete notion of space and I would claim that every project needs both ways of thinking about space – sometimes focusing more on one aspect and sometimes on the other. This means scenographers do not work with physical materials all of the time. Scenographers simply work with spaces. Because these relations are fluid and a bit hard to grasp, it just does not feel like a good starting point to frame the questions in this text to the frame of scenography. I try to cross the borders of different artistic fields because I feel genre and boundary definitions will lead to narrow conclusions. This said, my own context will probably lead me to think from the perspective of a spatial artist or designer, even though the questions themselves are broader. Also I hope this perspective does not lead me to make too simple conclusions when viewed from the perspective of another artistic field.

## The art piece's space

Getting back to the medium of McLuhan, it raises some questions for me. What is space as a medium? What or where is the space where an art piece is "located" if we try to think of this space both in the concrete and in the abstract? What aspects does it have? Where are its borders or can we even define such borders? Is this space even possible to define?

I think of this space as something that exists in the "no man's land" between the artist and the art piece, the experiencer and the art piece or between the art piece and any other part of the world. I use the term experiencer in this essay, instead of the more traditional spectator or audience. I will think about the potential that space has and the potential that it may not have. I discuss the potential the art piece gets through this space and about the potential created when an artist makes material and artistic decisions. At the same time I try to remember at all times that artistic work in itself is only one of the many factors that enable the existence of such a space. I try to maintain a fluid relation to what this space is and try to dig as deep as possible in its multidimensionality.

In this manner, I hope that I at least at times manage to make a verbal sketch of this space and where its borders could be located – only to break it down in the next moment and create a new sketch. The chosen style of the text is essayistic and I want to make it clear that I do not consider my conclusions as truths but as an attempt to understand and structure

ways of thinking about space. I try to be true to the following citation from the philosopher Alfred North Whitehead (1978, XIV): "how shallow, puny, and imperfect are efforts to sound the depths in the nature of things. In philosophical discussion, the merest hint of dogmatic certainty as to finality of statement is an exhibition of folly."

## Mittakaava

**Tunteiden mittakaava**  
**Tilan mittakaava**  
**Narratiivin mittakaava**  
**Mittakaava, jonka näkee vasta jälkeenpäin**

**Ääretön mittakaava**  
**Äärellinen mittakaava**  
**Rajallinen näkökenttä**  
**Rajaton kuvittelukyky**

**Taideteos on tila**

**Se on tila sen fyysisessä mielessä**

**Taideteos luo tilan**

**Se luo mielikuvituksellisen tilan**

**Teos on omalaatuinen, koska sen funktio on lähtökohtaisesti määrittelemätön.**

**Kokija luo tilan teoksen ympärille. Tällä tilalla on avoin raja. Teos tarttuu kokijaan ja sitä kautta maailmaan. Teos tarttuu kokijaan ja sitä kautta maailmaan.**

## Scale

**The emotional scale**  
**The spatial scale**  
**The narrative scale**  
**The scale which is visible only afterwards**

**The infinite scale**  
**The limited scale**  
**The limited field of vision**  
**The unlimited ability to imagine**

**The art piece is a space**

**The art piece is a space in its physical sense**

**The art piece creates a space**

**It creates a space an imaginative space**

**The art piece is unique, since its function is – in principle – indeterminate.**

**The experiencer creates a space around the art piece. This space is open-bordered. The art piece sticks to the experiencers and through them to the world.**

## The form

I think about this thesis as a work consisting of three parts. These three parts unfold on the pages side by side. The first part flows on the pages as the theoretical part of this thesis work. It takes the form of an essay, and the approach is theoretic-philosophical. The second part flows on the pages as well, not on every page, but when I feel they have a place. It consists of both prosaic and poetic fictional fragments written in Swedish and Finnish. The fragments are presented in the original language in which I wrote them, but I have also added English translations. The third part consists of an artistic piece – a spatial installation with the title *Hold (2017)*, created as artistic collaboration with the lighting designer Mateus Manninen, as well as the philosopher Joel Silvennoinen and sound designer Eero Nieminen. In this printed version of the work I have chosen to represent this third part through the pictures flowing on the pages. The pictures are all frames taken from the same video material that I produced in an early phase of the artistic process. With a few exceptions, I have chosen not to make written connections between the three parts, but by letting them unfold side by side and in the frame of the form, they are related to each other in the layout of this work. I imagine it will still be possible for the reader to understand the relation between them.

Another reason not to make too many written links between the three parts is that I want to avoid creating a hierarchical relation between them where one part justifies the existence of another part. The three parts simply approach the same questions with the tools of three different genres and I hope the reader will feel they start to comment each other through

their relation. This form is a result of a process and I want to cite one inspirational source, which has led me to the decision not to make written links or to explain them.

There has been much talk and concern in recent years about how much talk is produced in the field of contemporary art. [...] How is it possible that visual culture can so intensely lean on language and linguistic arguments? [...] This must all be set against a process of fundamental social change whose impact cannot be exaggerated. Because of a number of reasons on the macro level, trying to understand any field of activity today no longer involves some discrete, clearly defined and comprehensible whole, but a pluralistic, nebulous and uncontrollable thing. The illusion of a single truth or great narrative has not disappeared. It is now accompanied by several colleagues, competing versions of reality, notions of how reality should be experienced and understood. We are faced with a plurality of multiple origins, in spite of which each situation always has one dominant, accepted and adopted model. (Hannula 2005, 9-10)

In the first part I use literature from different scientific discourses to approach the questions at hand. It would be possible to talk about this as the theoretical part of this thesis. In an essayistic manner I have chosen the literature based on what has been inspiring for me in relation to the subject. In this sense I am not trying to stay true to any specific methodology,

and the methodology of this work – if someone feels the need to categorize – has been developing through the process.

In the beginning of my own process with this work, when I was reading a lot and finding different literary approaches to map the ground I was standing on, I realized it was a quite difficult process. In the beginning I tried to find literature from my own field, but realized that the questions I want to approach are broader than that. If I try to fit them into the perspective and only the perspective of my own field, I will probably fail. So I started to search for literature outside my own field and through a funny coincidence I found the American feminist theorist and theoretical physicist Karen Barad's *Meeting the Universe Halfway*. It later happened to become a very strong influence for this thesis work and has become my main reference.

In the second part I have given myself permission to “just write” fictional stories, poems and text fragments about subjects that for me somehow relate to the questions at hand. I think of these texts as written pictures or metaphors related to the subject of this thesis. The form has been inspired by different sources, Georges Perec's *Species of Spaces and Other Pieces* being one.

In the third part the approach is artistic. The spatial installation *Hold (2017)* is a result of interacting with the the questions at hand, and trying to approach them from an artistic point

of view. Inside the context of an artistic MA thesis work, *Hold* is an artistic collaboration between the lighting designer Mateus Manninen and myself. Outside the context of an artistic MA thesis work, the artistic working group also includes sound designer Eero Nieminen and philosopher Joel Silvennoinen, who has been in a constant dialogue with us and helped us to find alternative viewpoints to the questions at hand. The dialogue has taken place in both spoken and written form.

# Setting the scene

## – another perspective on the world?

Meaning is made possible through specific material practices.  
– Karen Barad in *Meeting the Universe Halfway* (2007, 148)

### Perspectives on space

It has been hard for me to map out what the questions discussed in this thesis really are about. I know it has to do with space. But what does space really mean? What does it mean to me and what does it mean to others? What is artistic space? Are spaces just physical spheres for human beings, or is there something more to these questions? How does this relate to art?

The questions in this essay are fluid. And the different perspectives on them are fluid. I do not want to claim anything else. Working as a part of collective artistic processes has lead me to question what my work really is about. Also the artistic “meta-process” that the work with the installation has been, thinking about boundaries of spaces and trying to create art with these questions as some kind of “content”, have given me some new perspectives on space. For me, this work has lead me to think about fundamental questions that relates both to the field of scenography, but also broader, to art as a phenomenon in the world.

To begin with, I will give an example of the pondering we’ve been through while working with the installation. The example is taken from a dialogue with Joel about space, and the

kind of viewpoints he has given us is the following text, taken from a Whatsapp discussion the 30<sup>th</sup> of August 2017:

Jos tila on todistus siitä että on mahdollista sijaita jossain, on tilan olemassaolo todistus siitä että kokijan/toimijan on tarve sijaita juuri siinä; tämän tarpeen määrittää toiminta, joka tilaan on tarkoitettu. Tämän toiminnan tarkoitus on määräytynyt historiallis-kulttuurisen kehityksen mukaan ja tila kuin tila on tehtävässään määräytynyt valjastamaan toivottua toimintaa, joka on suhteessa tilan/tilojen rajaaman rakennuksen, toimenkuvan, instituution valtaan, joka taas on suhteessa monimuotoisiin edelliset määritteet täyttäviin kokonaisuuksiin. Tilan tarkoitus on valjastaa toivotun toiminnan fokus, ja tämän fokuksen kiinteys määritetty toiminnan mukaan.

*My translation: “If the space is evidence of the possibility to be somewhere, then the existence of the space proves that the experiencer/agent has a need to be located exactly there; this need is determined by the action that is intended for the space. The purpose of this action is determined by the historical and cultural development, and any space has*

*been defined to harness the desired activity, which is in relation to the space/spaces framed by a building, a function, a power of an institution, which in turn are in relation to the complex wholes that meet the previous attributes. The purpose of the space is to harness the focus of the desired action, and the focus itself is determined by the action."*

In this text Joel continues a thought by the French phenomenological philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1993, 42). I like his way of trying to grasp what space is about. Even though I will not go into phenomenology in this essay, the interesting part of this citation is the relation between the space and the person experiencing the space. What strikes me is that there is no space without this context of experience.

The French writer Georges Perec also relates to this question about the experience of space, although in different form and from another perspective. In the foreword to *Species of Spaces and other Places*:

We live in space, in these spaces, these towns, this countryside, these corridors, these parks. That seems obvious to us. Perhaps indeed it should be obvious. But it isn't obvious, not just a matter of course. It is real, obviously, and as a consequence most likely rational. We can touch. We can even allow ourselves to dream. There's nothing, for example, to stop us from imagining things that are neither towns nor countryside (nor suburbs), or Métro corridors that are at the same time public parks. Nor anything to forbid us imagining a Métro in the heart of the countryside

[*champagne*] (I've even before now seen an advertisement to that effect, but it was – how shall I put it? – a publicity campaign [*champagne*]).

What is certain, in any case, is that at a time too remote no doubt for any of us to have retained anything like a precise memory of it, there was none of all this: neither corridors, nor parks, nor towns, nor countryside. The problem isn't so much to find out how we have reached this point, but simply to recognize that we have reached it, that we are here. There isn't one space, a beautiful space, a beautiful space round about, a beautiful space all around us, there's a whole lot of small bits of space, and one of these bits is a Métro corridor, and another of them is a public park. Another – and here we suddenly enter into much more particularized spaces – originally quite modest in size, has attained fairly colossal dimensions and has become Paris, whereas a space near by, not necessarily any less well endowed to begin with, has been content to remain Pontoise. (Perec 1999, 5-6)

From the first years of my current studies, I remember a situation from a course in dramaturgy, where we laughed to the silliness of the following pondering about beauty in Aristotle's *Poetics*:

Moreover, since something beautiful, whether [it be] a living thing or a complete artefact, must not only have an orderly structure but must also have a size that is not arbitrary – for beauty is a matter of size as well as of order, which is why an extremely small creature does not get to be beautiful (because you get a close

## Sananlasku

**Me emme näe metsää puilta, mutta silti voimme käsittää metsää kokonaisuutena, toisin kuin sananlasku ehdottaa.**

## Proverb

**We do not see the wood from the trees, but we can still comprehend the forest as a whole, unlike the proverb suggests.**



[enough] look [at it] just at the moment that it goes out of focus), and neither can a very huge one [be beautiful] (because then a [single] view is not possible at all – its unity and wholeness elude your vision) as would be the case if a creature were a thousand miles [long] – so, in the same way that with [inanimate] bodies and living creatures [a just] size is needed ([a size] that can be well taken in at a single glance), so also with plots: they must have a length such as can readily be held in memory. (Aristotle 1997, 79)

We thought it was a passage hard to grasp and understand and that it did not really match reality. Nowadays I feel different about it. In the light of the following text by Marshall McLuhan I think the Aristotelian definition of beauty seems rather interesting.

When Sputnik had first gone into orbit a schoolteacher asked her second-graders to write some verse on the subject. One child wrote:

The stars are so big,  
The earth is so small,  
Stay as you are.

With man his knowledge and the process of obtaining knowledge are of equal magnitude. Our ability to apprehend galaxies and subatomic structures, as well, is a movement of faculties that include and transcend them. The second-grader

who wrote the words above *lives* in a world much vaster than any which a scientist today has instruments to measure, or concepts to describe. As W. B. Yeats wrote of this reversal, “The visible world is no longer a reality and the unseen world is no longer a dream.” (McLuhan 2001, 37-38)

The world is more vast than it used to be and we can assume it has become even more vast than it seemed in the eyes of McLuhan in the 1960’s. To the already infinite universe that McLuhan sketches before our eyes with the help of a second grader and W.B. Yeats, has been added a whole new infinite dimension of virtual space. In this sense it seems that we are living in a world more vast than ever before.

The way I think about art in this essay, an art experience changes the phenomenon of the art piece. In this kind of thought pattern, when we experience art (in the broadest sense of the word) the art piece changes through the experienter’s interaction with it. It gets new meanings and communicates not *to* us but *with* us and *through* us *with* the world around it. The art piece becomes more than its original materiality all together. And I claim that this is an ongoing process.

## Om expansion och hastigheter

Jag har lärt mig att universum expanderar hela tiden. Jag lärde mig att ljusets hastighet är den största hastigheten i universum. Men universums expansion är snabbare än ljusets hastighet. Jorden snurrar runt sin egen axel. Detta gör att jordytan som snabbast rör sig kring 1 650 km/h. Detta betyder att en människa, som står på jordytan på en punkt som befinner sig i 90-graders förhållande till jordens axel, rör sig ungefär i denna hastighet i förällande till jordens mittpunkt. Ett varv kring denna punkt kallar vi ett dygn. Men som vi vet så snurrar jorden också runt solen. Och i förhållande till solen så rör sig denna människa ca 23 500 km/h. Ett varv kring denna punkt kallar vi ett år. Men även vårt solsystem snurrar kring Vintergatans centrum i en medelhastighet på 828 000 km/h. Ett varv kring denna punkt kallas ett galaktiskt år. Dinosaurierna dog ut för knappt ett halvt galaktiskt år sedan. Men även Vintergatan rör sig. Den rör sig i förhållande till Virgosuperhopen, som i sin tur rör sig i förhållande till Laniakeasuperhopen, som i sin tur rör sig i förhållande till den Stora attraktorn, som i sin tur rör sig i riktning mot Shapelysuperhopen, ifall jag har förstått saken rätt. Och listan skulle väl gå att fortsätta.

Varje sådan rörelse och hastighet är alltså alltid definierad i förhållande till en viss annan punkt i universum, och denna punkt rör sig också. Därför kan man säga att vi samtidigt står stilla och rör oss oändligt fort och allt där emellan, beroende på hur vi definierar denna andra punkt.

## About expansion and velocities

I have learned that the universe is expanding all the time. I learned that the speed of light is the greatest speed in the universe. But the expansion of the universe is faster than the speed of light. The Earth spins around its own axis. This means that the ground is moving at about 1 650 km/h, at its best. This means that a person, standing on the ground at a point that is located at a 90 degree angle relative to the axis of the Earth, moves at an average of this speed in relation to the center of the Earth. A lap around this point is called a day. But as we know, the Earth also spins around the sun. And in relation to the sun, this human is moving at about 23 500 km/h. A lap around this point is called a year. But our solar system also revolves around the center of Milky Way at an average speed of 828 000 km/h. A lap around this point is called a galactic year. The inosaurs became extinct for less than a half galactic year ago. But also the Milky Way is moving. It moves in relation to the Virgo Supercluster, which in turn moves in relation to the Laniakea Supercluster, which in turn moves in relation to the Great Attractor, which, in turn, moves towards the Shapley Supercluster, if I have understood the matter correctly. And the list would probably go on.

Each such movement and velocity is thus always defined in relation to some other point in the universe, and this other point also moves. Therefore, we can say that at the same time we stand still and move infinitely fast and everything in between, depending on how we define this other point.

## Perspectives on the art piece's space – an entity or a phenomenon?

In *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, Karen Barad (2007) suggests a specific ontology and a way to think about the world – something she calls "agential realism". She bases her argumentation on quantum theory, especially on Niels Bohrs thoughts. Her theories are my main reference and inspirational point for this essay.

I do not want to claim that I – as a person without any background in physics – would understand every thought and phenomenon that Barad discusses in *Meeting the Universe Halfway*. But I still claim that her thoughts are possible to apply when we think about art, art pieces or the art world – as spaces, phenomena, spheres or something else. In this essay I use the term "art piece" as a synonym to an art piece as an entity and the idea of the "art piece's space" as a term for the whole phenomenon of the art piece.

I have been told this essay approaches a new materialist and posthumanist world view. Therefore, I want to state that I won't relate to these in any other way here than through my main reference – Barad's *Meeting the Universe Half Way* – that is written from a new materialist and posthumanist perspective . But I do not think this essay in itself is academic enough to take a stand to these discourses. I do not want to place myself inside these discourses, I just want to acknowledge where my source of inspiration can be placed.

We easily think of art pieces as entities or "wholes" that have "physical" boundaries or "outer" borders. And it seems pretty clear that we in many cases can define a physical border for art

pieces. Novels are inside their covers or as files on a computer, tablet or server. This piece of thesis – even though it is not art (or is it a part of it?) seems to be definable through its borders and covers. Paintings are often painted on a very definable canvas or other area. Some sculptures are cast in one piece and in one material. Music can be thought of as physical waves in matter.

But the physical borders of these works has nothing to do with what makes them art. Regarding only these physical borders and properties we can make assumptions about a medium, at the most. But the medium does not define it as art. A painted wall has the potential to be a painted wall or a mural. A piece of cast iron can either be a frying pan or a sculpture. Even the exact same material conditions within "the borders of the piece" can be different things. A urinal can either be a urinal or an installation, having in mind Marcel Duchamp's *Fountain* (1917, replica 1964). A theatre stage with a cleaning trolley on it can either be an empty theatre stage that someone is about to clean or a scenography for a performance.

Therefore it seems pretty clear that the entities we think about when we think about art pieces not necessarily contain any physical attributes that make them art. It is not their (own) materiality that make them art pieces. Because of this I want to suggest that we need to broaden the view a bit and think of the borders of the art piece from another point of view than as entities. I want to suggest that we think about an art piece as a phenomenon. This phenomenon contains physical qualities but also other things. So the big question is: what is the rest of it?

## A material arrangement

As I already discussed, art pieces have material borders. Art pieces are made of matter. It is hard to imagine a piece of art that has no materiality to it. Even if we speak about virtual pieces of art, they are located somewhere physically on a server, on a computer or some other technical platform and the audience needs some kind of technical apparatus to experience the work. This apparatus can be considered as an extension of our senses, an extension of us. And without this apparatus, without any way to experience the art piece, it loses its meaning.

There are also pieces of art that minimize their materiality. In the unpublished article "Kokemusesityksen teoria" ("Theory of Experience Based Performance", my translation) Eero-Tapio Vuori discusses what a performance is and what it is to be part of an audience:

Aloin tehdä kollegani kanssa kokeita. Eräs niistä oli *Portiton portti* (1999). Se oli esitys ilman yhtään esiintyjää. Katsojat asetettiin istumaan tunniksi porttikongiin, joka rajasi edessä näkyvän maailman valkokankaan tavoin. Oikeastaan mitään erikoista ei tapahtunut. Tunnin aikana katsojien editse kulki hyvin erilaisia ihmisiä (ja eläimiä) – mutta ei yhtään näyttelijää. Mitään ei oltu rakennettu. Oli annettu vain yksinkertainen suggestio: istu tässä ja katso. Jotain outoa silti tapahtui ja näkymä edessämme muuttui esitykseksi. Ja useimmat tuntuivat pitävän kokemuksesta. (Vuori n.d., 1)

*My translation (brackets added): "I started to make experiments with my colleagues. One of them was Portiton portti [The Gateless Gateway] (1999). It was a performance without performers. For one hour, the spectators were placed in a gateway that framed the world in front of them like a [projection] screen. Actually, nothing special happened. In the course of the hour, a wide variety of people (and animals) passed by in front of the spectators – but no actors. Nothing was built. There was only a simple suggestion: sit here and look. Something strange still happened and the view in front of us turned into a performance. And most seemed to like the experience."*

This kind of performance minimizes its materiality. Vuori claims that nothing was built. I myself would say that Vuori and his colleagues use some parts of the world as material to create a performance situation. The performance is a material arrangement in the world. It is a kind of equivalent to the "readymade" of the fine arts world. To present an object in a certain way gives the object a framing that makes meaning possible (this can be compared to the citation from Barad in the beginning of this chapter). In the same manner, the performance situation that Vuori is talking about is creating a framing. This framing – or material arrangement – gives it meaning inside the phenomenon of the art piece. And here it is important to remember that the experiencers themselves are also a part of the framing and material arrangement. From an outside perspective it even can seem meaningless to see a group of people sitting in a gateway.

In both the case of the readymade and the case of Vuori's performance the materiality of the work is less about creating content and more about creating a situation – or a medium if one wants. By placing an everyday object in an art gallery or by placing an audience in a gateway for one hour, some material arrangements have been made and in these particular cases these material arrangements happened to be considered as art by the experiencers. So, as an artist it seems to be impossible to escape the materiality of the work, even though it is possible to approach it with different methods. Different artistic media offers different approaches – for example, in a musical performance or rehearsal, musicians use their bodies and their material instruments to rearrange the particles in the air with the sound waves they produce. A sculptor uses different material sketches or processes to eventually reach the material form that is the sculpture.

These examples can be compared to the statement above by Marshall McLuhan (2001, 8) about “the ‘content’ of any medium” always being “another medium”. If we continue with the example of Vuori's performance, it may be that Vuori wanted to criticise the tradition of having objects and performers on stage in a performance, or that he wanted to suggest that the public space is a stage, but these kind of intentions do not change the medium, they are only in a critical relation to the medium. Marshall McLuhan (2001, 13-14) continues: “Cubism [...] suddenly announced that *the medium is the message*. Before [...] it was not obvious that the medium is the message. The message, it seemed, was the ‘content,’ as people used to ask what a painting was *about*. Yet they never thought to ask what a melody was about, nor what a house or a dress was about. In such matters, people retained some sense of the whole pattern, of form and function as a unity”.

With these examples in mind, it seems that an art piece always consists of matter and that it has some physical borders in spacetime, even though it starts to become clear that the entities we think of should rather be thought of as phenomena. The medium is a part – and only a part – of the phenomenon, because it is a part of the material arrangement of the art piece in the world.

In the light of these examples everything becomes interesting when we start to consider the different agents – for example the experiencers – as a part of the phenomenon – or in my terms the space – that the art piece creates (or actually *is*). Outside the right framing everything loses meaning. This is true for both the readymade and Vuori's performance and they even lose their essence as art pieces. The urinal is still a urinal and the gateway is still a gateway.

It follows that the audience and social context is an essential part of the art piece, the phenomenon and the materiality of the piece of art. Without the audience there is no piece of art. Just think about the well-known philosophical example of a tree falling in the forest with no one around to hear it. Without the artist, the material arrangement does not exist – there is no tree that makes a sound – and so the artist is has to be considered a part of the art piece's space. Without the experiencers there is no one around to witness the falling of the tree – and the material arrangement made by the artist becomes meaningless, which in turn means there is no phenomenon in where artistic agency can exist, which in turn means there is no artist.

These kind of thoughts raise even deeper issues about the arts piece's relation to the artist. I consider it common to think about an art piece as something that is “ready” – it is a work that is finalised by the artist for us to experience as some kind of separate event. The artist creates a work of art that the experiencer encounters as the final piece of art. This kind of thinking frames the artist outside the art piece's space. This is a simplification and there are many academic discourses that would not recognize this kind of thinking, but it is easily how we think of an art piece in an everyday scale.

In light of Vuori's performance, it is safe to say that the audience cannot be framed outside the phenomenon of the art piece – on what grounds can we then frame the artist outside of the art piece? In fine arts, this seems to be standard thinking while in other art forms – for example performing arts – it would seem ridiculous to frame the artist outside this framing. Just think about trying to analyse a dance performance without talking about the performer or the movement. (If someone considers the choreographer the only author of a dance piece, I will come back to the question of authorship in the chapter named “As a matter of art?”) But how can we think of the performer in *Portiton portti*? The performer is the person walking by, and this person might or might not realize his or her position in relation to the performance. But if we think of a person that does not realize they are a part of a performance, what can we then say about this person? Is this person really a performer? I would answer this question with both yes and no. At the same time the person is and is not a performer. This can be explained by thinking about the performance as a phenomenon. From the perspective inside this phenomenon, the person can be said to be a part of it (in this case in the role of the performer) and from the perspective outside the phenomenon the person can be said to be a regular

person walking on the street (or similar). There is no problem with two simultaneous roles, and these roles are not dependent on how this person defines themselves.

So, it also seems to be a little bit too simplified to frame the artist outside the borders of the art piece. (For example, the artist as a subject creating an object.) Would it not be more reasonable to consider the art piece as a space in spacetime and to think about the artist relating to this space as one agent and the experiencer as another? During the time we consider the creation the art piece it is in constant interaction with the artist. When the art piece is being experienced, it is in constant interaction with the experiencers. Or to use a term from Barad (2007, 33): the agencies are in “intra-action” inside the phenomenon – “*agencies are only distinct in relation to their mutual entanglement; they don't exist as individual elements.*” And the phenomenon, on the other hand, is in contact with the world and what happens around it.

It seems to me that if we try to define the art piece in the traditional manner – as a material object that one subject (the artist) creates and another subject (the experiencer) then experiences – we run into problems. It is an easy and quite functional way to create meaning in an everyday situation. But at the same time, when we go deeper, it seems a little too simple.

## A habit of mind?

Already based on the short discussion above, it seems clear that the space that an art piece creates around itself as a phenomenon is not very easily definable – at least not as an “object” that we can approach from afar – it even seems to escape definitions. When we feel we have grasped one aspect of it, it seems that it does not fit with the rest. It seems that every definition and every try to draw a boundary has its own blind spots and never covers every aspect of the phenomenon. But I still think it is too early to claim that it would be impossible to find ways to think about this in a reasonable way. The hard part is to find a perspective or a “meta” definition that is coherent and covers all of the viewpoints of the phenomenon. I think the problem may lie in our thought patterns. Could it be that we think about things too dichotomously, one dimensionally and statically? Could it be that it would be easier to grasp things from a more multifaceted, multidimensional and dynamic point of view?

The thought patterns we question here are basically thought patterns related to representationalism, that we think we have access to the essence of things through for example thoughts and words. It seems that we think that words “actually” represent objects in a so called objective way and that data “actually” represents objects and phenomena in a direct way. Barad (2007, 48-49) calls this a “Cartesian habit of mind”. She claims that “the asymmetrical faith we place in our access to representations over things is a historically and culturally contingent belief that is part of Western philosophy’s legacy and not a logical necessity”.

If we believe in this analysis, which seems reasonable, it is only a habit of mind and nothing more. This is something we have to recognize before we can even talk about alternatives. But it also suggests that there are alternative habits of mind.

It think the issues that Barad discusses comes quite close to the same problems we run into when trying to define one, and only one, border for the art piece. It seems that we need to shift our thought pattern and see the phenomenon from other perspectives before it makes sense to try to find another “habit of mind”, that could make sense from different perspectives. If we think in Barad’s terms, the problem lies in what we see as an object and what we see as a subject and if we think these are static or dynamic terms. Or on another scale: the problem lies in how we define objectivity. Barad has many interesting and inspiring thoughts about this.

## Galileo

**En gång visste alla människor att jorden var i centrum av universum. Det var ju lätt att se. Solen går upp där och så går den ner där. Och så fortsätter den att snurra runt oss dag ut och dag in. Men så kom det sig att någon upptäckte hur man kan producera glas och någon annan upptäckte hur man kan slipa och polera det för att skapa linser. Och en tredje kom på att sätta olika linser i rad i ett rör och till slut fick Galileo ett teleskop. Det råkade sig också att Galileo var en person som var väldigt intresserad av att titta på himlen med hjälp av detta teleskop. Och denna – lite slumpartade – rad av händelser ledde till att han började tänka sig att det egentligen är solen som ligger i centrum och att vi snurrar kring den, vilket människor inte ville acceptera.**

**Människorna blev faktiskt så arga på Galileo att de dömde honom till husarrest för resten av hans liv. De var antagligen arga eftersom han hade ifrågasatt deras världsbild och på så sätt även deras plats i universum, vilket väl i grund och botten är en identitetsfråga som kan kännas ganska personlig.**

**Hur det än var så fortsatte tiden att gå och människorna började se på världen på det sätt som Galileo hade föreslagit. Jag vill inte påstå att de hade rätt eller fel, men deras världsbild förändrades. De kunde till och med så småningom själva iaktta världen med samma redskap som Galileo hade gjort och helt själva konstatera att Galileos teori – åtminstone med hjälp av detta teleskop – verkade ganska logisk.**

## Galileo

**Once, all people knew that the earth was at the center of the universe. It was easy to see. The sun rises there and then it goes down there. And then it continues to spin around us day in and out. But then it happened that someone discovered how to produce glass and someone else discovered how to grind and polish it to create lenses. And a third happened to put different lenses in a row in a tube, and eventually Galileo got a telescope. It also happened that Galileo was a person who was very interested in watching the sky using this telescope. And this series of rather random events led him to think that the sun is at the centre and that we spin around it, something people did not want to accept.**

**The people got so angry at Galileo that they sentenced him to house arrest for the rest of his life. They were probably angry because he had questioned their worldview and thus also their place in the universe, which is probably a quite fundamental question of identity that can feel quite personal.**

**However, the time went by, and people began to look at the world as Galileo had suggested. I do not want to say they were right or wrong, but their worldview changed. They could even eventually observe the world with the same tools that Galileo had done and found out that Galileo’s theory – at least with the help of this telescope - seemed quite logical.**

## Diffraction or reflection?

Barad approaches these questions with the metaphors of reflection and diffraction. Reflection is a term that most of us probably are aware of. Reflection is an optical phenomenon that relates to how light reflects from materials. Reflection as a term is used as a linguistic metaphor for how things – often entities – relate to each other. For example, we can talk about art through the metaphor of reflection – this art piece reflects this or that phenomenon in the world. And even though this essay is not about how language relates to thought patterns, the reader needs to be aware that language relates to thought patterns because it is something we easily forget in the everyday sphere. In the English language the expression “reflect on/upon” is also used in the sense “to think deeply or carefully about” (Oxford Dictionary of English 2016, reflect). In a nutshell, reflection is about how one context relates and mirrors – another linguistic metaphor that relates to reflection – one another.

What is diffraction then? As a simple introduction – summarizing Barad’s (2007, 71-94) presentation of the phenomenon in my own words – diffraction is a physical phenomenon relating to the behaviour of waves. This could be for example light waves or waves in a water surface. Furthermore diffraction relates to how waves behave when they combine and how they behave when they meet an obstacle and bend around it. The simplest way to think about diffraction is to think of two stones thrown in a still water surface. The waves – or wave rings – shaping around these stones, and how the rings around the two stones combine and shape new patterns is an example of diffraction. This is an example probably most of us can relate to. Something important to notice is that when the waves from the two stones combine,

there are points where they cancel each other and points where they amplify each other. Furthermore, the same kind of phenomenon happens when a barrier with some openings is placed in the path of one single wave.

Imagine a breakwater or pier with two openings in it where the waves can flow through. On the other side of this barrier, the waves do not continue straight in a line, but they form circular patterns whose centres correspond to the openings. Even further, looking at the waves coming through the two openings and how they combine, they shape a new pattern together. As the rings combine they form a blurry but geometrical pattern of lines or sectors. This pattern is shaped because the waves affect each other when they meet. They cancel each other or amplify each other depending on where they meet. This in turn creates this geometrical pattern, which can be considered a diffraction pattern (Barad 2007, 74-79). In Donna Haraway’s words, we could say that the diffraction pattern “does not map where differences appear, but rather maps where the effects of differences appear” (Haraway 1992, 300).

But how can we use this phenomenon as a metaphor to think about art – or any other phenomenon in the world? How could the phenomenon of diffraction be used as an alternative to the metaphor of reflection as I have opened it above? Before we can get into these questions, we have to understand how diffraction is related to reflection as a physical and optical phenomena. This example with geometrical and physical optics will be used later on in this essay.

As I said, diffraction as a phenomenon is related to wave behaviour, and this includes light waves. If we think of reflection as an optical phenomenon, we basically think about particles bouncing from mirroring surfaces. For example: if I place a spotlight in the ceiling, facing a mirror hanging in the centre of a wall, I can be certain that the light source will bounce off the mirror surface to shape a stretched version of the form of the mirror on the floor somewhere underneath the spotlight. This basically means that I think of the light as an infinite amount of straight lines going to the mirror in an angle and then bouncing off the mirror to the floor in that negative angle – or as an infinite amount of photons following these lines. This kind of optical thinking is called “geometrical optics” and works perfectly fine in most cases when we consider the everyday experience we, as humans, have of light. The same thinking would suggest that a light source small enough in relation to the distance and size of an object – for example the sun that is so far away that it can be considered a point light source – will cause sharp shadows, while a bigger light source in relation to the distance and size of the object will cause smoother shadows. And still – this works on an everyday level.

But neither geometrical optics nor the metaphor of reflection explain why the shadow of some matter does not always behave like this. Barad (2007, 76) uses an example of a razor blade being lit with a monochromatic light (a light with only one wavelength), and shows that the shadow actually is a diffraction pattern. There is no “sharp line” or border of the shadow. There is a shadow, and this shadow continues in the shape of the razor as lines of alternate light and shadow, which is something we can observe, but which is dependant on the monochromatic light. This was new, and pretty mind blowing, for me. So what is happening here? To approach this question, we can think about light as waves. If we think about the

razor blade as the breakwater, we realize that the light behaves exactly as the waves – because it is waves. The different waves passing through the centre of the razor spread out in a circular pattern after the obstacle that the razor is for the wave. The reason this phenomenon is not visible in normal conditions, for example in daylight or in the light of a halogen lamp, is that the light we normally experience consists of a combination of different wave lengths. And because of their different wave lengths, they form diffraction patterns whose lighter and darker areas do not correspond to the pattern created by another wavelength, and thus they blend together forming the *illusion* that the border of the shadow is sharp.

I hope this opens the phenomenon of diffraction enough for me to go further in my discussion. To summarize, I will cite Barad (2007, 81): “So unlike the phenomenon of reflection, which can be explained without taking account of the wavelike behaviour of light (i.e., it can be explained using an approximation scheme called ‘geometrical optics’ whereby light might well be a particle that bounces off surfaces), diffraction makes light’s wavelike behaviour explicit (i.e., it can only be accounted for by using the full theory of ‘physical optics’).” Furthermore “whereas the metaphor of reflection reflects the themes of mirroring and sameness, diffraction is marked by patterns of difference” and “diffractions are attuned to differences – differences that our knowledge-making practices make and the effects they have on the world” (Barad 2007, 71-72).

To summarize, in Barad’s (2007, 88) words: “By contrast, diffraction is not reflection raised to some higher power. It is not a self-referential glance back at oneself. While reflection has been used as a methodological tool by scholars relying on representationalism, there are

good reasons to think that diffraction may serve as a productive model for thinking about nonrepresentationalist methodological approaches.”

So how is all of this related to art? We easily talk about art pieces as something reflecting the world or a part of the world. Can we somehow think about art through diffraction? Can we think about art pieces as phenomena being in direct interaction with the world? As a phenomena that in a diffractive way interacts with its artist and the experiencer and therefore is in constant interaction with the world? It is also important to remember that the two views are only two ways to see the same phenomena, and do not exclude each other. I will not claim that it would be wrong to think of and analyse art in terms of how it reflects the world, its social context or some other phenomenon in the world. But I want to bring into question that it would work in every situation. And as with optics, we sometimes need multidimensional ways to think about art. As geometrical optics work well in every day situations, a reflective thought pattern also works well for thinking about art in an every day context. But when things get more complicated and the analysis deepens – for example when we talk about art in an academic context – it is good to shift the thought pattern to a diffractive one, in the same manner that we need physical optics to deepen our understanding about how light behaves in relation to materials.

This is about what we have capacity to imagine. And what creates our world view is the means we have to experience the world with. In other words, we could say that the senses of us as human beings allow us to perceive the world inside a certain frame – in a certain point in time and space – and not outside it. To reach outside it, we need extensions (or in

McLuhan’s words ‘media’) to get outside this frame. We need tools. Our senses themselves do not allow us to perceive the world in *any* way but with the right medium or extension of the senses we can broaden this frame. For me, this is true for both art and science. A good example inside science is the example of Galileo and the sun. There were no tools (or a “medium”) to perceive that the earth is moving around the sun and not the opposite. It definitely looked like the sun really circled the earth every day, this was the only logical conclusion. But when the right tools were developed, in this case the telescope, humanity – with Galileo at the forefront – became aware that this was not the case. In the same way, any kind of thinking is dependant on the tools we have to perceive the world, and no thinking can be “right” or “objective” in a sense that it would really represent the world as it is, even if that would be the logical conclusion with the tools we have at hand. To state it short: the tools become an extension of our senses and our thinking. This is important to remember in this discussion because it also affects our conscious or subconscious thinking about art. In this way, art as well as everything else changes depending on the context, but it also has the potential to change the context itself. The telescope as a medium does not reflect the world, but affects it – it is in direct interaction with it and as an “invention” it leaves marks in the human thinking. And the same is true for an art piece.

Instead of thinking about an art piece as something that exists to *comment upon the world*, for example as a part of an artists intentions, we could think of it as something that *interacts with the world*. As artists, we can think that we, through the art piece comment and answer some questions in the world, but one can also think that one creates a phenomenon that has its own agency in the world. That is, the artist creates a material set up that together with other parts

of the world creates a phenomenon, which interacts and affects the world. This phenomenon includes agents – such things as artist and experiencer – but also other, non-human agents (or elements) of which the material set up is only one part. And the art piece – or the phenomenon – gets different proportions depending on the factors taken into account.

What means do we even have to think about these questions about the borders of an art piece? And what is there to say about object and subject or objectivity and subjectivity in relation to these questions? Barad gives a hint of what kind of thinking could be applied:

The analysis at hand then will require thinking through the details of diffraction as a physical phenomenon, including quantum understandings of diffraction and the important differences they make, in order to tune the diffraction apparatus, in order to explore the phenomenon at hand, which in this case is diffraction, in order to produce a new way of thinking about the nature of difference, and of space, time, matter, causality, and agency, among other important variables. (Barad 2007, 73)

This is no small project. And It seems that we need to set the current thought paradigms aside for a moment to approach this subject.

## Trädet

I början av året blev jag på något sätt inspirerad att fundera på universum och världen. Jag gjorde, mest på skoj, olika modeller för hur man kunde tänka på världen.

Och ni vet hur det är, när man blir intresserad av något så börjar det hända saker i ens huvud i gränslandet mellan sömn och vakenhet.

I ett sådant tillstånd visade sig världen för mig som ett träd – vilket i och för sig inte är en särskilt ny tanke. Denna metafor återkommer bland annat i många religioner. Men mitt träd var potentialets träd.

Ny eller inte, så var det ett vackert träd i det ögonblicket.

Trädet representerade allt det potential som finns i universum. I universums begynnelse, då det började växa, var det endast den minsta planta man kan tänka sig komma ut ur ett frö som grott. Då låg hela universums potential – alla möjligheter – där.

När världen sedan blev äldre och trädet växte började det dela på sig såsom träd gör. Stammen blev gammal och starkare och delade sig i grenar som så småningom delade sig i ännu mindre grenar. Potentialet delade sig och vissa delar av det förgrenade sig från andra.

På samma gång var varje ända på varje gren skild från varje annan ända på varje annan gren. Potentialet hade delats på ett sådant sätt att de möjligheter som fanns på ändan av en gren inte längre kunde påverka de möjligheter som fanns längst ute på en annan gren.

Och trädet växte och potentialet i ändan på varje gren blev allt specifikare och hade allt mindre möjlighet att påverka de andra delarna av trädet. Men potentialet tog ändå aldrig slut. Även om potentialet blev specifikare, så fanns det fortfarande oändligt av potential i ändan på varje gren. Man kunde säga att ramen och gränserna för vad som var möjligt blev mindre, men att det fortfarande fanns oändligt med olika möjligheter inom dessa gränser.

Och i det gränsland jag befann mig, mellan sömn och vakenhet, kunde jag se på trädet så som det var just nu. Och jag kunde göra en genomskärning av dess stam och dess grenar och se på årsringarna för att få veta hur det varit vid en tidigare tidpunkt.

## The Tree

At the beginning of the year, I was somehow inspired to think about the universe and the world. Mostly for fun, I created different models of how to think of the world.

And you know how it is, when you are really into something, things happen in your head in the borderland between sleep and wakefulness.

In such a state, the world appeared to me like a tree – which in itself is not a very new thought. This metaphor can be found in many religions. But my tree was the tree of potential.

New or not, it was a beautiful tree at that moment.

The tree represented all the potential in the universe. At the beginning of the universe, when it began to grow, the tree was the smallest plant one could imagine coming out of a sprouting seed. The potential of the whole universe – of all possibilities – were there.

When the world then grew older and the tree grew, the tree began to brach out, as trees do. The trunk became older and stronger and divided itself into branches that eventually divided into even smaller branches. The potential divided and the branches grew apart.

At the same time, each end of each branch was separated from every other end on every other branch. The potential had been divided in such a way that the possibilities that existed at the end of a branch could no longer affect the potential that was growing on another branch.

And the tree grew, and the potential at the end of each branch became more specific and less likely to affect the other parts of the tree. But the potential never ended. Even though the potential became more specific, there was still an infinite potential at the end of each branch. It could be said that the frame and the limits of what was possible became smaller, but that there was still an infinite amount of possibilities within these limits.

And in the borderland I was in, between sleep and wakefulness, I could look at the tree as it was right now. And I could make a cross-section of its trunk and its branches and look at the growth rings to understand how it had looked at an earlier point in time.

# The Art Piece as a Phenomenon

## Towards another objectivity

As every artist probably has experienced, it is no easy task to try to think of how a piece of art will be perceived. It is both naïve and impossible to try to define a single experience that every experiencer will have when meeting the art piece. We can maybe define some kind of frame or a range of experiences that might be probable, but we have no control over the different associations and links that a single experiencer makes. Even in cases where the piece has the form of an event and is framed in time – such as in the case of performances – there is more than one interpretation and experience. And it gets even more complicated when we think about art pieces that humans in different contexts – for examples in different times or different cultures – experiences. But why is this so difficult and why does it feel complicated for me?

My suggestion is that the difficulty lies in that we try to think about the art piece as an entity, not as a phenomenon. When I suggest this, I mean that we have a tendency to make a division between the subject and the object that is arbitrary and does not acknowledge the whole phenomenon, which can be compared to the metaphors of geometrical and physical

optics. The division is arbitrary because we do not take all the parts of the phenomenon into account, but we still think of our own definition as representing a whole – which for example may lead two experiencers to think that they talk about the “same” object, when they actually talk about two different framings of the same phenomenon of which they are a part. It seems there could be a point in trying to problematise this way of thinking about objectivity itself, as Barad (2007, 338-340) also suggests. What I am suggesting in relation to an art experience is that this mistake could be corrected by shifting our thinking to a way where we acknowledge that the piece that we can touch, hear, see or experience directly with some other sense, only is a part of the whole phenomenon that *actually* is the art piece. And this phenomenon includes things like context, audience and artist, just to name a few. The piece does not a priori contain any attributes that makes it art. Neither does it contain any attributes that define it as an object that a subject can experience. These are all things which are definable only in relation to the cuts made by agents inside the phenomenon. This raises questions about the audience’s position in relation to the piece, as well as questions about the artist(s) relation to the piece.

So the objectivity we are talking about is some kind of dynamic way to think about objectivity. Or as Barad (2007, 91) states: “objectivity cannot be about producing undistorted representations from afar; rather, objectivity is about being accountable to the specific materializations of which we are a part”. She also states that this requires a methodology that is attentive to, and responsive/responsible to, the specificity of material entanglements in their agential becoming. I understand this, it is not about denying the kind of entities that we are used to talk about, but to be aware, responsive and responsible to the circumstances in which they appear or do not appear and also to the fact that they change and are different from different perspectives in time and space. This may be hard to grasp at first glance, but in the following I will give some examples of how I understand it in relation to art.

When we start to think about art through a diffractive thought pattern, we come across questions about subjectivity and objectivity and about object and subject. If we think of art through the perspective of the experiencer, it means that as an experiencer we can say nothing about it without acknowledging that we are a part of the phenomenon around the art piece at that specific moment in time. As an easy visual metaphor, one can think about the whole phenomenon (= the art piece’s space) as a bubble. Inside this bubble there is (in this simplified example) the art piece and the experiencer, and together they create a phenomenon. As an experiencer I have to relate to my experience and my interpretation as a subject. Thinking through this specific cut inside the phenomenon, everything I say is objectively true, but when the phenomenon changes (= another cut is made) – for example the cut made by another

experiencer – I can no longer say that my statements are true in relation to this new cut inside the phenomenon. The truth is not objective in a Cartesian manner, but objective in relation to its context.

To broaden this example: Inside this bubble, I can define some parts of the art piece’s space as an object. I can define myself as a subject that experiences an object – a sculpture, a performance, a concert, a painting and so on. In this case I can draw pretty sharp boundaries and make pretty clear (temporary) definitions of myself as a subject in relation to some matter or material(ity) that I experience and define as the art piece. But I cannot say that there would be no other factors that effects the relation between myself as a subject and the piece of art as an object. And these other factors are also a part of the phenomenon, they also exist inside the art piece’s space. For example I might know something about the artist(s) and this may affect my interpretation of the piece. Also my experiences affects my interpretation of the art piece. If I have a good knowledge of a genre or field, I may relate the piece to other pieces in the same genre or field, and I might be able to see references to other pieces, where an experiencer without the same knowledge of the genre or field does not see them.

This is also a reason I separate the terms “art piece” and the “art piece’s space” in this essay. I think about the art piece’s space as the whole phenomenon, that we can just think of as an idea and in theory as human beings – in the way I do in this essay – while the art piece as a term also can refer to the what we as experiencers or artists refer to when we talk about the piece (= the part of the piece that is perceivable by each experiencer).



If I continue with the perspective of the experiencer, it may also be hard to tell where the experience starts and where it ends. As an example from my own life, I went to see a performance of Albert Camus' *Caligula* at Teater Viirus in 2007. The production premiered the 3<sup>rd</sup> of November 2007, and I saw one of the first shows. I saw it before the 7<sup>th</sup> of November. I can't tell for sure, but I think I saw the show on the 6<sup>th</sup> of November, so let us agree that this was the case. The next day, the 7<sup>th</sup> of November a school shooting took place in Finland. It was an event that shocked the whole country. My experience of the performance changed when I heard the tragic news. I started to think about what I had experienced the night before in a new light – I started to think about the main character in Camus' stage play in a new light. If we think of me as an experiencer "subject" in relation to the performance "object" in a traditional way, it can be hard to explain why my experience of the performance can change outside the frame of the performance situation and -context. This example pretty much blurs out the boundary of where my experience of the performance ends in time.

And we can continue this example: hypothetically we can think that there were people that went to see *Caligula* at Teater Viirus the 7<sup>th</sup> or the 8<sup>th</sup> of November and that they made the same associations to the school shooting as I made. The difference is that they had heard about the school shooting before they saw the performance, while for me the experiences were arranged in the opposite or another (just in case someone does not want to think about time as linear) way in time.

This example shows that it also seems to be hard to make statements about chickens and eggs, and also – at least for me – these statements start to seem irrelevant. Has the work of art been

changed after the school shooting? Or have I changed because I have heard about the school shooting? If we think about these questions acknowledging a more dynamic definition of objectivity, the answer to these questions is both yes and no at the same time. It is a matter of perspective. We do not *need* to be able to draw a sharp border in space and time, because there is no sharp border to be *found*. We do not *need* to make statements about chickens and eggs. The only thing we need to do to get further is to acknowledge that they have *affected each other*. The piece of art and I are not unrelated to each other but entangled. Not even seemingly unrelated events are necessarily unrelated, even though this relation might need human agents as a link between them for them to be entangled. Barad uses her own word "intra-action" to talk about these relations:

Intra-actions include the larger material arrangement (i.e., set of material practices) that effects an agential cut between "subject" and "object" (in contrast to the more familiar Cartesian cut which takes this distinction for granted). That is, the agential cut enacts a resolution within the phenomenon of the inherent ontological (and semantic) indeterminacy. In other words, relata do not preexist relations; rather, relata-within-phenomena emerge through specific intra-actions. Crucially, then, intra-actions enact agential separability-the condition of exteriority-within-phenomena. The notion of agential separability is of fundamental importance, for in the absence of a classical ontological condition of exteriority between observer and observed, it provides an alternative ontological condition for the possibility of objectivity. (Barad 2007, 139-140)

## Paus Pause

**En paus är en stund av osynlig förändring.**

**A pause is a moment of silent change.**

In Barad's spirit, my perspective in this essay is that there is no absolute truth (which I feel is a synonym to a more "traditional" way to think of objectivity) to be found. There is only human knowledge that is more or less true *right now*. Also, I do not want to take a stand on the existence of a truth, code or "objectivity" in the world or the universe. The important thing is what we can be aware of through our human perspective – at least if we try to analyse a human phenomenon, for example art. And I do not think it is very fruitful to try to define objectivity in any other way than through the point of view where we are right here and right now. Beyond this, it might be fruitful to think about what objectivity could be in the future, or – in other words – what potential there is for future perspectives. And this is a matter of philosophy, and should be thought of through the words of Alfred North Whitehead (1985, XIV) that I cited in the introduction of this essay: "In philosophical discussion, the merest hint of dogmatic certainty as to finality of statement is an exhibition of folly". How we think about objectivity should be based on the best knowledge we have right now in different fields, and at the same time we should be able to question how we think about objectivity and be prepared to be wrong all the time.

In this way, we can approach Barad's suggested definition of objectivity:

*Objectivity means being accountable for marks on bodies, that is, specific materializations in their differential mattering. We are responsible for the cuts that we help enact not because we do the choosing (neither do we escape responsibility*

*because "we" are "chosen" by them), but because we are an agential part of the material becoming of the universe. Cuts are agentially enacted not by willful individuals but by the larger material arrangement of which "we" are a "part."* (Barad 2007, 178)

## Where does the art piece end?

We can broaden the thoughts above by thinking of them through the metaphor of diffraction in a water surface. If we think that both subject and object at the time of their meeting are two stones thrown in a still water surface, they make waves in the surface at this point in time. When the ring-shaped waves meet each other, they combine and effect each other. After a while, when the waves have reached far enough, there is nothing left of the original ring patterns, and it is not possible to tell which one has effected the other. When thinking about the relation between subject and object in this way, it feels quite pointless to even talk about any kind of one-way cause and effect. When the two agents meet, they interact, and cause a larger phenomenon that is the water surface. And we can think of any meeting between two agents inside a delimited phenomenon through this metaphor.

To broaden this metaphor in a simple way: every encounter with an art piece creates a small wave pattern in the ocean of the world. When we zoom in on the water surface, we can see these small waves, but from this point of view it is hard to see the bigger waves. But if we zoom out a bit, we can no longer see these small waves, but we start to perceive the bigger waveforms that all these small phenomena have created together. From this position we get a picture of how the water flows in the "art world" as a whole. And if we zoom out even more, for example when we look at the water surface from an airplane, it gets hard to distinguish the medium sized waves from each other, but instead we see bigger wave formations – such as surges, swells and currents – and also recognize bigger surfaces where the water is more still

or more in motion. From this position we can – in this simplified example – think that we see how the "art world" relates to the world as a whole.

Above I have made statements of how we should think of objectivity in a new way. In the following text, I will deepen this thought. I will make statements about how things relate to each other when we think through a dynamic way to think about objectivity. We create our own illusions of the world by sticking to our own thought patterns. We strongly *believe* something, and are not ready to be wrong. Because of this, shifting thought patterns is no easy task.

Therefore, I want to make a short recap using straight references to Barad, before continuing my own discussion. To get beyond the representationalist and Cartesian view of the world, Barad (2007, 56) states that she wants to present a "realism toward phenomena and the entangled material practices of knowing and becoming", where phenomena "are neither individual entities nor mental impressions, but entangled material agencies". As I already introduced, Barad uses the word "intra-act" (instead of interact) to describe how the material agencies act in relation to each other. She suggests that in this manner, for example a scientist that is experimenting cannot be viewed as some separate entity outside the phenomena, but rather a part of it. In her own words:

The agential realist understanding that I propose is a nonrepresentationalist form of realism that is based on an ontology that does not take for granted the existence of “words” and “things” and an epistemology that does not subscribe to a notion of truth based on their correct correspondence. Agential realism offers the following elaboration of [Ian] Hacking’s critique of representationalism: experimenting and theorizing are dynamic practices that play a constitutive role in the production of objects and subjects and matter and meaning. As I will explain, theorizing and experimenting are not about intervening (from outside) but about intra-acting from within, and as part of, the phenomena produced. (Barad 2007, 56; brackets added)

In my own words: the world is not a bunch of attributes or properties that are to be found – or already defined subjects and objects – but the world consists of matter that is in a constant change. The world is unfolding through its constant material re-arrangement. Inside this thought pattern, it is possible to – inside a phenomenon – define (human and non-human) agents. But these agents themselves effect the phenomenon itself – together with other agents entangled in the phenomenon. And this makes the agents entangled through the phenomenon. This means that the relation between the phenomenon and the agents is constantly changing or unfolding. This explains how I can think about a ten year old performance of *Caligula* as an experience of an art object and not need to think about the performance (or my experience of it) as something static. Because I am entangled with the phenomenon, I am actively shaping it and it shapes me. And I cannot step outside this entanglement when talking or thinking about it.

After this small recap, I hope the reader is on the same page as I am in this discussion. It is fundamental to understand this base to understand the following parts of this essay.

If we accept this way to think about an art piece as a phenomenon, we also have to reconsider the concept of the border. As I suggested earlier, it is often hard to draw a sharp line between the experiencer and the art piece or between the artist and the art piece. If we think in the terms of how Barad interprets Bohr, we could maybe say that this border of an art piece is also enacted – and not permanent. In her analysis of Bohr, Barad problematizes where the outer boundary of an apparatus ends:

Bohr does not directly address the question of where the apparatus “ends.” Is the outside boundary of the apparatus coincident with the visual terminus of the instrumentation? What if an infrared interface (i.e., a wireless connection) exists between the measuring instrument and a computer that collects the data? Does the apparatus include the computer? Is the printer attached to the computer part of the apparatus? Is the paper that is fed into the printer? Is the person who feeds in the paper? How about the person who reads the marks on the paper? Or the scientists and technicians who design, build, and run the experiment? How about the community of scientists who judge the significance of the experiment and indicate their support or lack of support for future funding? What precisely constitutes the limits of the apparatus that gives meaning to certain concepts at the exclusion of others? (Barad 2007, 142-143)

This exact same question can be applied to art and our experiences of art. If we think about how Barad presents the Bohrs thoughts as a refusal of the delineation of the “object” – in this case the piece of art – and the “agencies of observation” – in this case for example the experiencer or the artist(s) – it makes sense when thinking about art, in the same way it makes sense for Bohr when he thinks about science. But, as Barad shows, “Bohr does not directly address the question of where the apparatus ‘ends.’”

The same thought could be applied to the art piece: where can we say that it “ends”? Is the artist(s) a part of the phenomenon that the piece is? Or in my terms – is the artist(s) a part of the art piece’s space? And if they are, then are they so all of the time, or will they stop being it at some point? And how about the audience? Is the experiencer a part of the art piece’s space? And if they are, where does the experience start or end? And how about people that only hear about the piece by the original experiencer – are they a part of this space? And how about the local society, if the local news make a story about it? And how do we in this manner frame the outside border of the art piece’s space?

An example of this could be Leonardo DaVinci’s *Mona Lisa*. There are many people that have never seen the piece “live” - including myself – but still have their own experiences of the piece, because they have seen pictures, read and heard about it. The phenomenon of *Mona Lisa* is much broader than its physical frame suggests.

The art piece’s space can be said to be as open-bordered as the apparatus in Barad’s example. It is a matter of how we think about it. If we go back to the citation from Georges Perec that I used in the beginning of this essay, where Perec thinks about spaces and their framing: “There isn’t one space, a beautiful space, a beautiful space round about, a beautiful space all around us, there’s a whole lot of small bits of space, and one of these bits is a Métro corridor, and another of them is a public park.” In my view Perec talks about a similar problem. The one big space that – for example – might be thought of as the surface of the earth, or perhaps the perceivable part of the world, has become small bits of space, and it is a matter of how we think of it, and how we frame this big space into smaller bits. And how we frame this big space into smaller ones does not erase the existence of the big beautiful space, they simply exist side by side. It is a matter of perspective. And we can think of the art piece’s space in the exact same manner – it is a matter of framing bigger wholes into smaller bits. The objects, subjects or the “bits of space” are all enacted by an agent, and in a human scale it is usually a result of many agencies, and these relata are not dependant on (but surely affected by) how one linguistically or socially defines or frames them.

And now we are getting to the point. If the experiencers as agents “objectify” the rest of the art piece’s space (of which they are a part), and in this way define it as “the art object” – which is in this case is some kind of synonym to the art piece as a Cartesian entity, or a Kantian “the art piece *an sich*” – does not the artist(s) do it as well? From the perspective of the experiencer, the artist is a part of the objectified art piece, while the artist(s) objectifies the experiencer(s). This is a result of the *different agents enacting different material cuts inside the phenomenon*. In other words: as different agents, they define themselves as subjects and the rest of the phenomenon

as object, which they in this case call an art piece. This means – once again – that the ”object” is different depending on the perspective and how some agent defines their ”subjectivity” – and there are left no means to view the phenomenon from the outside without bumping into the same problem considering this bigger phenomenon of which the smaller one is a part. And again we return to the question: where does the phenomenon end?

To state this in another way, we can take the experiencer as the example: the experiencer and the art piece have become one. Through the event of the experience the art piece has become a part of the experiencer and the experiencer a part of the art piece. This may sound a little bit peculiar, but I can give some concrete examples. If I for example see a performance (I become a part of the performance and the performance a part of me), and then tell about the performance to some of my friends, they get an idea of the performance, even though they have not seen the performance itself. But the phenomenon or the space of the performance widens in this way. It becomes hard to think about the piece as a static physical entity that always follows the same terms. Instead, it is its influence on the world – the rings in the water surface – that it creates over time that is highlighted, and in this way the piece becomes as important as any agent in the world – human or non-human.

It can be harder to imagine how the experiencer leaves traces in the art piece, but this follows the same principle. If we imagine that I have told about the art piece to my friends and they later on experience it, my words and opinions will influence their experiences. What I have told is therefore a concrete part of the work that my friends experience. The phenomenon has

been changed by me. Other example of this exact same mechanism is a critic’s review, or in a bigger timeframe, an art historian’s text about some art piece.

Let’s make a thought experiment. Does it make sense to play with the thought that the cut inside the phenomenon does not include human agents? Can we, for example, think of the material painting inside a frame as an agent? To approach these questions, we can try to make a cut between the ”entity” that we easily think of when we think of an art piece, and the rest of the phenomenon. For example, we can try to think of *Mona Lisa* as an agent looking back at you. In this thought experiment, we try to look at the world through the perspective of “the art piece” (or the part of it that we might define as it). Here, this piece of matter then becomes the subject. What does this subject “see” or “experience”?

Very anti-climatically, I have no answers to this thought experiment, but I have presented it as a seed that is hopefully planted in the readers mind (and can hopefully lead to some big thoughts by some readers). In this sense, it may seem like an unnecessary thing to bring up, but the question is – for me – what we can learn when we think about an art piece in the same manner as we think about our own subjectivity, which we often take for granted. When we shift our perspective to the “eyes” of *Mona Lisa*, it seems pretty obvious that she has experienced pretty much in her life. In a nutshell: she was “created” by DaVinci. Then she was exposed in many different ways, before she – for some reason – ended up in the Louvre. Nowadays her everyday life consists of hordes of tourists that come there and get

## Anden

**Jag sitter på en brygga med min kollega från ett svunnet sommarjobb på en sightseeingbåt. Vi har paus, väntar på kunderna. Det är en fin sensommar dag och vi dricker kaffe på en brygga på Torra Mjölö utanför Helsingfors. Vi har suttit där redan en stund, kanske en halv timme, och i vattnet simmar en and. Den har varit där några gånger redan. Den verkar inte göra något annat än att plaska där och leta efter mat under ytan. Under en halv timme har den redan hunnit försvinna ett par gånger, bara för att efter en stund komma tillbaka i samma syfte. Min kollega har fäst sin uppmärksamhet vid den och kommenterar till slut dess beteende. Hon tycker att det är lite skojigt att se på den, att dens liv består av att simma fram och tillbaka från punkt A till punkt B och kanske ibland till punkt C, bara för att senare upprepa ungefär samma mönster.**

**Men gör vi inte precis samma sak, men på en annan skala? Dag ut och dag in åker vi med vår sightseeingbåt. Från Salutorget i Helsingfors till Borgå och tillbaka. Från Salutorget till Torra Mjölö och tillbaka. Från Salutorget till Söderskärs fyr och tillbaka. Och sedan tillbaka till den egna platsen vid servicebryggan. Fyra-fem platser. Punkt A, B, C, D och E. Och detta gör vi hela sommaren fem-sex dagar i veckan.**

**Vi är ganska lika, anden och vi, fastän skillnaden av någon orsak känns enorm. Våra världar möts ett litet ögonblick och jag förstår hur anden tänker att den är viktigast i världen och att det den gör är meningsfullt, komplext och viktigt.**

## The duck

**I’m sitting on a dock with my colleague from a time long gone. It is a summer job on a sightseeing boat. We have a break, waiting for the customers. It is a nice late summer day and we drink coffee at a pier on Kuivasaari, outside Helsinki. We have been there for a while, maybe half an hour, and there is a duck swimming in the water. The duck has been there a few times already. It seems that it is just swimming around and looking for food beneath the surface. During this half an hour, the duck has already disappeared a couple of times, just to come back after a while in the same purpose. My colleague has drawn her attention to it and finally comments on it. She thinks it is a little bit funny to look at it – that its life consists of swimming back and forth from point A to point B and maybe sometimes to point C, just to come back the same pattern later.**

**But are we not doing the same thing, yet in another scale? Day by day we drive around with our sightseeing boat. From the market square in Helsinki to Porvoo and back. From the market square to Kuivasaari and back. From the market square to the Söderskär lighthouse and back. And then back to the service pier. Four to five places. Points A, B, C, D and E. And this what we do throughout the summer, five to six days a week.**

**We are quite alike, the duck and I, though the difference, for some reason, feels enormous. Our worlds meet at a small cut in time and I understand why the duck thinks that it is the most important creature in the world, and why what it does seems meaningful, complex and important.**

disappointed about the fact that she is so small. And she has seen all of this, and every day, day in and out, she has to relate to the fact that all of these experiencers have their opinions of her, commenting on her “body”.

Of course, this is personification of some material in the world that does not think and feel like this. But why not play with this thought? In some way – for me – it places me in the same vulnerable position as the art piece. We are equal parts of the phenomenon. Probably *Mona Lisa* – in some undefined way – is a bigger agent than me, but there is no hierarchy to it. We are just different drops in the water surface. This can seem like an unnecessary thought experiment, but the important thing – for me – is that we somehow jump one step ahead in our thought if we automatically define some materiality of the art piece as an the art object. We forget that what we really experience is not limited by a frame or event, but that the object that we experience is the rest of the phenomenon (or the parts of it that we know about and relate to), of which some material aspects, the artist(s) and the experiencers are all a part – just to name a few. Together these parts or agents shape material, that is possible to think of as the whole phenomenon of the art piece – or the whole four dimensional space of the art piece in spacetime. Every time we use definitions, like “artist” or “spectator”, we make cuts inside this phenomenon, which automatically simplify it. This makes it understandable in a everyday scale, but does not reflect the whole complexity of the phenomenon, and we miss that the phenomenon could be framed or cut in another way. There are always alternative thought patterns – of which the one I present here is only one.

This also explains why we so easily bump into problems when thinking about art pieces as entities. If we for a moment accept the thoughts presented in this text as a perspective, it is easy to see that thinking about the world through entities is a simplified view that does not take all the aspects of an art piece – or any phenomenon for that matter – into account. If we instead think of the art piece as a phenomenon consisting of different agents – which includes all the human agents that are, have been or will be a part of the phenomenon, as well as all the non-human agents that are, have been or will be a part of the phenomenon – “we” understand that the “object” that “we” look at consists of a number of agents that “we” cut “ourselves” apart from inside this phenomenon. And the phenomenon is thus much more complex than what we can understand from our own subjective perspective. We have no means to – from our position in spacetime – take into account all the agents that are, have been and will be a part of the phenomenon, and because the phenomenon itself is open-bordered and thus possible to widen, it is an exhibition of folly to claim that we can view the phenomenon from afar and talk about its “true” attributes – or to even think that there exists such attributes. (And in my example above, even not *Mona Lisa* “herself” has this ability.)

Now we return to Barad’s (2007, 72) reference to Donna Haraway’s metaphor about geometrical optics an physical optics. In an everyday scale it is we can think about optics by thinking about light as rays (= geometrical optics), while the theories of physical optics takes the wavelike behaviour of light into account. In the same way we can think that in some everyday cases it works well to think about art through a cartesian subject-object division, but it does not take the full phenomenon of the art piece into account.

If it is possible to define specific agents – such as subjects and an objects – within each phenomenon (and only within these phenomena) and that from the inside of the phenomenon we cannot say anything about the whole phenomenon’s objectivity or truth, then it must mean that if we want to know something about the phenomenon as a whole we have to step outside it and observe it from the outside. But even from this position, we influence the phenomenon – this new subject – which we observe, which in tun means we become a part of a new, bigger phenomenon of which the old one also is a part. In this way, the objectivity we can talk about is always in relation to the phenomenon of which it is a part. Barad has a good example of this.

Whether it is thought of as a measurement, or as part of the universe making itself intelligible to another part in its ongoing differentiating intelligibility and materialization, is a matter of preference. Either way, what is important about causal intra-actions is that “marks are left on bodies”: bodies differentially materialize as particular patterns of the world as a result of the specific cuts and reconfigurings that are enacted. Cause and effect emerge through intra-actions. Agential intra-actions are causal enactments. (Barad 2007, 176)

There is thus no way to draw an outer boundary for the phenomenon and there is no way to get out of the universe all together. This is quite far-out, I know. But it is still relevant, as it also applies to an everyday scale. How we talk about art in everyday life also affects what art is. And how we perceive art influences what we do as artists.

## Skogen

Jag står i en skog utan karta.

Omkring mig öppnar sig ett landskap. Åt vissa håll ser jag längre och åt andra håll ser jag inte lika långt. Det beror på hur terrängen ser ut – om det går upp eller ner och om där finns träd eller inte. Men fastän jag ser olika långt i olika riktningar, finns det alltid en gräns för hur långt jag kan se. Åt ett håll finns det vad jag uppfattar som en mörk skog. Åt ett annat håll ser jag en nerförsbacke som leder ner till en sjö. Åt ett tredje håll ser jag en brant uppförsbacke som är stenig och hal.

Nu skall jag göra ett val: jag skall välja en riktning att gå i. Vad baserar jag valet på? Baserar jag det på vad jag ser framför mig, eller baserar jag det på vad jag tänker mig att kan finnas där borta, dit jag inte längre ser? Väljer jag uppförsbacken som är tung och svår att gå, eftersom jag tänker mig att jag där uppe kan se längre och ha en klarare bild av vilken riktning jag sedan skall välja – fastän detta innehåller en risk

för att det jag ser där uppe inte är vad jag hoppats på? Eller väljer jag att ta den lätta vägen ner till vattnet? Även detta innehåller en risk – jag kanske inser att vattnet inte är en sjö, utan ett hav som jag kan ta mig över. Eller väljer jag att gå in i den mörka skogen i hopp om att finna något där, med risk för att gå vilse och komma tillbaka till samma plats igen?

Och ifall varje steg jag tar motsvarar en dag i mitt liv – hur väljer jag då?

När vi väljer en riktning så ser vi bara det vi ser. Men vi kan inte föreställa oss det landskap som öppnar sig där vårt synfält tar slut.

Därför kom vi på att rita en karta.

## The forest

I stand in a forest without a map.

Around me a landscape opens. In some directions I can see further and in some directions I do not see that far. It depends on how the terrain looks – if it goes up or down and whether there are trees or not. But although the distance is different in different directions, there is always a limit to how far I can see. In one direction, there is what I perceive as a dark forest. In another direction, I see a downhill slope leading down to a lake. In a third direction, I see a steep slope that is rocky and slippery.

Now I have to make a choice: I have to choose a direction to walk. What do I base my choice on? Do I base it on what I see before me, or do I base it on what I think that might see at the location that is now at the end of my field of vision? Do I choose the uphill, that is heavy and hard to walk, because I think that I can get a good overview

up there and then have a clearer picture of what direction I should choose – although this includes a risk that what I will see is not what I was hoping for? Or do I choose to take the easy way down to the water? Even this contains a risk – I may realize that the water is not a lake, but an ocean that I cannot cross. Or do I choose to go into the dark forest hoping to find something there, but with the risk of getting lost and return to the same place again?

And if every step I take corresponds to one day in my life – how do I choose?

When we choose a direction, we only see what we see. We can not imagine the landscape that opens where our field of vision ends.

Therefore, we got the idea of drawing a map.

## As a matter of art?

It's impossible to know everything about reality. But nevertheless, we constantly try to approach it, enclose it, understand it. I use my performances to explore the world, to investigate reality. We humans are born as psychological beings asking, "What does it mean, what is it about?" I answer with a performance about perspective and gravity. Or about the baroque era.

– Kirsten Dehlholm (Hotel Pro Forma 2017)

I want to move my discussion to a more concrete level, and think about how this way of thinking really might effect when we create art as human beings. Thinking of art through a diffractive thought pattern is of course only one of many ways, but I feel that it might help myself (and hopefully also others) to think about artistic activity and art in a more multifaceted way. What can we gain in an everyday work or life by shifting our thought

patterns? What kind of work does a diffractive thought pattern suggest and what is the difference when comparing to a reflective thought pattern?

Going through the process of writing this text, I have run into everyday situations in my work, or in other people's artistic work – either as an experiencer or as a colleague – that for me feel like "evidence" that the existing thought paradigm very instantly affects the artistic work of today and how we think about other human beings – our colleagues or our audiences – inside these contexts. As I feel I have started to be more alert about how the current thought patterns affects the work and the art pieces, I have started to think that there are alternatives that lead to different working methods, structures and relations to artistic activity.

So what kind of differences does a shift in thought pattern suggest? What kind of structures? What kind of artistic identities? And how does it affect how we structure and think about our own work? Does it suggest working methods? And what kind of ethical questions does it raise?

I feel I cannot approach these questions without thinking about the reasons why an artist makes a work of art. It is in some way a matter of intentions and intentions are a matter

of world view. But through a diffractive thought pattern, our world view is not chosen by us, but is a result of our intra-action with the world. We affect the world, and the world affects our view of the world, and both of these are in a constant change. I won't approach the question about why human beings in general want to create art and what drives this will, but instead talk about the intentions of artists in relation to specific pieces.

In my opinion, thinking through a reflectional thought pattern easily leads us to think that the only thing important is what impact the art piece has in relation to our intention. If we want the art piece to change the world in some way, the important thing is to fill the piece with statements or questions; with the *content* that drives this intention in the best possible way. This thinking easily leads us to think that the ends justify the means. By thinking through a diffractive thought pattern, we try to acknowledge other aspects as well.

### Creating potential – How do you want to raise your child?

Some times art pieces might playfully be talked about as "children" by the artist(s). Lets play with this thought based on the discussion above.

We can think that the process of creating an art piece is comparable to raising a child. At some point in time, the child gets quite independent from its parent – as gets the art piece. But before that, there is a process of raising the child in(to) the world, and different parents have different approaches to this process, in the same manner as different artists have different approaches to their "children".

Even though there are tragic exceptions – let's assume that every parent wants the best for their children. In the same way let's assume that every artist wants the best for their art piece. So, in this discussion, we assume that the intentions are "good". But what is "good" and "best", and in relation to what? As a parent, one can think that the best is to create the best possible conditions for the children: to be successful, to be happy, to be rich, or to be something else – or a combination of these – in the world. The intentions are in relation to the parents world

view and the values of the parent. And this is true for the artist as well. So – as artists or as parents – we cannot escape our own values.

And as we probably all are familiar with, telling a child what is right and what is wrong does not work any better than telling an adult. The child learns values by observing other human beings – for example what you do as a parent – and follow that example. A simplified example: if we as parents speak of some values to our children, but do things in an opposite way, the thing the child learns is that it is okay to be superficial, that it is okay to speak in one way and act in another. Speech is not unconnected from actions. So to really succeed in parenting, you have to recognize your own values and how you act and be transparent to yourself and to your child. And if you really want the child to learn some specific values, you have to live and act them yourself, it is not enough that you speak of them.

If we think about art in the same manner, I would like to play with the thought that the art piece “learns by following the example of the artist” and not from “what the artist tells the art piece to do or not to do”. What I mean by this is that our values shine through in the art piece. As a thinking artist analysing yourself and your context you have better means to think about the impact and values you raise the art piece with.

For me, this way of thinking about art suggests that we think about artistic work as a way of creating potential in the world. That could mean a shift from thinking about creating pieces, to creating framings and potential inside the art world and in the world. We do not need to

be prisoners of imaginary structures and rules, but we can invent the best tools possible for what we want to do. And this way of thinking affects the practice – the working methods. For example it frees me from thinking about a sketch as good or bad and shifts my focus to the potential it creates. An idea can slowly take its form by going through the different (diffractive) stages that it has to, to slowly form the framed potential – or space inside the art world – that the work in itself is.

As artist(s) we cannot know anything about the future. We cannot know what the world will look like, and we cannot know which agents are going to step inside the space of the art piece – which, as said, can be thought of as a metaphor as the art piece’s space in spacetime, where every agent that is, has been or will be in relation with the phenomenon is situated. Or if we want to think of this in relation to the metaphor of the child, it is a metaphor for the life of the child – all the experiences she has, everything she is right now and everything that will affect her later on. As parents, we can only try to raise her in the best possible way. And in art we can only try to “raise” the art piece in the best possible way. We can only create potential. We create platforms inside of which experiences can happen – and the variety of experiences is infinite inside the framing of the potential.

## Artistic agency and authorship

Just as parents step into the life of their child earlier than other human beings, we can probably safely say that artists step into the art piece’s space earlier than the experiencer. When the parents starts raising their child, the child has not yet become a raised child. When the artist steps into the art piece’s space, this space has not yet taken the material form that the first experiencer will step into.

As artists we build the space that in the end becomes “an independent” art piece. We step into it and choose to start to act in it. For example, for what ever reason, we encounter something that becomes an idea for us, and we choose to explore this idea further, to interact with it. This is the embryo of the art piece’s space. As time goes on and we continue our interaction, this space grows into material “things”, into social structures and other factors. At this point it includes our working methods, how we take care of ourselves among other things. If we are not able to create the right kind of spaces to function in (the right kind of circumstances), we just try to bring the wrong content in the wrong spaces. It is comparable with trying to sew a perfectly clean fabric in a mud pit. And the better we are at building this space, the better potential we create for the art piece in the world. Because this *space itself* becomes what we think of as the art piece at some point in time.

And as a side note, this is not a discussion about what is immediately perceived as “good” or “bad” art, because this cannot be the only yardstick. In our history, we have many examples of

art pieces that has been recognized after the death of the artist. And just to relate to something outside the arts – just take the example of Galileo and the sun. Ideas that have a big impact are not necessarily recognized right away. And in political history we have many examples of ideas that has been perceived as good, but later on turned into for example genocides.

If we do not understand that the way we work – taking both physical, social, linguistic and imaginary aspects into account – really affects the art piece, then how can we really tune our artistic identity in the way we want? How can we really be good parents for our children? How can we avoid creating art in mud pits?

As artists, we build the art piece’s space by creating working methods and material set-ups for ourselves. We create the circumstances in which we function, and this is a part of what will become the art piece. We do this as agents in the world and this is a matter of how we choose to work.

This means that we should be transparent about our intentions – to the world, but especially to ourselves. If we do not know what we do and why we do it – then how can we really tell the world about it? If we are not transparent to ourselves, and cannot analyse what kind of values our actions suggest to others – then how could we be able to communicate things to our colleagues and the world? Considering the working methods, this becomes even more important in a collective artistic process.



So how should we view the artists' relation to art pieces? As a reference to this artistic identity and also to artistic authorship, I want to cite Barad. In the acknowledgement of *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, she writes:

So this acknowledgment does not follow (and does not not follow) the tradition of an author reminiscing about the long process of writing a book and naming supporters along the way that made the journey possible. There is no singular point in time that marks the beginning of this book, nor is there an "I" who saw the project through from beginning to end, nor is writing a process that any individual "I" or even group of "I's" can claim credit for. In an important sense, it is not so much that I have written this book, as that it has written me. Or rather, "we" have "intra-actively" written each other ("intra-actively" rather than the usual "interactively" since writing is not a unidirectional practice of creation that flows from author to page, but rather the practice of writing is an iterative and mutually constitutive working out, and reworking, of "book" and "author"). Which is not to deny my own agency (as it were) but to call into question the nature of agency and its presumed localization within individuals (whether human or nonhuman). Furthermore, entanglements are not isolated binary coproductions as the example of an author-book pair might suggest. Friends, colleagues, students, and family members, multiple academic institutions, departments, and disciplines, the forests, streams, and beaches of the eastern and western coasts, the awesome peace and clarity of early morning hours, and much more were a part of what helped constitute both this "book" and its "author." (Barad 2007, IX-X)

Even though Barad is writing in another discourse, the content of this acknowledgement can be applied to artistic practices as well. As artists we make the pieces as much as the pieces makes us – we "intra-actively" make each other. When thinking about art through a diffractive thought pattern, it also becomes complicated to define the "authorship" of an art piece. Or at least one should be very careful when making such definitions. Because where does a piece of art come from? Is it a sum of factors that are not traceable in the ocean of the world, or are they really traceable without making arbitrary assumptions?

We can think of a case, where the working group has been working very collectively, and where the working group feel they share the authorship of the piece. If the audience in this case thinks of the director as the author, and the performer as an "element of the piece", does it change where the authorship lies? And should the directors point out that the authorship is not theirs alone? Or if the director does not acknowledge that the performers could be artists, but still uses them as artistic agents to build the performance, does it change the relation between them just because the director happens to have this opinion?

So how should we then relate to the question of authorship in art? I think we can think of the authorship through the metaphor of the art piece's space. If there, inside this space, is only one agent that can be considered an artist, it may be safe to give all the artistic credit to this person. But this is seldom the case. For example, if we think of a piece of classical music, the composer has written the piece as musical notation a number of years ago. After that, there has been interpretations made over and over again by different orchestras. And every time the piece has been performed by a new orchestra the art piece's space broadens and the

## Linnut

Olet lintu taivaalla.  
Tuhansien lintujen keskellä  
vieressä  
ympäröimänä  
Jostain syystä näen ainoastaan  
sinut, just nyt.

Et ajattele minua  
Sinä lennät  
Tuhansien lintujen keskellä  
vieressä  
ympäröimänä  
Sinä lennät

## Birds

You are a bird in the sky.  
In the midst of thousands of birds  
next to  
surrounded by  
For some reason I only see you right now.

You do not think about me  
You are flying  
In the midst of thousands of birds  
next to  
surrounded by  
You are flying

individual musicians becomes an artistic agent inside this space. But the artistic agency of the musician is relatively small in relation to the whole phenomenon. We can also think of the same musician going home and writing a song and performing it with a small band later on. In this case the musician's artistic agency is bigger in relation to the whole space of the art piece.

And even in the cases where we usually consider that the piece is made by a single artist – for example a painter – there seems to be no exact boundary for the persons authorship, as we can see in the example of how Barad has chosen to write her acknowledgement. Therefore, the question about authorship is – in this thought pattern – always in relation to the sum of all the artistic agencies and their temporal involvement. Because without the artistic effort made by the individual musician the art piece's space would not have the same proportions neither would the sum of the artistic agency inside this have. In this thought pattern this is not a matter of opinion and credits, but it is a matter of effort and actions leaving traces in the world. Neither is authorship a matter of “either or”, but a spectrum, where some agents have more artistic agency and some less inside the art piece's space.

## Structures and ethical aspects

A human being in this society has many roles. Some of them are work related, some are social. One person can have different roles in different contexts – and there seems to be no problem with that. But that also means artists are not artists all of the time. It is a role that the artist has in the right context, it is a part of the artist's agency inside specific phenomena. Being a painter, sculptor, musician, performer, director, choreographer, scenographer or something else does not automatically make a person an artist. But in some contexts – inside some phenomena – these agents have an artistic agency. I would like to think that roles like “scenographer” function in at least three ways.

Firstly, it relates to a personal work identity, to how one views oneself, which role one project on oneself. For example, I do not think of myself as a scenographer just because I have studied scenography. I think of scenography as a set of tools that I know how to use. But I also have tools that, by some, would be categorized under the tool set of video design, and also tools that by some would be categorized under the set of lighting design. I also have tools that go further than the visuality that these tool sets suggests for some – for example I also need a great deal of dramaturgical understanding in my work. But when I think of my work identity, I like to think of myself as either a spatial designer or a spatial artist, depending on the context. But that is only my subjective view of it when “I” make a cut between myself and the field I work in. And as we have seen, there are different views.

Secondly, “scenographer” as a role relates to how other perceive me. I have realized that others do not always perceive me as a spatial designer with different tools, as I would like them to. And this is of course no surprise, based on what my education is and on the fact that most of the work I have done have been in the role of a scenographer.

Thirdly, “scenographer” as a role relates to what my role is in a specific project. In this context it has to do with both what kind of work I am expected to do – an agreement made between me and the working group – and what credit I get when the work is done.

But these roles are only words, and talking about them on this level, they do not per se include any artistic agency. And there seems to be some confusion here – at least inside the changing field of the performing arts. It raises the question about if we book people to projects or if we book “roles” when we book the people that will become artistic agents in the projects. Some designers, for example, identify themselves very much as “scenographers”, “costume designers” or something else and can even get upset when they inside the frame of some project are expected to work in an experimental way or if they are asked to be a part of a more democratic and collective process, where the artistic decisions regarding any aspect of the performance are made together. Others enjoy this kind of working environment. And we can come up with these kind of examples in any artistic field. People are different and interpret these identities and roles differently, and there is no problem with that per se.

But it means that we have to be extremely transparent to each other when we communicate these things to one another. We need to be aware that the other person does not necessarily have the same view of their role as I have. And we need to communicate it in order to avoid problems and build the best possible space for the art piece. And if there are differences in the views, we need to solve them together and not run over one another. We need to be ready to try to shift our own views. What is okay for someone is not okay for another, and it is a matter of consent and how we treat each other. It is not an argument to say that “I am like this” or “we have always done like this”.

And if we still, in a collective art process (or in parenting) find ourselves in situations where we realize the other person has another perspective than ourselves – and most certainly we will – the best way to solve it *considering the process and the result of the process, which is the art piece itself* is to try to find a working method that both parts can accept and where both agents have space to give their best regardless of the decided hierarchy or the roles inside the working group.

This is not necessarily about making democratic artistic decisions. It would be an illusion to think that these two are equivalents of each other. The relationship between parents does not necessarily need to be democratic to be a good relationship – there are perfectly well functioning relations where only one of the parents makes most of the decisions that regard the child. And this does not mean I deny the fact that in some collective processes some of the artists have more artistic agency than others. And this is no problem, some projects are more collective than others, but the point is that it is not a matter of “either or”.

So these are examples of how we could think about the structures during the work with the piece – while building the art piece’s space. But what about the content we put into the piece, and the ways we present this content?

To go back to Marshall McLuhan’s (2001, 8 and 13-14) idea about the content of a medium always being another medium and the statement “the medium is the message”, this starts to make sense. If we just try to present ideas or content inside some medium, we miss the fact that the medium where we present it is actually more important and that there might be alternatives to this medium. And thinking about the art piece’s space as the medium, it is therefore important for us to be aware of what it consists of, just to be able to see the alternatives. Otherwise, it might lead us to just presenting problems inside an existing structure, but not being critical to the structure itself (of which we are a part).

One example of this kind of blindness is the repetition stereotypes on the stage with an intention to break them. In these kind of cases the mistake is comparable to the parent that fails to understand that the words are not enough and that the actions and the example shown through actions speak louder.

For example, when artists create art pieces about sustainability, they have to consider how sustainable they are themselves as well as human beings and as artists (or as a part of a working group). If they create pieces about equality, they have to consider how they treat

others. These may seem like simplified examples, but the point is that it is questionable to work in a way that repeats the structure that it criticises.

This means that there are structures that define the art piece. The creator – in this case the artist as an agent – can be more or less aware of these structures, and therefore more or less able to create a piece that really resonates with the parts of the world that the artist wants. If we do not take these structures into account as artists, it might create an illusion for the experiencer that the reality is simpler than it is. And if it affects the thinking of the experiencers in this way, this only repeats an already existing paradigm, instead of questioning this paradigm, which in turn is questionable through an ethical or responsibility perspective.

This way of thinking gives us a much bigger responsibility as artists in relation to what we do. Apart from just thinking about our working methods and structures, we also need to acknowledge the fact that we cannot know how big the art piece’s space will grow in the future and how much impact it will have on the world. Therefore it is very important that we take responsibility for what kind of potential we let loose in the world. And even if someone makes art with purely egoistic intentions, the potential let loose in the world still will affect the artists life later on, because the artist is entangled with the art piece.

The question about responsibility can also be applied when we shift the perspective to other agents in the art world – experiencers, cultural journalists, critics, guides, curators and institutions deciding for the funding. Of course the experiencers are free to make their own associations, but if these turn into assumptions about the artists intention, for example “it is clear that the artist wanted this or that with this piece”, is this not to put words into others mouths?

And maybe this is not so much a problem with an experiencer that now and then experience art as a part of their free time. But when these same assumptions are made by professionals inside the art world, I think there is a problem. And I would claim that there is this kind of thinking also among professionals. An everyday example of this, the other day I went to the Helsinki Art Museum to see an exhibition called *Nautinto/Njutning/Pleasure*, where works by Anna Retulainen, Jukka Korkeila and Elina Merenmies were exhibited. As I was enjoying the exhibition with a person dear to me, we happened to hear what one of the guides was speaking of. The guide was going into some religious and sexual topics in the artists personal lives and making statements based on this. I do not know if the guide or the person deciding for the content of the guided tour in this case took the responsibility, because if the artists in question have stated that their own religious view or sexuality is a source for their work, there may be no problem. But if not, there is. It is comparable to citing someone in an academic text without being able to make the reference.

So in this sense, this thought pattern forces us to take more responsibility for our agencies inside the art world. And, in my view, this is at first hand the responsibility of the professionals working with art – either as artists, cultural journalists, critics, guides, curators and institutions deciding for the funding, just to name a few. If we as professionals cannot show the right example, we cannot require it from our audiences.

## Doppler

Idag vet vi – på samma sätt som människorna i Galileos tid visste att jorden var universums centrum – att universum expanderar hela tiden. Om jag har förstått saken rätt så kan vi se det, eftersom vi vet vilken färgs ljus som borde stråla in till jorden från rymden. Detta baserar sig på en kunskap om hur grundämnena fördelar sig i universum. Men färgen skiftar, beroende på om den materia som utstrålar detta ljus rör sig mot oss eller bort från oss. Ljusets färg förändras alltså på samma sätt som ljudet av en ambulans då den kör förbi. Då den närmar sig låter ljudet högre än då den rör sig bortåt och i stunden mellan dessa skeden sker en snabb, men ändå gradvis förändring mellan dessa tonhöjder. Om universum skulle vara ett kaos av rörelse, så skulle alltså medeltalet av färgförvrängningen närma sig noll. Men nu är detta alltså inte fallet. Fallet är att större delen av

ljuset skiftas mot rött, vilket betyder att massan som utstrålar ljuset rör sig bortåt från jorden. Alltså vet vi att universum expanderar hela tiden och att den rymd som finns runt oss rör sig i en viss riktning och att den riktningen är ”bortåt”.

Vi har alltså alla bevis vi behöver för att veta att universum expanderar.

Och detta leder vissa till att tänka att det är en expansion som alltid kommer att fortgå, precis som trädet alltid kommer att växa.

Andra tänker sig att det måste finnas en punkt där gravitationen tar vid, vilket skulle leda till att universum börjar förminska vid en för människor ofattbar tidpunkt i framtiden.

Och så finns det kanske någon, någonstans på jordens yta, som helt enkelt tänker sig att det hela bara är ett bevis på att universum andas in och ut, precis som vi.

## Doppler

Today we know that the universe is expanding, in the same manner as the people of the time of Galileo knew the earth was the centre of the universe. As far as I have understood, we can see it because we know what colour the light that reaches the earth should have. This is based on a knowledge of how the elements are distributed in the universe. But the colours change, depending on whether the material emitting this light moves towards us or away from us. The colour of the light thus changes in the same way as the noise of an ambulance as it passes by. As it approaches, the sound pitch is higher than when it moves away, and in the moment between these stages we experience a rapid, yet gradual change between these pitches. If the universe would be a chaos of motion, the average of the colour distortion would approach zero. But this is not the

case. The case is that most of the light is redshifted, which means that matter emitting the light moves away from the Earth. Thus, we know that the universe is expanding all the time and that the space that exists around us moves in a certain direction, which is “away”.

So we have all the evidence we need for knowing that the universe is expanding.

And this leads some people to think that there is an ongoing expansion, that will always continue, just as the tree will always grow.

Others think that there must be a point for gravity to claim its space, which would cause the universe to start to contract at an unimaginable moment in the future.

And maybe there's someone somewhere on the surface of the earth, who simply thinks it's just a proof that the universe breathes in and out, just like us.

## Conclusion

The world is changing. We live in the era that is nowadays officially called the Anthropocene. That means we already, as humanity, have started to acknowledge how we change the world. This in turn means, that there is a paradigm shift going on. A shift in thought is happening right now. But it is a subtle and slow change, and it can be hard to perceive in an everyday scale. But it effects our thinking and art is not outside this.

I did not want to write a thesis about scenography as a framed phenomenon in the world. Now I understand why. It has slowly become clear to me, that what I am really writing about may be framed inside questions like “What is art?” or similar. That surprised me. I would have never imagined to write about such a topic, but yet the world has led me here. And as I said – I understand why. This essay has given me the answer. It just feels wrong to frame scenography as some object that I try to analyse as a subject. What I am interested in is how it relates to the world, or at least to humanity. And to think about this, I cannot frame the world outside the phenomenon of scenography.

If we think of the world – or about art in this manner - we do not *need to know*. We can place our human cravings for knowledge in a perspective. The feeling of wanting to know the truth and seeking the truth, does not mean we have to find it. It is enough to seek and to make theories, it is not about the theories being right. It is about having the courage to place yourself in a process, and to not be “ready”.

We do not *need* to be right, as long as we are prepared to be wrong. And if we – deep inside – *feel* that we have taken all the perspectives into account, isn't it enough? We can make big statements about the world, and we do not need to be afraid of being wrong as long as we have thought it through and as long as we are prepared to be wrong. And isn't that what art is all about in our society? To have the courage to claim something or to make a statement or to question something – inside a safe frame that allows analysis and discussion? It is about making phenomena and structures visible and tangible. It is about bringing what we do not see into art. To be open to new propositions, to alternatives, to definitions followed by new definitions, to be indeterminate, to question and so on. And so we return to Mika Hannula's pondering about the talk produced in the field of contemporary art cited in the introduction

of this essay. The talk is needed in order to understand structures, but it is not enough in itself. It is about how this talk can result in responsible artistic actions.

I do not claim these thoughts to be new in any way. I know artists that think about similar questions, even though they have never heard of diffraction. Similar thought patterns are already existing inside artistic communities and probably elsewhere in the society as well. We do not need to call it “diffractive” or understand how it relates to some “reflectional” thought pattern. In this sense, this essay should not be interpreted as some kind of manifest for shifting to another – or some specific – thought paradigm. This essay is more of an attempt to try to understand what is going on, and to put some words to it. But in the end they are only words and they could be replaced with other sets of words that represents the same kind of idea.

And it does not matter for me so much what the metaphor is. For me it was easy to think about these questions inspired by the thoughts presented in *Meeting the Universe Halfway*. I will not claim that I have understood Barad or the ontology of agential realism fully, but I have used Barad as a source of inspiration and it has lead me here. Someone else may need some

other kind of route to get hold of their own thoughts. This said, I hope this essay have given some readers something to work with, because it certainly has given me.

# References

## Published

Aristotle. 1997 (n.d.). *Poetics*. Translation: George Whalley. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press.

Aronson, Arnold. 2008. "The Power of Space in a Virtual World" in Hannah, Dorita et al.: *Performance Design*, 23-37. Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press.

Barad, Karen. 2007. *Meeting the Universe Half Way*. Durham: Duke University Press.

*Caligula*. Stage play by Albert Camus. Directed by: Cezaris. Premiere: 3<sup>rd</sup> of November 2007. Helsinki: Teater Viirus.

Deleuze, Gilles. 1994. *Difference and repetition*. Translation: Paul Patton. New York: Columbia University Press.

Esittävien taiteiden lavastus. 2017. <http://www.aalto.fi/fi/studies/education/programme/nayttamolavastus/> Visited: 19<sup>th</sup> of July 2017

Hannula, Mika. 2005 (2003). *Everything or Nothing*. Translation: Tomi Snellman. Helsinki: Academy of Fine Arts.

*Hold*. Spatial installation. Working group: Mateus Manninen, Fabian Nyberg, Eero Nieminen, Joel Silvennoinen. Opening: 10<sup>th</sup> of November 2017. Helsinki: Theatre Academy.

Haraway, Donna. 1992. "The Promises of Monsters: A Regenerative Politics for Inappropriate/d Others" in Lawrence Grossberg et al.: *Cultural Studies*, 295-337. New York: Routledge.

Hotel Pro Forma. 2017. <https://www.hotelproforma.dk/about/> Visited: 23<sup>rd</sup> of October 2017

McLuhan, Marshall. 2001 (1964). *Understanding Media*. London: Routledge.

Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. 1993 (1964). *Silmä ja mieli*. Translation: Kimmo Pasanen. Helsinki: Kustannusosakeyhtiö Taide.

Oxford Dictionary of English. 2016. Accessed through Dictionary for macOS, version 2.2.1.

Perec, Georges. 1999 (1974). *Species of Spaces and other Pieces*. Translation: John Sturrock. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd

Whitehead, Alfred North. 1985 (1978). *Process and reality*. New York: The Free Press

## Unpublished

Vuori, Eero-Tapio. n.d. "Kokemusesityksen teoria", unpublished

## Natt och dag Night and day

**Mellan natten och dagen finns en tid som man inte kan definiera som natt eller dag.**

**Den tiden kallar vi morgon eller kväll – gryning eller skymning.**

**Between night and day there is a time which can not be defined as night or day.**

**This is a time we call morning or evening – dawn or dusk.**