



Aalto-yliopisto

ANDREA COYOTZI BORJA

In the Middle of Things: On Researching the Infraordinary

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Abstract

The infraordinary is a phenomenon first addressed by Georges Perec in his 1975 text *Approaches to what?* The infraordinary is presented in Perec's text as an awareness and a questioning of things and events happening in our everyday life. These everyday happenings are not qualified as grandiose; but rather, the phenomenon focuses on the significance of the banal, the common, the things we label as ordinary due to their relationship with functionality or their recurrence in our daily lives. Through his work, Perec invites us to question the ordinary, what we encounter in our everyday lives, objects, situations, routines, and things which we have lost contact with when we dismiss them or qualify them as obvious. In this dissertation, I propose the question *What is the infraordinary?* not as an interrogative subject, but rather to raise the possibility and purposeful search, and re-search, of the phenomenon. This questioning delves into the processes through which the phenomenon becomes visible and inquiries about the dynamics present in this process.

This dissertation approaches the questioning in two parts. The first part, *In the middle of things*, is practice-based research that seeks through 114 fragments to circumvallate the infraordinary and, in the process, determine which features and characteristics of the phenomenon are visible and how. This first part engages with experimental writing with the purpose of having content and form intrinsically woven. It follows the structure of the book *Hopscotch* by Julio Cortázar, which invites the reader to choose one of the three (or possibly more) orders to read the book. In

the same way, the document *In the middle of things* invites the reader to decide how to engage with it: either linearly from 1 to 114, or by following a suggested order which is found at the beginning of that part, or by free association by moving at random from section to section.

The research in this first part follows a way-finding methodology through a selection of concepts such as visibility, gesture, space, everyday life, and experience, among others. Additionally, *In the middle of things* engages with the two artistic components included in this doctoral research (the exhibition *There was no thought, but a thrive for the visibility of something yet to be named* in HAM gallery, and the piece *What happens when nothing happens* exhibited in Huuto gallery), as well as with related methodologies and practices employed by other artists and writers.

The second part, *On researching the infraordinary*, elaborates on a framework of research on the infraordinary and on the work of Georges Perec in Literary studies and Artistic research. *On researching the infraordinary* also contains a formulation about the artistic research methodology employed in the section *In the middle of things*. Researching the infraordinary phenomenon brings forward the opportunity to observe and dwell on different facets of everyday life and to re-consider our relationship with our daily lives. In *Approaches to what?* Perec invites us to question our teaspoons, why? Why is questioning what is found in our pantries useful? What are our pantries saying to us? What do we encounter, and what do the things we find say about our everyday lives, our contexts, the place we live, the supermarkets, the social dynamics, and the politics of it?

To inquire about the infraordinary is not an action delimited by the pursuit of an answer but an opportunity to engage with what surrounds us. A chance to take a moment, to look around and discover all that is already there speaking to us.

A brief note before reading

TO DRIFT AND TO ACT ON AN IMPULSE

There is a group of navigators in the Marshall Islands located in the central Pacific Ocean that guide themselves from island to island not only by the stick charts they have crafted for the purpose of navigating their journeys, but mainly through the knowledge they have acquired over the years by observing the sea and its motion, the movement of their vessels, the wind, and the relationship of these with each other that is, how the waves impact on the boats.

Researching the infraordinary is a practice similar to the experience of navigating – specifically, navigating through methods similar to those of the Marshallese sailors. There is observation, analysis of the phenomena, following of cues, documentation and a means of inquiring that results in the written form of the research found in this work.

The way this research on the infraordinary was conducted resulted in two sections of the process which approach different scopes of the phenomenon:

The first section, *In the middle of things*, is research in practice on a search towards the infraordinary. This section follows a wayfinding practice, which means that the writing acted as a vessel that navigated the infraordinary and to which experiences, thoughts, observations, and ideas collided and formed the research.

The second section, *On researching the infraordinary*, presents a framework of the research and addresses the methodologies employed in the first section. *On researching the infraordinary* also references other fields of research that have addressed the phenomenon of the infraordinary, in literary studies and artistic research, for example.

It is important to note that the section *A conclusion*, although located after *On researching the infraordinary* it refers to the whole of the research, both the first and second section, and it is not an exclusive conclusion of only the second section.

HOW TO READ

In this research, the reader is invited to take the lead in the reading process and to decide where to begin and what to follow. One can choose to start with *In the middle of things* and then continue to *On researching the infraordinary*, or vice versa.

In the middle of things engages with an experimental writing process, and its structure derives from Julio Cortázar's book *Hopscotch*. At the same time, this first section contains its own set of instructions, found in its first page, titled *Intent*. In the same way as in Cortázar's novel, the reader is invited to follow three possible paths: to move consecutively from page to page, to follow the explicit

page with a suggested order or to read at random without any specific order or direction.

How this research is structured asks from you, the reader, more than you might be willing to undertake when reading. It asks of the reader a willingness to feel lost, to follow and to continue walking without knowing in which direction the thoughts are flowing, but that is how encounters happen.

This research on the infraordinary intends to share with the reader the experience of searching for the infraordinary, to walk with the text and follow the thoughts and ideas that in this research look for hints and symptoms that could lead to the phenomenon and, if not knowing for certain what it is and how to define it, to acknowledge it and give it a moment to observe it and dwell within.

Choose and follow – return and change paths. Stop and give it a moment. Allow the possibility of something being nothing more than what it is at first glance.

Index

ABSTRACT	III
A BRIEF NOTE BEFORE READING	VI

IN THE MIDDLE OF THINGS

INTENT	1
SUGGESTED DIRECTION	2
INTENTION	3
<i>IMAGE 1</i>	4
<i>RAYUELA</i> BY JULIO CORTÁZAR:	
THE ADMISSION OF OTHER POSSIBLE OPENINGS	5
<i>IMAGE 2</i>	7
<i>RAYUELA</i> BY JULIO CORTÁZAR: A COUNTER-NOVEL ...	8
A VISIBILITY TOWARDS SOMETHING	10
INFRAORDINARY AS EXPERIENCE	11
I-EXPERIENCE	12
<i>IMAGE 3</i>	13
EVERY DAY / EVERYDAY	14
ROUTINES AND CYCLES	15
EXPERIENCING THE INFRAORDINARY	16
<i>IMAGE 4</i>	18
ABOUT THE MIDDLENESS	19
<i>IMAGE 5</i>	21
RICHARD WENTWORTH	22
<i>IMAGE 6</i>	25
INFRAORDINARY AND VISIBILITY	26
<i>IMAGE 7</i>	27
ODDNESS	28
VIRILIO ON THE INFRAORDINARY	30
<i>IMAGE 8</i>	31

HAPPENINGS OUT OF CONTEXT	32	SPACE AND PLACE	80
PEREC: WHAT CALLS OUR ATTENTION	33	HEIDEGGER: "BUILDING, DWELLING, THINKING"	83
GEORGES PEREC: I REMEMBER	35	<i>IMAGE 14</i>	88
GEORGES PEREC: <i>APPROACHES TO WHAT?</i>	36	INFRAORDINARY AS A BRIDGE OF AFFECTION	89
<i>IMAGE 9</i>	41	JUST ME AND THE HOUSES ON FIRE	90
CAUSE COMMUNE	42	<i>IMAGE 15</i>	92
APPROACHES TO WHAT?	46	SPACE, PLACE, AND THE INFRAORDINARY	93
INFRAORDINARY AND ENCOUNTER.....	47	<i>IMAGE 16</i>	94
<i>IMAGE 10</i>	48	INFRAORDINARY	95
A MEMORY, A PRESENTATION, AN INTRODUCTION	49	EXPERIENCE AND PERMANENCE	96
WAYFINDING	51	THE INFRAORDINARY AND AMBULATORY PRACTICES.	97
IN THE MIDDLE OF THINGS	52	<i>KEEP WALKING INTENTLY</i> BY LORI WAXMAN	99
MARCEL DUCHAMP: INFRAMINCE	54	<i>IMAGE 17</i>	100
INFRAORDINARY / INFRA-ORDINARY	56	<i>RAYUELA</i> BY JULIO CORTÁZAR:	
ABOUT WORDS	57	FIRST READING AND A PRACTICE	101
GESTURE	58	EVENT: SHARED AND COLLECTIVE	108
INFRAORDINARY AND SIGNIFICANCE	60	ENACTMENT	109
ENCOUNTER AND PURSUIT	61	WALKING INTENTLY.....	110
WALKABLE CONVERSATIONS	62	<i>IMAGE 18</i>	115
A GESTURE WITHIN IMAGES	63	INFRAORDINARY AS ENCOUNTER	116
GESTURE: <i>THERE WAS NO THOUGHT, BUT A THRIVE</i>		EVENT AND EVENTFULNESS	117
<i>FOR THE VISIBILITY OF SOMETHING YET TO BE</i>		PEREC: EVENTFULNESS AND ENCOUNTER	119
<i>NAMED OF SOMETHING YET TO BE NAMED</i>	65	SHARING AN ENCOUNTER	120
<i>IMAGE 11</i>	67	LIFE AND ART	122
SELECTED IMAGES	68	BAS JAN ADER	123
<i>IMAGE 12</i>	70	EVENT AND ALLAN KAPROW	127
WHERE TO GO? WHAT DIRECTION TO FOLLOW?	71	ART AND LIFE	130
SHOULD WE GO TO THE SHRIMP PASTA PLACE?	72	POINTS OF CONTACT AND POINT OF DIVERGENCE	132
<i>IMAGE 13</i>	75	ON MEANING, PURSUIT, AND EXPERIENCE	135
ON DEFINING.....	76	REPETITION AND ROUTINES	136
HENRI LEFEBVRE ON DEFINITIONS	77	<i>IMAGE 19</i>	139
GESTURE: HINTS ON MEANINGS	78	QUOTIDIAN	140
EXPERIENCING SPACES	79	A REASON MUST BE HAD	141

MOVEMENT AND VISIBILITY	142
EVENT	143
A WITNESS	145
<i>IMAGE 20</i>	146
AN ART EVENT	147
<i>IMAGE 21</i>	151
WHAT HAPPENS WHEN NOTHING HAPPENS	152
THE DESK AND THE BOOKS AT THE EXHIBITION	155
THE REVOLVING CHAIR	158
<i>IMAGE 22</i>	162
THE TYPEWRITER	163
ON SUBTLETY	165
THE DOING AND THE COMMUNAL	166
QUOTIDIAN AND CONTEXT	169
NONLINEAR THOUGHT	171
BECOMING	172
ART AND THE INFRAORDINARY	173
SPACE: A BACKGROUND	174
INFRAORDINARY: NOMADIC AND SETTLEMENT	177
PEREC AND SPACE	178
<i>IMAGE 23</i>	182
A ONE DAY PROJECT AND THE QUESTION ON THE INFRAORDINARY	183
ON THE INFRAORDINARY: THOUGHT AND FORM	189
<i>IMAGE 24</i>	191
THE INFRAORDINARY AS IT HAPPENS	192
(JUST) DOING RESEARCH	193
INFRAORDINARY AND PRESENCE	195
LIST OF IMAGES	196
NAMES MENTIONED IN THE DOCUMENT	197
BIBLIOGRAPHY	198

ON RESEARCHING THE INFRAORDINARY

CONTENT	2
INTRODUCTION	3
IN THE MIDDLE OF THINGS: A DOCUMENT	6
PART I: ON METHODOLOGY	9
IN THE MIDDLE OF THINGS	14
WAYFINDING	18
RESEARCH PRACTICE ON THE INFRAORDINARY	22
(EXPERIMENTAL) WRITING & FORMAT	25
AUTOBIOGRAPHY AND OBJECT	30
WAYS OF KNOWING: AUTOETHNOGRAPHY	33
PART II: RESEARCH	36
PEREC AND THE INFRAORDINARY	37
<i>CAUSE COMMUNE</i> AND THE ANTHROPOLOGY OF CONTEMPORARY MAN	40
THE INFRAORDINARY AND RESEARCH FIELDS	43
LITERARY STUDIES APPROACH TO THE INFRAORDINARY	46
ARTISTIC RESEARCH APPROACH TO THE INFRAORDINARY	54
EVERYDAY AND THE INFRAORDINARY	69
BIBLIOGRAPHY	74
A CONCLUSION	I
ARTISTIC COMPONENTS	XV
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	XVI

“To want nothing,
Just to wait,
until there is nothing
left to wait for.
Just to wander,
and to sleep.
To let yourself be carried
along by the crowds,
and the streets.
To follow the gutters,
the fences,
the water’s edge.
To walk the length
of the embankments,
to hug the walls.
To waste your time.
To have no projects
to feel no impatience.
To be without desire,
or resentment,
or revolt.”

Georges Perec, *Things: A Story of
the Sixties / A Man Asleep*, p. 161.

Intent

Writing, thinking, speaking, or communicating about the infraordinary has no beginning nor end. One often seems to find oneself in the middle of things, just as life happens.

While trying to make my way towards the infraordinary, I seemed to remain in a place where the past reached forward seeking some form of recognition and relevance, and the future dissolved as I walked towards it.

Both the process of writing this document, and its thinking, did not have an established order or set direction. I moved following hints and crumbs, and I gathered the concepts, ideas, thoughts, memories, and reflections in the writing.

The experience of writing and reading about the infraordinary flows in the same way, without a definite direction, but meandering through experiences, thoughts, ideas, doings and undoings. The intention of the format of this document is to offer different possibilities of engagement with the words and thoughts it contains. The reader can choose to read this document in different ways: by proceeding page after page; by following the numbering in the *Suggested direction page*; or by taking one's own path, jumping into the subject that catches the eye, feeling free to be involved with this document as one sees fit. Jump, skip, read one, miss one, or not. → 2

Suggested direction

→	1	2	3	146	12
16	30	28	13	26	33
49	35	46	41	174	36
42	71	7	178	143	94
80	79	116	75	119	51
139	56	54	11	72	89
83	95	93	182	10	173
145	61	120	52	78	19
4	142	14	15	191	60
135	5	8	101	100	171
70	177	109	99	25	110
130	62	152	151	155	147
108	192	88	117	31	127
122	18	172	47	22	183
193	27	189	48	163	140
141	166	21	165	132	136
115	96	97	57	67	65
68	63	76	77	162	58
90	92	123	32	158	169
195	196	197	198	199	

→ 3

Intention

The intention within these words is to focus on the phenomenon of the infraordinary, not to define it by dissection, but to approach it. By taking up ideas, thoughts, concepts, and practices related to the infraordinary, one can begin to focus on the shape that these thoughts circumvallate. That is, looking at the seemingly empty space that all these approaches surround, which one would consider devoid, but which is, in fact, occupied by the concept one is approaching. In this case, the infraordinary.

Gazing into the fullness of nothing happening allowed the possibility of what was already there to become visible. → 146

allowing the walker to take in the unexpected details encountered along the way.

All this is very much about mushrooms, but it is also about other things. Mushroom hunting offers a model for learning, observing, and having new thoughts. “Ideas are to be found in the same way that you find wild mushrooms in the forest,” Cage wrote. “Instead of having them come at you clearly, they come to you as things hidden.”³⁰ Since mushrooms themselves are so unpredictable, they mitigate the very possibility of boredom or of exhaustive knowledge. “The more you know them, the less sure you feel about identifying them,” Cage explained. “Each one is what it is—its own center. It’s useless to pretend to know mushrooms. They escape your erudition.”³¹ To what extent this statement can be applied to the world at large is revealed by considering Cage’s musical compositions. According to *Music Walk*, *Water Walk*, and *4’33”* respectively, it is just

Image 1

→ 142

Rayuela by Julio Cortázar: The admission of other possible openings

“I don’t think it is easy to synthesise something that, in a way, is a life time of experiences; the attempt of saying it and taking it into writing. But I can give you some general ideas (...).”

Julio Cortázar in an interview with Joaquín Soler, “a Fondo”, RTVE (Spanish Radio and Television network), 20 March, 1977

In this sea of experiences, an ocean full of thoughts and ideas constantly in motion, how does one make sense of what came first, before, or from where? Experience seems to dissolve like a spoonful of sugar in hot water, leaving no visible trace, waiting for your palate to send the news to your brain; waiting for the experience that cannot be seen, but rather is felt, made, or gone through; through to where? Through time, perhaps.

Writing about the infraordinary often feels like going through a lifetime of experiences, as Julio Cortázar mentions in his interview with Joaquín Soler in regard to his novel *Rayuela* (published in English as *Hopscotch*). A thought now, or a concept I attempt to write about, might have its roots in something that happened more than ten years ago. Perhaps at this moment, I can think of the first time I read the novel *Rayuela* around 2006–2007. And so, I backtrack to that moment, following that thought. After engaging with that thought, I return, and my experience with that thought follows me

around. Not that thought itself, but something else that comes from the result of me engaging with the thought or the memory. Then I write it, I think it now, I write it now. And so it goes and goes, me following thoughts, thoughts following me, me writing them, them dissolving like snow spattered with warm piss.

This notion of rhythm and direction of thoughts in practice is – ironically – not very practical when trying to write. When writing, one letter follows the other, one word the next, and paragraphs one on top of each other. Trying to push into linear thoughts presents a challenge.

How to convey that non-linearity? How to convey the experience of following and pursuing thoughts and ideas that evaporate? Evaporation not as in disappearance, but in the sense of change of state.

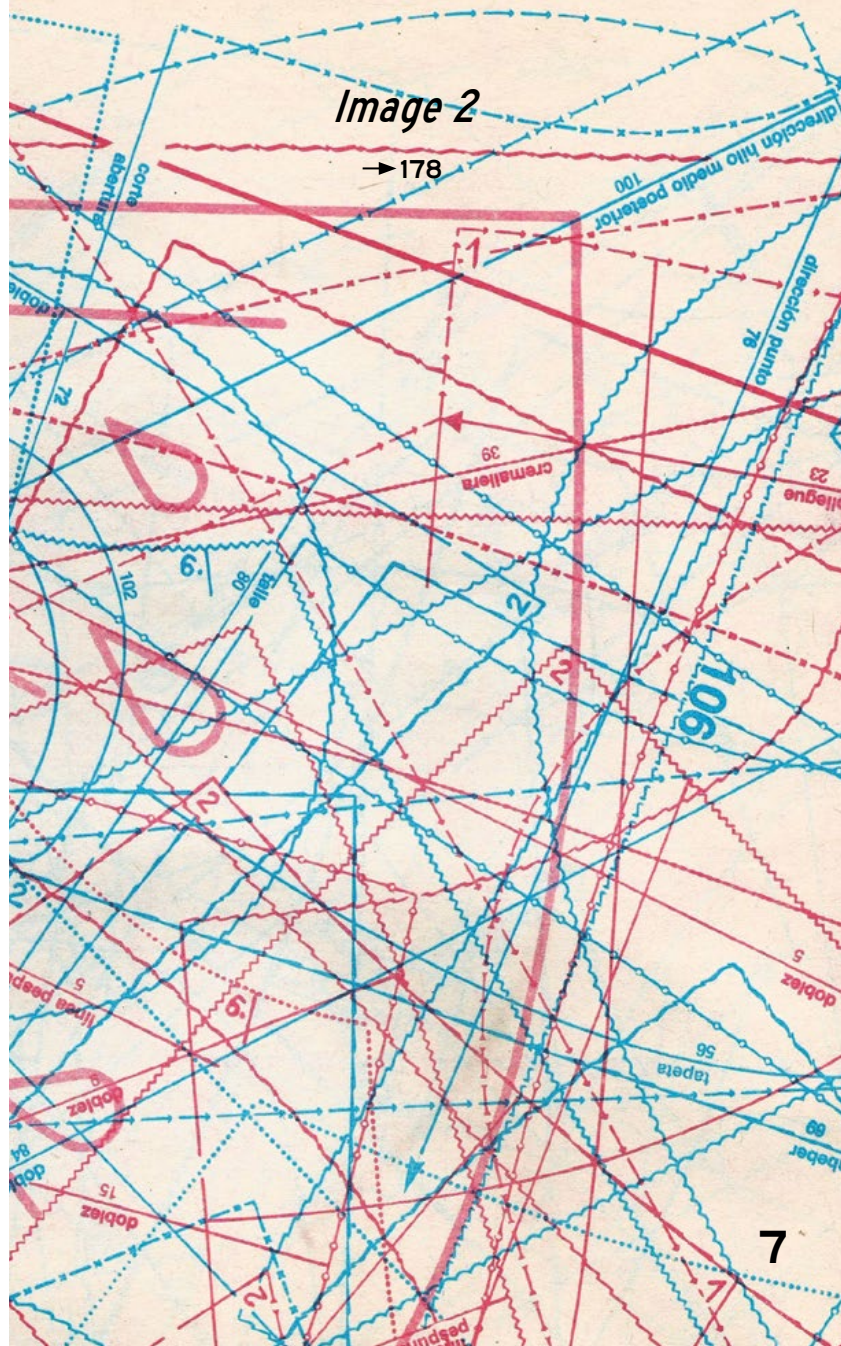
It is so, that at this moment my mind wandered off to follow the memory of *Rayuela*. Chasing this possibility, the author, who attempts to catch his thoughts on paper, offers the reader to participate in a labyrinth-like path, swivelling and swirling, bumping, tripping, gathering, and unleashing. Each section from the book moves in and around the rest of the sections. They link, relate, build on each other, and dwell among them.

“The admission of other possible realities, of other possible openings.” (Cortázar, Julio, 1977).

And so then, why not other possibilities of engaging with artistic research, too? → 8

Image 2

→ 178



Rayuela by Julio Cortázar: A counter-novel

“I don’t think it’s an anti-novel (...)” replies Julio Cortázar when asked (by Joaquín Soler) if he agreed with the critics that the novel *Rayuela* (Hopscotch) is an anti-novel.

“(...) because the notion is very negative, anti-novel. It would seem a bit of a venomous approach to destroying the novel as a genre if you say “anti-novel”, and no, it’s not that; on the contrary, it’s an approach to find new openings and new possibilities in the novel. I think the novel is one of the most fruitful literary vehicles and that, even in our time, it has great validity. One just has to imagine the number of readers that the novels have. It’s not that. But, when someone also said that the work was a “counter-novel” instead of “anti-novel”, it was a bit closer to the truth because it was an attempt to eliminate, seeing differently, the contact between the novel and its reader.

So, when you ask me for the novel, you should ask me about the novel’s readers because I wasn’t thinking individually about the readers. The whole attempt of the book, and I think that is visible from the start, is an attempt aimed at modifying the attitude of the reader who reads novels. The reader’s attitude in novels, in general, is a passive attitude because there is a man who has written a book, and one takes it and reads it from page one to three hundred, and one enters the game of the novel.

Then, one is in a passive attitude, fully receiving what that novel is giving. One has partial reactions; for example, one can dislike and abandon it; or one can find positive or negative aspects, but one is immersed.

I had these ideas, and I knew very well it was a difficult task, a really difficult one, to write, to attempt to write a book where the reader, instead of reading the novel consecutively, would have, in the first place, different options. This placed the reader in an equality with the author because the author had taken different options in writing the book. The possibility of choices, of leaving aside a part of the book and reading another one; or reading it in a different order and creating a world in which he would perform an active role and not passive. I know very well that, in practice, that doesn’t exactly fit with my theoretical desires because, in the end, the readers of *Rayuela* have accepted it in its ensemble as a book. In that sense, it’s a novel like any other. (...)

That book attempts to go all the way into the deepness of a long denial road of the quotidian life and the admission of other possible realities, of other possible openings. And one can see that the book develops in incongruent, absurd, and sometimes even incoherent episodes where the most dramatic situation is dealt with humor, and vice versa, where there are unacceptable episodes from everyday realistic criteria (...).” (Cortázar, Julio, 1977)

Julio Cortázar in an interview with Joaquín Soler, “A fondo”, RTVE (Spanish Radio and Television network), 1977. Translated from Spanish to English by Andrea Coyotzi Borja. →101

A visibility towards something

What do we see? What do we notice? What speaks to us? How do we seemingly naturally and automatically select what becomes visible to us?

What we see and/or select to see speaks of us, for us, and to us. What happens when there is a conscious decision on what we decide to see or what we decide to make visible to others? What happens when chance turns into pursuit and when the encounter becomes a choice?

Artists research within their practice. There's the doing, thinking, observing, and dwelling in the doing. Most importantly, the visibility towards something is built. In that stage of the decision to make a phenomenon visible by representation, the infraordinary enters the dynamics of artistic practice. → 173

Infraordinary as experience

Focusing on the infraordinary means placing one's attention on the experience. It means not being attentive to the thought of the phenomenon but to its lived experience. The infraordinary dwells within every day, and it is encountered in everyday life and the quotidian. This encounter, however, does not point to a dwelling within those margins. If one could place a dwelling for the infraordinary, it would be in the realm of experience.

The infraordinary has no goal. It has no purpose. It is not a practice. It is useless in a sense. But it is present, and it presents us with something. When it happens, it is something happening; it is something to be seen and experienced. What we see is not infraordinary; we are in the infraordinary, in the experience; there is nothing to see but objects and people. What happened is infraordinary, and yet, we never see the infraordinary since we are within it; there is no distance when it happens. The infraordinary is shapeless. The infraordinary envelops us as a room does. We cannot see the room when we are in it, but we are in the room; we dwell in it. We see things in it, and those things belong to the room and make it this or that kind of room. The infraordinary, as experience, is either an image which remains in the past or a sensibility that can only remain in the present.

In this sense, the infraordinary is placeless. → 72

I – experience

When thinking about the concept of experience, a black hole opens up. Not filled with a negative understanding of death and ending, but with the notion of a disappearance. I disappear in experience. Or rather, the “I” is in a raw state of being. There is no buffer zone of understanding. Once we understand what is happening, the experience is gone and replaced by meaning, thought, and a series of dynamics, such as interpretation, which will reveal to us where the “I” is and what this “I” is. Where we are located.

We have experiences we don’t think about, and some we don’t even notice, since they have intrinsically become parts of us, like walking, sleeping, eating, and breathing, for example. It is not until we focus our attention on those actions or activities – in the doing, on what happens, and the experiences – that they become detached from their function through making ourselves aware of them and centring our attention to look, observe, perceive, or understand them differently.

→ 16

Image 3

→ 26



Every day / Everyday

Every day refers to every-single-day, to units that follow upon each other. It can be understood as progressive or accumulative.

Everyday refers to a conjunction of these every-single-days which creates something ordinary, typical, common, a routine by repetition. There is no specified direction or amount.

Every day would be to count “one, two, three, four, five, six, seven...” and so on. Not that this necessarily implies that there must be a progressive action, but a pulse is differentiated by the beginning and the end of each unit.

While everyday would be to say “counting,” instead of the single units there is no specification of what is being counted. But we understand there is a grouping of these units; they belong as unspecified. As their focus is on the overall and not the parts, they collectively make up for something as a whole. → 15

Routines and cycles

There is something about routines and cycles, about repetition and awareness. We tend to think of routines as something dull, but repetition can be fruitful in the act of noticing.

Within our everyday lives we try not to be stuck in the same routine day after day; we attempt to escape the dullness and at the same time we desire stability. Everyone wants different things, but in the end, the explorer longs for a settlement and the farmer craves some adventure at some point.

There seems to be a rejection of the ordinary when referring to everyday routines as dull, unimportant and irrelevant; yet, without it, there wouldn't be a reference by which we measure experience, and hence, there wouldn't be the experience of the extraordinary. When did the word ordinary take on such a reference towards banal, common, unworthy, simple, and unwanted? When did the ordinary take such a negative rap? → 191

Experiencing the infraordinary

How to convey the experience of the infraordinary?
How to describe the infraordinary? It's always curious that the first question, or request, people have when I speak about the infraordinary is, "Can you give me an example?"

It is always difficult to convey the meaning of the infraordinary or the experience of it when thinking and speaking in the context of the everyday.

This happens since what is infraordinary for me might not be for someone else. I do try to give possible approaches or examples. However, it's not always as clear as it seems to be needed, and I end up delving more into the concept of the infraordinary, rather than providing a clear example where the other person can connect their own experience to how the infraordinary is visible in their own every day, or what the infraordinary could possibly mean for them. Finding a couch on the roadside of a city could hold an infraordinary experience for someone. Still, in some other contexts or for someone else that experience might be ordinary, or normal because an everyday thing is often seen on their roadsides. Chairs hanging from a wall in a home with the purpose of economizing the space is something I experienced seeing and which seemed odd and almost like an art installation for me, but for the people in that home, that was where chairs were meant to be.

This directs my thinking toward the relationship between objects and experience. Sometimes the situation in which things are encountered is odd. The objects seem to be out of place, out of context, and our experience with them becomes oddified. What would the relationship of oddness with the infraordinary be?

The above examples happened. I have them in my memory. They are now only the visual experience of the oddness of objects being out of place, where they are usually not. It might be that they are experiences to be had and not told.

It is, of course, possible to speak and write about experiences and thus convey meaning in such a way that the listener or reader creates an experience through that. This is when storytelling and narrative become practical tools for articulating an experience in an oral or written medium. And that is also when art appears to utter either visually or experientially – if we refer to installation or other time-based mediums – an experience, a thought, an observation, an idea towards something. → 30

Image 4

→ 172



About the middleness

It's never an easy task to pick a point in time to set as the beginning. To choose a thought and go forward from there since just when I think I have found a beginning, I find myself very much in the middle of things, jumping, back and forth between thoughts, events, happenings, and occurrences. It feels like I'm trying to find the beginning of a circle.

Joaquín Conde, a close friend, and teacher, once told me how many subjects and topics we choose in our artistic practice end up being like roundabouts which we encounter, enter, and stay in, going around and around, until we take an exit and move on. One goes in a direction, purposefully or not, until one reaches a roundabout. One does not stop and reflect within the roundabout, but rather go around the idea repeatedly, thinking while moving around it. One steers the wheels and off one goes; around and around the thought goes in one's head, the works and pieces accumulate until one decides to let go, choose an exit, and leave the roundabout in the direction of a path again. Often, one does not return to the same roundabout. Other times one encounters similar roundabouts, or even new roundabouts in the form of ideas and topics.

This is how the infraordinary has unfolded for me through the practice, observation, analysis, and reflection of the infraordinary and the everyday. It was always there, even when it didn't have a name. Its

thoughts and ideas were consistently in motion; like ocean water, the arrival of which at the shore is only predicted, but never assured. I am constantly attempting to write now; it is always now. And when I try to write in the now about the infraordinary, my thoughts roam without direction, they flap around, moth-like, and I'm left running with a net chasing the closest one only to find myself deflected by another which then seems to be closer. At times, I catch the moth; I observe it and let it go, only to chase it again. → 4

Image 5

→ 165



Richard Wentworth

When the conversation on the infraordinary emerges, so does the need for images that can speak on its behalf. There are moments in which language seems to only take us part of the way, and it is the use of any other possible medium, such as images and sound, which may allow us to reach a common understanding of what we are talking about.

I don't remember where or how I bumped into Richard Wentworth's work, specifically his book *Making Do and Getting By* (Wentworth, Richard, 2015). In this book, he makes visible a series of encounters in his everyday life with objects taken out of their typical use to become something else – forms and shapes created by the light conditions, and oddities found in the streets of different cities and countries – through 750 photographs.

When leafing through the photographs in the book, one gets the feeling of having seen those things before somewhere. This is because many of the things, objects and situations documented in these photographs hold a commonplace, a similarity or a point of connection to the experience each of us has with the everyday in an urban context. An every day within a place, with objects, with functionalities, and the adaptation of many of these objects outside of their common function.

When trying to convey an aspect of what the infraordinary is, referring to Wentworth's *Making Do and Getting*

By offers a common ground in which words by Georges Perec resonate both in what we see in the photographs and what might be speaking beneath the surface of each image, on the experience of each object. Each experience filtering through the images,

“The daily newspapers talk of everything except the daily. The papers annoy me, they teach me nothing. What they recount doesn't concern me, doesn't ask me questions and doesn't answer the questions I ask or would like to ask. What's really going on, what we're experiencing, the rest, all the rest, where is it? How should we take account of, question, describe what happens every day and recurs everyday: the banal, the quotidian, the obvious, the common, the ordinary, the infra-ordinary, the background noise, the habitual?”

(Perec, Georges, 1973, p. 200–210).

These photographs are evidence of an important quality of the infraordinary, the encounter. It is in the act of noticing, via the encounter, that the infraordinary holds a place within the banality of the everyday. That moment in which we notice how the shape of the shadow of an object isn't always the same as the object itself (Wentworth, Richard 2015, Porto 2006, p.40); or when walking the same street day in and day out, we always notice a book which is holding a window open, wondering what specific book that might be, which author is the one keeping the window open (Wentworth,

Richard 2015, Camdem 2009, p. 86). We belong in that encounter with objects and things. That instant being a moment of attention while our minds wonder about the possible intentions, and our bodies try to keep the pace while walking and continuing with our lives. A moment of belonging and forgetfulness.

Within Richard Wentworth's photographs, we are reminded of what we have already seen but have sometimes discarded as uneventful, without anything spectacular that can transport our lives out of the dullness of the everyday. There, in between the encounter and our body moving away from it, is where we experience the infraordinary. → **183**

Image 6

→ 110



Infraordinary and visibility

The infraordinary finds a temporary belonging within the moment that it is happening. In the strangeness of that moment, in being out of context, “somewhat out of place”, the infraordinary becomes visible. → **33**

Image 7

→ 189



Oddness

The oddities, the mismatches, the seemingly out-of-place.

In 2019, I spent a month in the midst of the Scottish countryside in the Cove Park residency programme. Looking at the mountains, hills, the grass, Loch Long, and the bats nesting in the pod where I lived. It was there, in the middle of what we call “nowhere,” that I wondered if the infraordinary could be found in that type of environment. In a place where the nearest supermarket was an hour away on foot, two if you intend to return, I wondered about what Paul Virilio proposed in his AA Files interview with Enrique Walker about things happening,

“Outside of the city nothingness can perhaps exist (...) but it certainly does not exist in the city. In the city there is never a void. There is always background noise, there is always a symptom, a sign, a scent.”

(Virilio, Paul, “Paul Virilio on Georges Perec,” 2008, p. 15).

In the city, we are surrounded by things happening and symptoms that point towards something. Perhaps it is true that only outside the city nothingness can exist. But if nothingness existed, there would be an absence of the infraordinary. Is it really possible for the infraordinary to exist outside the city?

To answer this question, I believe one would have to focus attention on the way or processes in which the ev-

ery-single-day builds our everyday through routines, normalizing objects, actions, and our surroundings in a way that they disappear into the ordinary. Meaning: things disappearing into their functions. A coffee mug that one glanced through the window of the shop, which caught one’s attention because of its shape, size, colour, pattern or combination of different aesthetic factors, has now blended into the routine of drinking morning coffee from it every day. There is a longing for having a coffee before one must deal with the daily happenings such as people, emails, or just before waking up to what we refer to as mundane activities of the day. Maybe at the beginning, there is an excitement about using the new cup; or perhaps the cup has such a symbolic nature that one can only drink the morning coffee from that mug. But be as it may, the longing is for the action of drinking the coffee, not for the object as a desire. There are exceptions, but my point here is how what was once distinct due to its objectual condition has now blended with a routine action.

I believe it might be possible for the infraordinary to exist outside the city; however, when the environment is new and not part of one’s everydayness, it is also possible that the infraordinary is passing one by without one noticing. In that respect, it would be that the quotidian, the routines, and the setting up of normality are needed for one to detach from them and to experience the infraordinary. Before that, before the normalization of the environment and context, everything seems to be in place in the newness of a place or situation. Nothing is odd or out-of-place. → 13

Virilio on the infraordinary

“... Hence our approach to the city, for instance, no longer connected to traditional notions of urban geography (cadastral survey, social classes, concentration, density and other phenomena); rather, it connected to what we termed the ‘infra-ordinary’, i.e. what we do when we do nothing, what we hear when we hear nothing, what happens when nothing happens. Outside of the city nothingness can perhaps exist (...) but it certainly does not exist in the city.

In the city there is never a void. There is always background noise, there is always a symptom, a sign, a scent. So we were interested precisely in those things which are the opposite of the extraordinary yet which are not the ordinary either – things which are ‘infra’...”

Virilio, Paul and Walker, Enrique “

Paul Virilio on Georges Perec.” p. 15.

→ 28

Image 8

→ 127



Happenings out of context

Mario Martínez, a friend and colleague, once described the infraordinary as “things that are misplaced”. Meaning that these things that can be found in the infraordinary are not where one usually would see them, or find them, or in the place they belong to. That is, referring to objects. It might be the same for “things happening” and not just things, but also situations happening “out of context”. → 158

Perec: What calls our attention

There is always something calling for our attention, pulling us towards something, somewhere. This might be based on desires, maybe wishes, and some call it will. We see without intention, or so we think. We always seem to have a point to which we move or for which we move, and yet we are never masters of our surroundings; we cannot control our environment. The environment, in a city or outside it, flows. When in the city, this environment might reply to the laws some makers have decided upon, and we react to them. Obey. And yet, there is much more that is unaccounted for. Rhythms, routines, coming and going of the “free will” of people unleashed for the unaccountedness and unexpected quality of everyday life in the urban environment.

When one is outside the city, outside the urban grid, where nature is confined and allowed (very gracefully from us – sarcasm intended) to live and exist, this unaccountedness and unexpectedness is unfortunately not unleashed from the rules we have set as much as one would imagine. We have “tamed” nature and planned it. We have decided what type of trees there will be somewhere and why. What once came naturally is now a science of balance. So, the unexpected is not to be found in natural areas close to the city. That categorization we leave for the places we call the wild. Why is it “wild”?

As defined by the Merriam-Webster dictionary, something is wild because it is not tamed, because it lives in a natural state which responds to no controlled behaviour. The same thing can be thought of in an urban environment. “The car was going wild!” meaning it was not responding to the traffic laws, possibly changing lanes in an unordered manner, or who knows what! There, the “who knows what!” of it all. Wild. It seems that we need to know, that we need to expect and prevent and foresee what is to happen. We need to be ready.

It is around these thoughts, going into the readiness of life, into the expected, that Georges Perec’s and Paul Virilio’s reflection on the statement “what happens when nothing happens” halts the never-ending stream of content, noise, images, wham and kablam! Away from everyday life. What happens when nothing happens? What happens when one stays in one place for no other reason than to observe what happens? What doesn’t happen? What happens often? What do I not see when I’m only a passerby? I can’t be sure, and I don’t even dare to assume what Perec’s questions and wanderings were when he sat at the Tabac café in the Place Saint-Sulpice to write what he observed. This practice resulted in his work, *An Attempt at Exhausting a Place in Paris* (1975).

In *An Attempt at Exhausting a Place in Paris*, Perec sat, observed, and wrote what he saw: letters, symbols, bus numbers, people he knew, materials, objects, subjects, routines, and repetitions. His visual wanderings ran with the pen as time passed while he smoked and drank coffee. → 49

Georges Perec: I remember

I remember. That resonates in my head whenever I start thinking about Georges Perec. An impulse that comes over from those words wants me to think of him as a close character in my life, even though there is no closeness other than the fact that I have attached myself to his thinking, his words, the rhythm in them and his methods of observation.

I fight against the stiffness of writing about Perec as if the writing was in the format of information one finds in library cards. At the same time, I know I don’t possess a thorough knowledge of Perec as David Bellos does, the author of the book *Georges Perec. A Life in Words* (Bellos, David 1993). Eight hundred and one pages, without including the preliminary pages or appendixes and valuable information that some people, myself included, avoid reading in the rush of sinking one’s teeth into the cake.

Throughout this book, David Bellos extensively details Perec’s life and work. Life events, work process, anecdotes, letter extracts, descriptions of friendships, family, love desires and everyday life into becoming the writer we now know. It is an unbelievably thorough work for which I don’t have anything but respect and admiration. Nevertheless, a way must be found here to introduce the person, Georges Perec, the author who, through many books, moving images, words and thoughts brought into the foreground the concept of the infraordinary. → 46

Georges Perec: *Approaches to what?*

France 1973, eight years after French writer George Perec (1936 – 1982) released his first literary work, *Things: A Story of the Sixties* (1965) (a book that was awarded the Renaudot award and consolidated his place in the literary scene) he published the text titled *Approaches to What?* in the 5th issue of the *Cause commune* publication.

The text might be short in length, but what Perec is offering us in the text is space, a field to run. An open field of thoughts and reflections to wonder about our relationship with the world, with things and objects found in it, and the possible events, eventualities, occurrences, and happenings that can unfold in our daily life.

In this text, Perec takes our hand to walk with us into a Wunderkammer of the forgotten. Also known as a cabinet of curiosities, the Wunderkammer, which initially was a room containing a series of collected items to be reflected upon, was later constructed within a piece of furniture to display the items rather than a whole room. The themes, or topics, of the collected items, depended on the curator/collector.

However, the things in Perec's Wunderkammer are not sitting in a room, behind glass, or on a shelf protected from touch, they are not set out for display and given a status of contemplation and reminiscence.

What Perec invites us to do is to notice, to observe, and to create an awareness of that which we deem ordinary, mundane, and unimportant.

In *Approaches to What?* Perec invites us to “question our teaspoons”. The matter here is not the spoons per se but the questioning,

“To question the habitual (...) To question what seems so much a matter of course that we've forgotten its origins. To rediscover something of the astonishment that Jules Verne or his readers may have felt faced with an apparatus capable of reproducing and transporting sounds. For the astonishment existed, along with thousands of others, and it's they which have moulded us. What we need to question is bricks, concrete, glass, our table manners, our utensils, our tools, the way we spend our time, our rhythms. To question that which seems to have ceased forever to astonish us. We live, true, we breathe, true; we walk, we open doors, we go down staircases, we sit at a table in order to eat, we lie down on a bed in order to sleep. How? Why? Where? When? Why?” (Perec, Georges, 1973, p. 210)

“Question your teaspoons,” I read, and so my mind begins to wonder. Have you ever noticed that spoons are flatter now? Not only the teaspoons but larger spoons. Have you noticed that the spikes of the fork are shorter? I don't remember when it was that I first noticed this.

I think it happened so many times that I began to try to find a spoon I liked in the cutlery drawer in my parents' house; I noticed that not all spoons have the same depth. And, as years have passed by, I have noticed that spoons are now just flatter than they used to be.

The cutlery drawer where I live now is very similar to the one I grew up with. It is composed of spoons, forks and knives that don't match. There are no sets, so all the spoons, forks and knives are different. There might be two here and there that are the same, but no more than that. This eclecticism leads me to have a preferred spoon (same with the fork and knife), and this is because I like spoons that have a deep bowl not a semi-flat one (as I learned today, the parts of a spoon are: the handle, the neck, the bowl and the tip). I have noticed that some modern or more up-to-date spoons are very flat, and I just don't get it. Isn't the point of the spoon to scoop liquid? To hold a mouthful of soup? Now, there are other observations regarding the spoons I like. Of course I do like that my spoons scoop a considerable amount of liquid, but old spoons that hold a good amount of liquid are also very long, so I cannot put the whole spoon in my mouth without grasping the corners of the mouth with the edges of the spoon. It's like a slicing feeling, like a paper cut, not that the spoon can cut (that I know of), but it gives the impression that it could if I was not careful. So, yes, I like deep spoon bowls but not huge spoon bowls. Anyhow, spoons nowadays are very flat and have more round edges, and I always wondered why. Is it because of some standardized norm or design? I have never really understood why, and from time to time, I ask people if they have noticed

that spoon bowls are kind of flat, not deep enough, and why they think that is.

When I asked Mario Martínez, he told me that spoons are flatter nowadays because of their production in an assembly line; machine manufacturing standardized the process of how the spoons are made. Upon researching the process of how spoons are made, I observed how there is a plate, a flat one which is pressed into the concave shape for the spoon bowl, and although the form in which this plate is pressed could be more prominent to give more depth to the spoon, that would mean more material, and hence more costs. However, there was no definitive answer in my research regarding spoons. I found different lines of enquiry, such as "the right spoons for spoon measurements when cooking" ("The truth about spoon measurements", *The Yuppiefchef*, September 20, 2010). Or an article named "What Your Spoon Says About You" in *The Atlantic* magazine in which the author Bee Wilson gives a short historical overview on the background of the shape of particular spoons, what they say about the time, place, and what the author terms results in "kitchenware as political propaganda" (Wilson, Bee, 2012).

The thought of spoons can take us in many unimaginable directions. Spoons can say a lot if given the room to roam.

"Question your spoons," such a simple sentence, and yet, a reminder that when looking upon the "simplest", most ordinary things that we have either forgotten or never thought of, we can observe and bring forward re-

flections, evidence of historical backgrounds, memories, and resonances. Or just a moment that allows us to follow the rabbit into a daydream.

Everything speaks, and George Perec reminds us to listen. → 42

Image 9

→ 174



Cause commune

How words and thoughts come to visibility varies in different forms and mediums. For some writers and artists who emerged from the 1968 – 1969 movement in France, this place for words and thoughts was the “open tribune” *Cause commune*, a “common cause”: “*Cause commune n’est pas une revue: c’est une tribune ouvert*” (Cause commune is not a magazine: it’s an open tribune) (Cause commune, May 1972).

The movement or civil unrest (as it’s often described in relation to the civic structure) began in May 1968. It rose from the voices of students and workers who searched for “new forms of life that would be non-hierarchical, convivial, and free” (Bellos, David 1995, p. 400).

The open tribune *Cause commune* began in 1972. It was founded by Jean Duvignaud, accompanied by two main editors and collaborators, Paul Virilio and Georges Perec. In his interview of 2001 with Enrique Walker, Virilio elaborates on different aspects of the topics that he and Perec worked on, including what the open tribune had as its aim and intention and where this publication came from at that time,

“The name of the journal was another way of connecting to the common, to the banal, to the quotidian. In fact, our goal was to be journalists of that which did not seem to interest anybody, to talk about things that were not obvious. In other words, we wanted the journal to

be political, economical, cultural, but we would still talk about the things which were to one side of these categories (...) Cause commune attempted to decipher events. But instead of looking at the political scene, we looked at facts – facts of various kinds”
(Virilio, Paul, 2001, p. 1).

The Bibliothèque Kandinsky in the Pompidou Centre in Paris, France has restricted access to a copy of the first volume of the Cause commune publication, there is not much information about the publication online. The information about this open tribune is scattered between quotes in books, articles and interviews, but there is no site online where they can be accessed fully. One must wonder about the life of the thoughts, ideas and words that have sprung from a civil conflict. The birth of these ideas and ideals dwell within social resistance, but what happens when there is no more resistance? Are they left to be found among a sea of clues within what has been appointed as historical?

To delve a little more into the incidence or reference towards Perec, these hints fall scattered as pieces of a jigsaw puzzle, one of the elements Perec uses in his book *La Vie mode d’emploi* (Life: A User’s Manual, 1978). Or perhaps these hints are precisely the ones Perec and Virilio refer to when writing about the “symptoms” of the city. As Virilio states in his interview with Enrique Walker when referring to the context of the open tribune at that specific time,

“We had emerged from the events of May 1968 with a deep sense of disappointment – I had been very much personally involved, particularly in the storming of the Theatre de l’Odeon – and consequently we set out to create a journal that had what we might call a ‘post-1968’ agenda. We were aware that we could not simply follow the predominant discourses, ideologies that had just failed before our very eyes. We had witnessed the collapse and abandonment of the leftist vision.

It was not yet the implosion of communism, but it was the implosion of leftism. And it was precisely our experience of the post-1968 period that made the journal extraordinary. To some extent we represented the idea that May 1968 was a literary rather than a political revolution: Cohn Bendit and all the rest were just play-acting – political play-acting. That is to say, it had all ended up being a farce. In 1968 nothing changed in political terms, but everything changed in cultural terms. (The stress has too often been put on the political aspect.) It is not by chance that writers such as Lyotard, Deleuze and Guattari appeared immediately after 1968. They embody the poetics of post-1968 man. And so did our work at Cause commune” (Virilio, Paul, 2001, p.15).

One can approach the core of the intentions of the open tribune in the original text in French found on the back cover of issue number 1 in May 1972. The main points regarding this open tribune are translated and summarized in *Georges Perec: A Life in Words* by David Bellos:

“To grasp at the root and to question the ideas and beliefs on which the workings of our “civilization” and “culture” are based, and to undertake an anthropology of contemporary mankind;

To elicit the bases of a new critical position so as to constitute modern political theory free of the suffocation of outdated prejudices and traditional humanism;

To undertake an investigation of everyday life at every level, down right to the recesses and basements that are normally ignored or suppressed;

To analyze the objects offered up to satisfy our desires – works of art, cultural objects, consumer goods – in relation to our lives and to the realities of our social existence

To restore the free discussion of attitudes and ideas, outside of sectarianism, ideologies, and school of thought.”
(Bellos, David, 1995, p. 492)

A tribune, an open platform where everyday life approaches find their visibility through the voices of different writers, thinkers, and authors such as Paul Virilio, Georges Perec, Henri Lefebvre, Marshal McLuhan, Pascal Lainé, Françoise Maillet, Patrick Berthommeau, Dominique Desanti, among others. A place where words settle to create a stratum that will permeate for decades to come. → 71

Approaches to what?

Starting with an invitation, Perec titles his text on the infraordinary with the word *approaches*. The notion and meaning of the word approach have an intention, a gesture, and an inclination towards somewhere. The word invites the reader into a place of thought and being without demanding an arrival or a resolution.

Perec's text *Approaches to What?* swiftly begins with a simple yet encompassing sentence, "What speaks to us" (Perec, Georges 1973). One is invited to rethink the things one considers common and which one has made ordinary due to the regularity and frequency with which they are used. Many of these things have become a means to an end, while others have simply vanished into our cupboards, closets, and the bottoms of our shoes.

Perec invites us to observe what is around us, those things which have got lost behind their functionality. He invites us to approach objects, things, routines, noises, images, and places; he invites us to re-live them.
→ 41

Infraordinary and encounter

The infraordinary as the experience of the encounter with what we have forgotten. What is known and yet unseen.

"How are we to speak of these 'common things', how to track them down rather, how to flush them out, wrest them from the dross in which they remain mired, how to give them a meaning, a tongue, to let them, finally, speak of what is, of what we are. What's needed perhaps is finally to find our own anthropology, one that will speak about us, will look in ourselves for what for so long we've been pillaging from others. Not the exotic anymore, but the endotic." (Perec, Georges, 1973, p.210)

To place our attention on that which is the opposite of the exotic, the extraordinary. To focus on the endotic. From the Greek prefix endo- meaning within, inner, absorbing, or containing.

To focus on the presence of depth, of an inner extension, on what is within things.
→ 22



Image 10

→ 163

A memory, a presentation, an introduction

Sometimes, I need to make a narrative of “what happened” to make sense of something. When I take a moment and let my mind wander through the thought of the infraordinary, attempting to trace when my awareness of this phenomenon came to be, I always end up meandering through memories, images, reasons, approaches, words, works, and people. Whatever and whenever my mind twists and turns following a scented line that I cannot see, a scent like the depiction in cartoons of the smell of a pie cooling by the window. I can trace the moment in which I found the infraordinary. I can trace the moment I saw the word. But my relationship with the infraordinary doesn’t begin with the word. I’m unable to know the moment I first encountered the infraordinary, but as many other things one experiences every day, the sensible was ahead of understanding, of recognition.

I remember the first time I read the word infraordinary. I was in my studio in Otaniemi, Finland, between furniture, walls and all the mind maps I had been working on while writing my MA thesis. I had been struggling with something within my thoughts that was calling me but which I couldn’t make sense of, as if it was in a language I didn’t speak or a frequency I couldn’t hear. But I knew it was there, articulating in its own way, being present and yet unfathomable.

It was then, after considering making up a word that could describe what I sensed but still being hesitant in doing so, that I opened the book *The Everyday* in the Documents of Contemporary Art Series and landed on an extract from the text “On George Perec” by Virilio (Virilio, Paul, 2001). As I began reading, the words started building an idea, the preamble for the coming word. By the time I reached the end of that long first paragraph, I was gone. I was not lost but found myself within the words, walking between the letters, turning at the corner of a t, sliding within the h, and bouncing on to the e until I found myself in front of the *infraordinary*. There it was. There was the sound. I could hear it. There were the words, the words for a meaning.
→ 35

Wayfinding

Now, I must wander around some words for a while. My mind wonders about the infra part of the term *infraordinary*. When finding the translations to English, more often than not, one encounters the word being hyphenated, with a few exceptions, such as its appearance in *Georges Perec: A Life in Words* (Bellos, David 1995). The French references for the word vary from *l'infra ordinaire* to *l'infraordinaire*, which in Spanish is always translated as *infraordinario*, no hyphen, no space. It is similar to the case of Duchamp's concept of the *infrathin*, written in English as *infra-thin*, but in French as *inframince*.

What is the purpose of the hyphenation?
→ 139

In the Middle

of Things

→ 78

**5
2**

**5
3**

Marcel Duchamp: Inframince

Much as the infraordinary, the *inframince* (also found as infra-slim) is not something to be defined but experienced. Marcel Duchamp approximates this concept as follows:

WHEN
THE TOBACCO SMOKE
ALSO SMELLS
OF THE MOUTH
WHICH EXHALES IT
THE TWO ODORS
ARE MARRIED BY
INFRA-SLIM

The Essential Writings of Marcel Duchamp,
Duchamp, Marcel, p. 194

Referencing Duchamp's words, what happens in the relationship between the cigarette and the mouth; the breath and the filter materials; the lips and the smoke, the inframince experience relies on the trace of this relationship which follows the remanence of each subject. There is no definition, only a retelling of the experience to convey what happens.

OTHER EXAMPLES THAT COME TO MIND:

- A warm seat on public transportation (someone was sitting there before).
- An odour in an elevator (pleasant or unpleasant).
- Food or liquids cooked or prepared in metal containers.

Just as the infraordinary, the inframince finds its visibility in the experience. One could say that an inframince experience is also an infraordinary happening.

A difference that comes to mind would be that the presence of the inframince is not found through images, or a visible element, but rather in the form of a bodily sensed experience. Whilst the infraordinary can base its experience in an image, in evidencing something visually. This is not exclusively, but there is the possibility whilst there isn't this possibility with the inframince. → 11

Infraordinary / Infra-ordinary

“Hyphens’ main purpose is to glue words together. They notify the reader that two or more elements in a sentence are linked” (Merriam Webster dictionary).

Is it possible that the hyphen is there only for clarity? Most of the official translations from French to English I have found seem to bare this grammatical punctuation. I’m still unsure why it’s not infraordinary and why the hyphen is used. Is it because of the two vowels sitting together?

Why is this important? In some way, hyphenating the word divides a gesture. It locates the ordinary in the infra (below), which upon reflection and thought, I believe is not the case for the infraordinary. The infraordinary is not something physically below; it is not located somewhere *per se*. It is a latent state of things becoming. I believe that Georges Perec and Paul Virilio might have used this suffix when referring to what they call a “symptom” to convey something happening “below” (Virilio, Paul, 2001, p. 15–18) the social tissue and urban structures of a city. The infraordinary seems to be below it, infra.

The latency in the ordinary. Hyphenating the word locates it somewhere. Without a hyphen, it leaves open the possibility of the word being in the latency of becoming visible, not tying it to a place or state of being but with the chance of emerging in various occurrences. It might be that the focus relies on the infra, not the hyphening.
→ 54

About words

There are times when words seem to get lost. One knows the meaning of the word but cannot say it, as if it had run to hide behind a curtain; one can see the feet lurking beneath and the bulk behind the curtain. It’s in hiding, yet present.

I often encounter myself lost for words when trying to convey the meaning of a word without knowing the exact definition. This sounds like a riddle already, but I’m (maybe) certain that we have all had that feeling of knowing what something means but not being able to fully convey it; unable to “language” it. And then, we enter a game of pantomime. We move, we gesture, and yes, we use words, but those are only roaming around the word we are trying to find. They come close; they circumvallate it without reaching the combination of letters that make up that word. We walk around the word. We dance.

And so I find myself doing, dancing, gesturing, signaling around the infraordinary. → 67

Gesture

What do I call that which I observe? How do I name what is happening?

Defining, writing, and enunciating what something means. Or rather, the attempt to name something that was visible but wordless. In this case, naming is not strictly related to a particular meaning but offers an initial approach.

We manifest ourselves through our bodies. We move, and those movements carry meanings with them; through the images that our body portrays through postures, bends, twists, turns, and stillness, we enunciate our moods, desires, and sorrows. When it comes to gestures, we are always open to each other. Our faces move and give us away without control, unless intentionality exists. Sometimes we speak louder than others. At times we come out more effectively from the shell, and at others, we camouflage with the skill of an octopus at the bottom of the sea.

Regarding the relation between gesture and infraordinary, my intention is not to decode nor interpret gestures. But to wonder about the possibilities of meaning in the concept of what gesture is. I am always concerned about falling into one definition, especially when it comes to broad concepts that seem to breathe on their own, having flexibility and a sense of play in their interpretations and in how they relate to one and how they relate one to the other. Some concepts, such

as gestures, are living concepts which adjust and welcome the possibilities or their use and interpretation. Nevertheless, there are aspects of the concept of gesture one can set one's eyes upon to appreciate its movement. → 90

Infraordinary and significance

The infraordinary is as remarkable as it is insignificant.
→ 135

Encounter and pursuit

Encounter and pursuit, two sides of the same rubber band. While one stretches intentionally towards something (pursuit), the other one lets itself go unexpectedly to meet something in its path (encounter).

It is possible that when we are referring to objects, happenings, and occurrences unfolding in our ordinary everyday lives we are in fact speaking of infraordinary encounters; things that are seemingly unimportant, irrelevant, and can be considered unremarkable, and yet, we speak about them, we give them a place and an awareness. The infraordinary is not a thing, when we speak about the infraordinary we are referring to the relationship and experience of us with the rest of things, with objects, people, circumstances, actions, occurrences, happenings, feelings, and thoughts.

We encounter things in our everyday lives. Not all of them speak to us every single time, every-single-day. However, it is in this encounter that the infraordinary makes its appearance. → 120

Walkable conversations

There is something in the act of speaking or having a conversation while walking, while being in movement. I have never taken up this activity alone, that is, speaking out loud when walking. But the conversations have been very fulfilling whenever I have had them while moving. I am unsure about what changes in a conversation when walking as compared to being static in a place. I do know I feel more comfortable talking when moving, either walking or in a car, or train, or any kind of modality in which the body is moving or transitioning from one place to another.

There has always been something about being within a flow that allows me to think as if something would open by not being static. → 152

A gesture within images

I never really gave much thought to the notion of gesture before. For me, gesture is one of those words that always seems to carry a lot of weight, and it is a challenging word to engage with without becoming overwhelmed, juggling different meanings and intentions. Gestures, like metaphors (and nowadays memes and reaction gifs), serve as a mediation of meaning and intention. Gestures are something, a very much established something, but they are not the end nor the final point; they are there as conductors. They are leaping points, redirecting you somewhere.

From 2016 to 2018, I decided to approximate the concept of gesture through my artistic practice in the exhibition, *There was no thought, but a thrive for the visibility of something yet to be named*. For this exhibition I developed a series of narrative videos related to the concept, or idea, of gestures.

The video works don't answer straightforwardly what a gesture is, they rather attempt to approach the idea by describing what is happening in the specific frame of each image. The images for the exhibition were selected one by one over the course of some months. The first image to go up on the wall was Bas Jan Ader's *Fall I, Los Angeles* (1970) which I saw every day without any specific intention other than to look at it and have it visible. From there, the rest followed in the form of dialogue both between images and between the images and me.

The selected images had (or have) for me an odd feeling, something that somehow seems to be unsettled within them. Something is happening in them. In some, there is a paused action since the image is from a video or a movie. In others, an action that seems to be in-between something else happening. And in one of them, the eeriness of the landscape. Even if these images hanging on my wall were static, they didn't feel like it, as if something would be working beyond what was visible. Something which seemed to elude a definition, a settlement. Although one could describe the components of these images factually, enunciating the actors and factors like shapes and forms, it still seems challenging to pinpoint entirely what is happening; there are only hints. And maybe that is what a gesture is, a hint of the meaning. → 76

For more information about the exhibition *There was no thought, but a thrive for the visibility of something yet to be named* please visit:
<https://andreacoyotziborja.com/therewasnothought/>

Gesture: *There was no thought, but a thrive for the visibility of something yet to be named*

The exhibition *There was no thought, but a thrive for the visibility of something yet to be named* at HAM Gallery in 2018 in Helsinki tackled an approach to the subject of gesture within the realm of a personal relationship between a series of selected images and myself. This relationship developed through months of watching, viewing, ignoring, observing, wondering and getting lost in thought while looking at these images.

I had hung the images on the wall for no initial reason. There was no intention beforehand, yet I could not let them just be. Something from them was speaking to me, but it had always been difficult to express what that was.

It was not until a friend questioned me about them when seeing them behind me on a videocall that I found myself somewhat forced to give a "reason", one that I didn't know. I ended up replying that I would use the images for something, something that I did not yet know. After that very unclear explanation, I saw myself confronted with a series of questions:

What?

What am I doing with them?

Is there really something there?

*Am I really going to do something,
or do I just have them there to watch?*

Having them on my wall just to be seen without intention would have been valid, but the thought gave me no comfort. And so, I decided to throw myself into a void, leap into it (as Yves Klein would have us believe) and try and describe what it was that I saw in them. In the texts written for each image, I describe what is happening, but it was not sufficient for me to explain the unfolding of events that seem to be portrayed. Still, I attempted to describe and convey that other thing, which is there, something that I could even say is not possible to describe in a methodical and definitive way. → 68

For access to the texts, videos and documentation on the exhibition *There was no thought, but a thrive for the visibility of something yet to be named* please visit: <https://andreaoyotziborja.com/therewasnothought/>

Image 11

→ 65



Selected images

The first image I had on my wall was a still from Bas Jan Ader's video *Fall I, Los Angeles*. I had been drawn to Ader's works since the first time I saw his 1971 video, *I'm too sad to tell you*. A work in which he is crying in front of the camera, absent of words.

In the still from *Fall I, Los Angeles* that I had hanging on the wall, one can see Ader on top of the roof of a house. He seems to have been sitting on a chair, but at the moment the still was taken, his body is already leaning forward, but not yet falling. I have seen the video; he does roll off the roof to fall behind the bushes at the bottom. But he doesn't fall within this image; there is only a body in the middle of something happening, a body with an intention.

After seeing that image, I remember printing four pages of houses on fire. Not one house on each page, but there were multiple houses on each sheet of paper. These were random images from the results of an internet search of "houses on fire". After those, I do not remember the order in which the rest of the exhibition images went up on my wall. Ultimately, I added five more images: *Leap into the Void* by Yves Klein; a still from the film *Steamboat Bill Jr.* by Chas F. Reisner and Buster Keaton; a still from the film *Au revoir les enfants* directed by Louis Malle; a watercolour painted by my mother Patricia Borja Osorio of the photograph of Duntroon Castle by Simon Marsden; and the photo-

graph Benches and tunnel man in BW by Truan Munro. All of them had something in them which drew my attention. Something which is there speaking, whispering. Something I wanted to go towards, at the same time knowing that what I was after couldn't be reached. → 63

Image 12

→ 177



PHOTO BY LAURELINE TILKIN

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Where to go? What direction to follow?

A “field to run” is a nice idea. It’s a pleasant thought to think about a border-less area where one can move, do, and be without any particular constriction. However, when taking that thought (a field to run) as a starting point to discuss the topic of space and place, one might find oneself in a reference-less desert. Where to go? What direction to follow?

I will go to the shrimp pasta place. I will follow my experience and thoughts of place, how those places came to be from spaces, the relation between those experiences, and the general ideas of the approaches of Georges Perec and Martin Heidegger. → 7

WHERE TO GO? WHAT DIRECTION TO FOLLOW?

7
1

Should we go to the shrimp pasta place?

Lately, my partner and I name places where we go grilling with the name of the food we have cooked there, and which has become memorable. Hence “should we go to the shrimp pasta place?” or “let’s go swim where we made the spring beef delight.”

Experiences shape us. They shape how we move, how we talk, how we think, and how we act. We are a bundle of experiences, so even when we have languages in common, we might not mean the same specific thing with each word.

I have always been drawn to the topic of space, so much so that it feels like every time I peek at the subject it is like peeking into Mary Poppins bag. There is an endless coming forth of things, ideas, thoughts, paths to follow, and coat hangers. So, I’m not going to discuss space per se, not that I won’t end up writing or talking about it at some point in the future, but this is not the moment for it. For that reason, as wisely as Lauren Reid put it, I won’t focus on Mary’s bag, just on the umbrella. Or, more particular in my case, on the shrimp pasta place.

Now, what is the shrimp pasta place? Or rather where? Actually, I don’t know. Well, I do know, but I can’t tell you exactly where. I know it’s in Finland, in the peninsula of Kirkkonummi more precisely (which is approximately 40 km from Helsinki). I know that from where

I live I have to take the Kehä I (Ring 1, a road that goes around Helsinki), then I have to take the Turku highway. I have to take Kehä III (Ring 3, there are three ring roads in Helsinki Kehä I, Kehä II, and Kehä III), then ... yes, I have to take the exit to Porkkalanniemi; so yes, the shrimp pasta place is in Porkkalanniemi. Now, from there, I think I know the direction but I’m not 100% sure how to get there. So, when making plans with my partner on where to maybe go grilling or swimming, if that is the place suggested, we say “the shrimp pasta place”. At first, he used to say the name of the actual place, but I could never remember where the place he was saying was or what happened there. I would ask, “have I been there?”. Eventually, that space that was a place, became the “shrimp pasta place”. Why? Well, that is pretty straightforward. One time we went there, I cooked that dish; modesty aside, it was pretty good. The credit goes to the open flame; it makes everything taste better. We have cooked many things in that place; we have also gone there just to take walks or swim, but the name is “shrimp pasta place”, which became memorable of that spot. That is how we named that space; that is how that space became a place for me.

We relate to the space, to already established places, to occupy them, to use them, inhabit them, and dwell on them. We experience them, and through that experience, we create these ballasts cementing our memories, these buoys bobbing in the distance, calling our

attention to remembrance, lighthouses rhythmically beaming towards our view. They call, and we look. We remember and relive. We get a pull from places. How do those ballasts, buoys, lighthouses and markings come to be? Who put them there? We did, we do, all the time. Many already bear a significance and function and belong to the urban. But within the structure that the urban and non-urban may impose, we move and drop a crumb, one that the birds will eat but which our memory will mummify.

There is the ballast, a “shrimp pasta place”, and the experience for which we created a link between us and a place. Or between us and a space which has become a place. What is the name of the experience? Does the experience need a name? Perhaps it is not a name that is needed, but we still call upon it with words. At times the experience is called “dwelling” as a reference to our existing within a place. At other times it is attached to a function and referred to as “eating” when the doing becomes the designation. “Artistic” comes to mind, those experiences which are called by this undefined context in which we portray “that something” that cannot be named but only experienced. And sometimes, outside any structure, beside the road, under the bed and inside the pot, we can find some which might be infraordinary, subtle, gentle, gestural and seemingly irrelevant.
→ 89

Image 13

→ 119



On defining

“Open-ended” is a term I feel closer to than the word “definition”.

The act of defining solidifies meaning. The infraordinary is an alive concept. It is an experience which moves through the everyday. Its solidification, through a definition, would take away the possibility of it happening. → **77**

Henri Lefebvre on Definitions

“... Like all definitions, it tends to immobilise what it is trying to define, presenting it as timeless and unchangeable. And as definitions frequently do, it takes one aspect or one part as the whole.”

(Lefebvre, Henri, 1961, p.43)

→ **162**

Gesture: hints on meanings

Gestures give hints about meanings. They get us closer to the meaning of something attempting to make its way through with or without words. Gestures are meanings happening. They stand in a place which, for some reason, seems impossible to locate, pinpoint, and which I think is not possible to arrive at, at least not permanently. We come as close as we can, we soak in them, but we are never wet. →19

Experiencing spaces

What is the process of experience when encountering something undigested and “unprocessed”? Something left being what it is and not set to be something else. Is a change being made within what is experienced or within the one who experiences it, leaving the space undigested? Can a place be left to be a space even when an experience takes place in it?

Once a space has passed through a state of experience, it is no longer a space, but it has become a place. Experience attaches the self to the location; by that attachment, the space becomes a place. →116

Space and place

Every time I think of the word space, everything rushes in to try to fill it up. I think of the times I have approached this word and concept and what I have thought. I think of the words and approaches I made when working on my BA thesis *Reflexiones Sobre el Espacio* y su imagen (Reflections on Space and its Image). I think of all the notes written on the computer in the various word processors I used. I think of all the typewritten papers I have in my binder; I think of EVERYTHING. And then, I write nothing. I am left in what was a field to run; now, it has become a storage space. Not a dusty one, but one filled with cabinet files and an endless number of documents containing experiences, ideas, thoughts, reflections, and observations on space. I find myself overwhelmed, not knowing where to begin, what to approach, how to convey what might be a simple thought, gentle approaches on the importance of space, place, the city and the invisible subject *flâneur-ing*, *dérive-ing* through them: the infraordinary.

There are two main approaches to space I will follow, led by two authors and their work, from which the infraordinary is drawn in its undefined and yet purposefully swivelling path: French writer Georges Perec with his book *Species of Spaces and Other Pieces* (1998); and German philosopher Martin Heidegger (1889–1976) in his essay “Building, Dwelling, Thinking” (1954).

For the purpose of not filling up the closet and then being unable to close the door, I will begin with a list of thoughts on space, place, the city and the infraordinary. A very Perec thing to do, perhaps (the list I mean, not sure if he filled up his closets to the verge of comically spilling the contents when a person opened the door):

- I begin with space defined as “a field to run”. Something defined as empty, but which is filled with the unseen possibility of a yet inexistent future.
- A field to run, a gasping of air before the wind. Like a kid (or an adult like yours truly) putting the head out of the window of the car trying to breathe and pulling the head back inside, smiling because you gasp for air, you know the air is coming too fast, and you can’t take air in, but you try, and you do it again, and again, with the same result. Like a lunatic, a happy one.
- The thought of a field to run as a definition for space is the one I can most relate to. Space is everything, whilst there is seemingly nothing. One maybe should say “it can be everything”, but it already is by presenting the possibilities. There is no need to wait. The possibilities are already there. It is everything. In this field to run, you can be, you can do, you can run, jump, sit, sleep, do anything; you can build, you can locate, you can place, you can structure, you can grow; you navigate it, you make up rules, you make up rulers.
- The authors mentioned above present a two-perspective experiential approach to the concept of space:

- Georges Perec in the form of recognition and designation. “I have constantly to mark it, to designate it. It’s never mine, never given to me, I have to conquer it.” (Perec, Georges, *Species of Spaces*, 1974, p. 91).
- And Martin Heidegger, the activation and localization of spaces through the concepts of building, dwelling and thinking. (Heidegger, Martin “Building, Dwelling, Thinking” 1954, pp. 347-363).
- We activate spaces; structures activate places.
- In here, a wandering thought, a question: can any space be a field to run? Even when that space has already been dissected, divided, structured? Perhaps it is so. Maybe if we thought of every area, even structured ones such as a room, as a field to run, the possibilities wouldn’t be limited to the given activities and actions we set on rooms “a bedroom is for sleeping, a kitchen is for cooking”. Not necessarily.
- It is here where place makes its appearance. It would seem as if once the field to run, the thought of space as the experience held in it would come to be replaced by its recognition. Something that depends on the functionality of the given space. Space becomes a place through the act of recognition. → 79

Heidegger: “Building, Dwelling, Thinking”

Go to the bridge, the voice says.

I have to go to the bridge and stand in the middle, letting the cold wind glide over my face while my body seeks shelter inside the coat.

I have to stand in the middle of the bridge, looking down at the water running underneath and around the columns that support the structure. The river is unbothered by this. The water flows and finds itself caressing the rocky structure that has been raised for the construction of not only a place but a dwelling. A dwelling for the banks of the river on each side. A dwelling of the experience and use of the commute from one side to the other. Heidegger writes,

“The bridge swings over the stream with ease and power. It does not just connect banks that are already there. The banks emerge as banks only as the bridge crosses the stream. The bridge expressly causes them to lie across from each other. One side is set off against the other by the bridge. Nor do the banks stretch along the stream as indifferent border strips of the dry land. With the banks, the bridge brings to the stream the one and the other expanse of the landscape lying behind them. It brings stream and bank and land into each other’s neighborhood. The bridge gathers the earth as landscape around the

stream. Thus, it guides and attends the stream through the meadows. Resting upright in the stream's bed, the bridge-piers bear the swing of the arches that leave the stream's waters to run their course. The waters may wander on quiet and gay, the sky's floods from storm or thaw may shoot past the piers in torrential waves – the bridge is ready for the sky's weather and its fickle nature. Even where the bridge covers the stream, it holds its flow up to the sky by taking it for a moment under the vaulted gateway and then setting it free once more."

(Heidegger, Martin. "Building Dwelling, Thinking." *Basic Writings*, edited by Harper San Francisco, 1993, originally published in 1951, p. 354.)

In 1951, Heidegger wrote "Building Dwelling, Thinking," a text in which the topic revolves around these concepts, not as mere definitions of the words but of them being within the subject and the world. Something that Heidegger writes as fourfold: the earth, the sky, the divinities and the mortals.

Within the text, we can find Heidegger's approaches and definitions to the words building, dwelling, and thinking, what they mean and how they relate to each of these words' being, definition, and practice.

The concepts of building and dwelling go back and forth, always changing, the definition of one depends on the other, and one keeps going back and forth without being able to settle, to remain static within a meaning. The definition of these concepts is nomadic, a dive of each concept within the practice of the other while thinking conducts them. There is no beginning and no end. When the idea and need for building a bridge be-

gins, one has already been dwelling on that idea and need. One could say that building and dwelling are merged by thinking, an action (thinking) that carries the practice through its different modes of being.

And so, while Heidegger writes, I dwell within the text, observing, collecting thoughts, building around the following extracted quotes,

"Thinking in itself belongs to dwelling"

"Dwelling is the manner in which mortals are on earth"

"Only if we are capable of dwelling, only then can we build"

"To build is in itself already to dwell"

"Building as dwelling"

"Building and thinking are, each in its own way, inescapable for dwelling"

"The essence of building is letting dwell."

Building accomplishes its essential process in the raising of locales by the joining of their spaces"

(Space) "is something that has been made room for, something that has been freed, namely within a boundary"

"Space as intervals"

"Space as pure extension"

“Distance, mere intervals of intervening space”

“Building produces locales”

“A locale comes into existence only by virtue of the bridge”

When Heidegger writes about the locale, he writes:

“But only something that is itself a locale can make space for a site. The locale is not already there before the bridge is. Before the bridge stands, there are of course many spots along the stream that can be occupied by something. One of them proves to be a locale, and does so because of the bridge. Thus the bridge does not first come to a locale to stand in it; rather, a locale comes into existence only by virtue of the bridge.”

(Heidegger, Martin. “Building Dwelling, Thinking.”
Basic Writings, edited by Harper San Francisco, 1993,
originally published in 1951, p. 354.)

This would then be the relationship between space and place and how a space becomes a place. Space becomes a place (or a locale if we use Heidegger’s word) by the dwelling, by building. But not only building in the sense of assembling and raising a structure, but building as dwelling (Heidegger, Martin, p. 349).

In this sense, when the artistic practices of the twentieth century (that is, from the Dadaism to Allan Kaprow’s happenings) re-approach and re-signify places – these being locales (buildings and structures) or the street – they are re-building as re-dwelling these spaces and places.

Something similar happens with the infraordinary, except removing the intentionality of a re-approach or re-signifying of the places and spaces. That re-signification of a place happens when it happens, with no intention or previous intention of action. That is when the infraordinary experience happens within the context of the urban environment, which is not always the case. An infraordinary experience is not bound to a context; the infraordinary experience is a context in which our relationship with the thing settles down as a dwelling. The use of the word settlement in this context can be interpreted as the place of permanence however temporal this permanence might be. The infraordinary is a ballast of experience, an anchorage between the subject, the experience, and the place. → 95

Image 14

→ 117



Infraordinary as a bridge of affection

The infraordinary as something that makes an ordinary action, a common happening, an everyday object, something not extraordinary, but something subtle and long-lasting in its own place of being. It makes the ordinary stick to you; it makes the common belong as part of you on a personal level. The infraordinary connects you with the banal and ordinary. It is a bridge of affection. → 83

Just me and the houses on fire

For years now, I have been drawing houses on fire. Not accurate depictions but more like doodles and stick houses with flames that people have confused for mountains. I draw them anywhere, doodling while listening to a talk or at a conference for example. While watching tv, in waiting rooms, in cafes, and in virtual meetings. I draw them on random papers or in actual notebooks with the sole purpose of having houses on fire drawn in them. And, images, or videos, of houses on fire have always drawn my attention, although I have never really seen a house on fire. But if Jerry Leiber and Mike Stoller were correct when writing the song, “Is That All There Is?” sung by Peggy Lee in 1969, I shouldn’t have my expectations of seeing an actual house on fire very high. And no, I do not wish nor want to literally burn houses. I don’t have a reason for it. Drawing houses on fire is just something I do.

I don’t know where the need comes from, but I do feel the need. There is a need, and I respond to that need. I like that the drawings are always different even if they are similar. I like that I can always play with how I draw the flames. Over the years, the houses have always been much the same, but the flames have changed. These changes in the flames, or how the flames are drawn, are not always instantly evident. Other times these changes unfold while I’m aware of what’s happening. The flames used to be more geometrical, pointy. Someone said once that they looked like mountains. And, in a way,

flames can be like mountains, high, unreachable, imposing, and majestic, full of colour, dangerous, mysterious, mesmerizing. I like that when I draw a house on fire nothing is demanded or required from me. It’s just me and the houses on fire. → 92

For access to the houses on fire drawings please visit:
<https://andreacoyotziborja.com/drawings/houses-on-fire-notebooks/>

Image 15

→ 123



Space, place, and the infraordinary

The dust in the air around my thoughts and experience of space and place will never settle. It will remain forever changing, always up in the air, eyes squinted, trying to see between the specks and build a sense from the known and experienced.

Space and place are not alone in this parade of seemingly randomly flying particles, home, settlement, city and any idea which relates me to being in the world are there along for the ride.

The infraordinary, as a bridge of affection, relates personal experiences with the world. However, it is not found as one would find a place, an object, or anything that can pinpoint a location within a map, within a determined space. It is found through the relationship between oneself, a place, a thing, and a being in time. The infraordinary, in this sense, brings awareness to how we relate to the world.

In this sense and contextualizing it within Heidegger's words and thoughts related to the ideas of building, dwelling and thinking, the infraordinary is an experience that builds and dwells within an interval. The infraordinary builds a locale, but not one that exists physically. No physical structures are raising or interrupting the space on the extension of the landscape. This locale is a being. → 182

Image 16

→ 80



Infraordinary

The infraordinary, dwelling as experience.
Experience as dwelling. → 93

Experience and permanence

Movements such as the Dadaists, Surrealists, Lettrist International, Situationist International, and Fluxus approached places that already bore significance due to their use or the experience subjects held within them. It is then that they set out to re-enchant the quotidian (Waxman, Lori, p.13) within those places, as if the enchantment were lost. Everyday life is never lost; we forget about the everydayness of things that hold on to our lives, the scenario, the stage, the context, the place. But it was never lost; we just forgot it was there and labelled it as ordinary.

Experience makes things visible. The infraordinary is an experience, and as such, one cannot hold on to it. One must live through it and accept that such are things in life and the experience within them. → 97

The infraordinary and ambulatory practices

Some words pull, others push, many carry, others drag you. Words are attached to meanings, gestures, movements, and actions.

When talking about artistic practices from the 1920s to the 1990s – Dadaism, Surrealism, Lettrist International, Situationist International, Fluxus and happenings – ambulatory is a beautiful word to get lost in. And no wonder that Waxman used it in the title for her book *Keep Walking Intently. The Ambulatory Art of the Surrealists, the Situationists International, and Fluxus*.

To ambulate.

Ambulate. Wandering. Walking. Strolling. Wayfaring. All movement can be done with or without intention. And just as words pull, push, carry and drag, so do places, and the artistic practices from the beginning of the twentieth century focused on this aspect by “walking intently” (as Waxman points out). Through a series of actions, thoughts and intentions, they approached places in the context of the urban environment.

Each of these artistic movements has its own rapport in its relationship with the urban environment, the way they activate places, and the selected mediums to do so. From ephemeral happenings such as walks (for example the Dadaists and Surrealists) to lurking words that add/bring new meanings to the passerby's crusade

in everyday life by plastering posters with manifestoes (Situationist International and Lettrist International). These movements had in common the intentionality of approaching places, to re-take them, re-signify them, re-approach them, re-configure them, and with these approaches to places came the re-approach to everyday life, the rethinking of production and meaning, the role of the individual in society. → 57

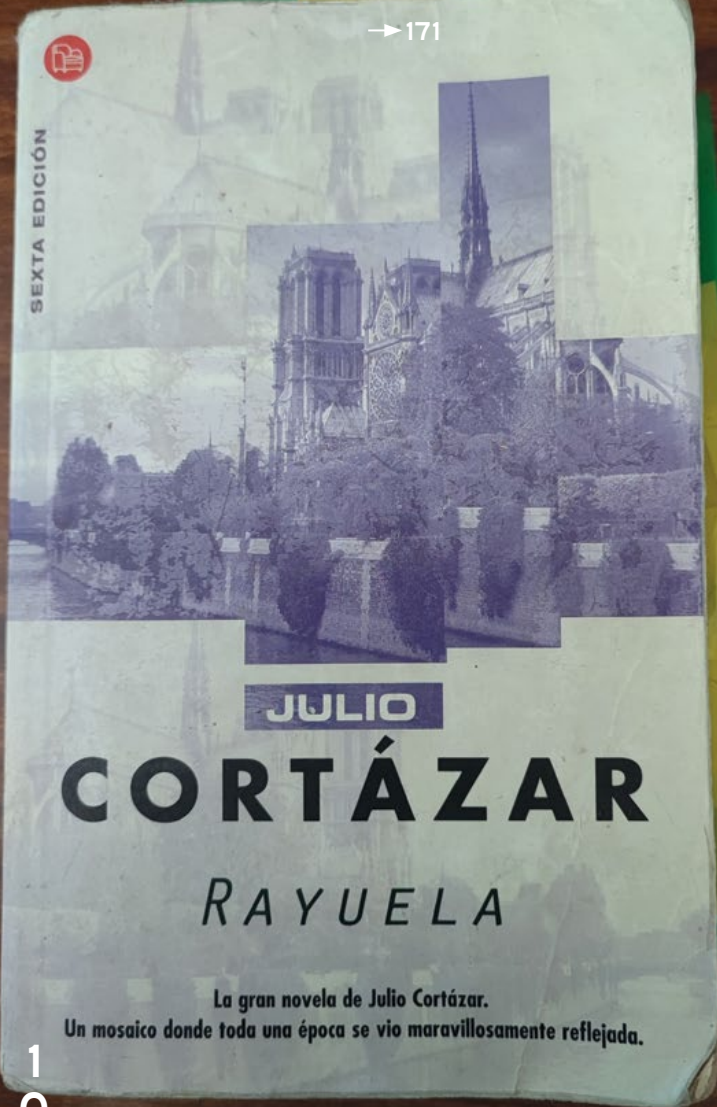
Keep Walking Intently by Lori Waxman

As the Italian naturalist, biologist, physician and poet, Francesco Redi (1626–1697) would have us realize in the sixteenth century, there is no spontaneous generation. Things, beings, ideas, words, and thoughts come from somewhere. We do not always realize what is before what we call “the beginning”, but giving it some time, some space to move and wonder, one might find the clues that trace where it comes from in our personal wanderings.

When reading Waxman’s book, *Keep Walking Intently. The Ambulatory Art of the Surrealists, the Situationists International*, and my intention was to approach the infraordinary by attempting to trace what seems to be a background of artistic practices for the infraordinary. Qualities of a phenomenon which plays along the *dérive*, the drifting, practised by the Surrealists, the Situationists International, and Fluxus movements.
→ 25

Image 17

→ 171



Rayuela by Julio Cortázar: First reading and a practice

Like many other people, I have the habit of marking books when I'm reading them. I take a sticky note and place it on the side of the book on the line where the thought has touched something within me. At times that is something that relates to my personal life, such as a family story, my relationship with someone or something, or how I think about things. Other times they are thoughts or feelings that I've had but that I didn't have the words for, and then I find the thought written in the most beautiful, engaging, or precise way. There are many reasons why these markings occur in the books I read.

It was sometime around 2006 or 2007 when I read for the first time the novel *Rayuela* (Hopscotch), a book with dimensions of 11 x 17.8 cm and reflected in the format of this book on the infraordinary. *Rayuela* was published in 1963 (the English version in 1966); it was written by the Argentinian author Julio Cortázar. Through his practice of stream of consciousness and experimentation within the format of the novel, Cortázar takes the reading of the book as a new experiment on how to engage, read, and relate to the written work, to the novel in itself as a genre, and the story within it. *Rayuela* is a book with 155 episodes (or chapters) which are non-structured for the reader; that is, the sequence on how to read these are not meant to be strictly in a linear form. Cortázar has set up these chapters to be read in any way the reader chooses, jump-

ing from any chapter to another. If the reader decides to, the book can be read sequentially from 1 to 155; or one can follow a suggested order that Cortázar has provided in the first pages; or not follow anything but the randomness of the book, opening on any page.

The book's storyline concerns the life and adventures of a writer who lives in Paris (Oliveira). He is surrounded by bohemian characters as he pursues his artistic endeavours until tragedy strikes his personal life and turns that life into another.

Much of the stream of what the novel's content offers, the stream of consciousness that is part of the story's character, also comes close to the relationship with the author. The character, a writer in Paris: Julio Cortázar, wrote this novel while living in Paris. And as Cortázar would point out in an interview in 1977 when asked about *Rayuela*, "(...) I don't think it is easy to synthesise something that, in a way, is a lifetime of experiences; the attempt of saying it and taking it into writing. But, I can give you some general ideas (...)"

Rayuela (Hopscotch) was the first book in which I added tiny sticky notes to mark ideas, thoughts, and experiences that resonated with me, and these sticky notes were added passionately. I write passionately, too, since I added them so frequently that the book looks like it has expanded outwards with these yellow and green sticky notes. They are placed on the upper part of the pages, going around the book to the side; the upper ones don't mark a line but a whole chapter. Since then, I have continued to do this, with some

books having more notes than others, depending on how much I relate to the book and the experiences portrayed there.

It wasn't long after I read the book that I decided to transcribe these pin-pointed markings from the book into the computer. I would transcribe all the text I had marked, then write below why I had marked that or how it related to me.

I have to be honest here; there are some notes that, even in Spanish, how they are written, don't make complete sense to me nowadays. But when I go back and read the quote, the feeling and my relationship with the quote are still there, so I can reconnect with what I wanted to say in what I wrote.

Quote 21, Chapter 44, page 268

(Cortázar, Julio, Hopscotch, kindle version):

"When Traveler was looking into Talita's somewhat purple eyes while he was helping her pluck a duck, a biweekly luxury that enchanted Talita, a fan of the duck in all of its culinary possibilities, he would tell himself that things were not as bad as they had been, and he even would have preferred for Horacio to come by and join in some mates, because they would immediately start to play a number game that they barely understood but which had to be played so that time would pass and the three of them would feel worthy of one another."

ANDREA 2007

It's one of those fun things. That sometimes happens to me when I'm with Mayra, Marcelino and whoever is around.

It's one of those games that are not found in a box, nor do they have a bar code; they also don't need anything other than one being there. How many chances does one have to play alone, with someone else, or play someone? The possibility of just doing. It's not about having the drive to do something or not, nor do I really want to talk and write about thriving here, sorry. To do, just do, whatever but do: get up, walk ten steps forward, turn right, jump three times, stretch, try yawning, turn to the right with all your body, then, find a table, lay down face upwards, shrink and remain dormant. Just do something.

ANDREA 2021

When I was in art school, things began as one kind of expects them to (either that or one makes reality fill the fiction and the expectation). One enrolls, registers in class, attends, questions one's whole life before being there and wonders if one has what it takes to make it. This is after a teacher not very kindly told the group that maybe only one of us will make it. Maybe. And so, you look around but can't find a mirror, so you wonder who it is.

I did not start making art, or what I call art, until I started playing, walking, and talking with Joaquin, Marcelino, Mayra, Mario, and Lalo.

The doing was in the playing, taking chances, and doing even when you didn't know what you were doing. It was when talking about what you did, about how the playing went – never a game, there were no winners or losers, there was just the time spent playing – about just doing and the will, the will to leap (anywhere) and getting lost. Is that what they call youth?

I used to write in my notebooks over and over the word “worth”, wondering what that word meant. I would

write one after the other incessantly. Thinking about it, I would always write it when I wanted to go to play, when I wanted to go and get lost in some doing. At that time, I didn't know, but worth was in-between doing and playing, and being part of an institutional education where things must be concrete, and experimentation was left aside. Maybe I wondered where to locate the worth.

Quote 66 Chapter 99, page 566
(Cortázar, Julio, Hopscotch, kindle version):

“Language means residence in a reality, living in a reality. Even if it's true that the language we use betrays us (and Morelli isn't the only one who shouts it to the four winds), wanting to free it from its taboos isn't enough. We have to relieve it, not reanimate it.”

ANDREA 2007

Perhaps if we give language electroshock therapy, we would manage to find something different in it. As if we could see another self of what language already is. Could we call that “Linguistic Psychiatry”? Who would have thought ...

ANDREA 2021

I often feel trapped within language. And, in this day and age, oof! What a minefield ...

I find it bold to blame the language for the betrayal happening when interpretation and meaning play the main role on the subject.

I hadn't done this for more than ten years (transcribing what I marked in the books I've been reading and writing why below) until recently when I was

reading Waxman's book *Keep Walking Intently. The Ambulatory Art of the Surrealists, the Situationists International, and Fluxus* marking and writing on the book thoughts on how these practices in the first half of the twentieth century relate to the infraordinary.

It has been roughly fourteen years since I first encountered *Rayuela*, and it is now when writing about the infraordinary that the work written by Julio Cortázar offers a possibility on how to engage in the experience of writing and reading about the infraordinary within the hypernarrative format in this document.

A freedom not only for the reader but for the writer to follow an idea, see where it leads, elaborate, hear another thought, relate it to the previous one, and so on. It's a little like the notion the filmmaker Lev Kuleshov experimented with in the 1910s and 1920s in what is known as the "Kuleshov effect".

The "Kuleshov effect" was an editing exercise that consisted of only four images: the face of a man, a plate of soup, a woman, and a child in a coffin. These four images were placed in the following order: the soup, the face of a man; a woman, the face of a man; a child in a coffin, the face of a man. The audience who viewed these images would interpret the face of the man differently depending on the image that would precede it, even though it was always the same shot of the face of the man. When the audience saw the soup first, they would interpret the man looked hungry. When they saw the woman first, they would say they could see lust on the man's face. When they saw the child in the cof-

fin, they would say the man appeared sad. The way the images were arranged affected the perception of the audience.

It is so, that what comes before affects the latter. How affective this is, is not measured in the intention of the words but in the interpretation that the viewer gives to the order of the images. The format of this document also plays with ordering. Depending on the order that it is read, what is read before affects the latter. → 100

Event: shared and collective

The notion of an event concerning everyday life, quotidian, is a point where the practice of the infraordinary separates from the artistic practices of Fluxus, the Surrealists, the Situationist International, and the Happenings of Allan Kaprow. These artistic movements based some of their practice around collective events, an arrangement of actions and tasks that happened and were experienced collectively. The experiential nature of the infraordinary encounter departs from the possible relationship of it with the concept of the event. This doesn't mean that the infraordinary can't be experienced with other people, but rather being a collective experience is a shared one.

The difference between these two experiences – shared versus collective – is in the timing of the experience, *a priori* versus *a posteriori*. Has the experience been labelled as an event before or after it has happened? When the experience is labelled before the event, this is a collective experience. When it has been labelled after it has become an event, this is a shared experience. Collective experience is an arrangement for something happening within a group of people.

Shared experience is the casualty of a group going through the same experience individually. →192

Enactment

The word enactment seems to portray what has been done as something planned, as rehearsed, something else than it just happening. The differentiation between something planned and something merely happening is one of the points where the infraordinary and the Surrealists, Situationist International, and Fluxus artistic movements differ. The infraordinary is not an artistic movement, and it is not something that can be planned. It cannot be an event in the sense of planning. →99

Walking intently

“Keep walking intently,” Waxman writes (Waxman, Lori, 2017), referring to Takehisa Kosugi’s instruction in his musical piece “Theatre Music”. Keep walking intently. When does this walk begin? How does it start? Why did it begin? All these questions are elaborated on and walked through in her book *Keep Walking Intently. The Ambulatory Art of the Surrealists, the Situationists International and Fluxus* (Waxman, Lori, 2017).

Walking as an element of artistic practice has existed for a long time. It existed even before André Breton, as part of the Dadaist movement in 1921, planned an excursion to the Church of Saint-Julien-le-Pauvre with the Parisian Dadaists, in which it was stated, “This is not an anticlerical manifestation, as one might be tempted to believe, but rather a new interpretation of nature applied this time not to art but to life” (Sanouillet, Michel, *Dada à Paris*, 1965, p. 254). Although the movements of the first half of the twentieth century focused on walking as an aesthetic practice, a type of manifesto on the move, the act of walking as something other than the mere act of transporting oneself physically was practiced earlier. Before the twentieth century, some painters would take intentional walks to find a landscape, to find something caught by the eye, to walk towards something, somewhere, a type of intentional *flaneurism*. Many of these painters, connected to the Impressionist movement (such as Berthe Morisot, Mary Agnes Yerkes, and Stanisław Masłowski, among many others), worked with their canvases outdoors

and seemed to have a preference distinct from the urban environment. Of course, the urban environment has transformed greatly since then, so I wonder about the delimitations between the city and the “country-side” in those years. This makes my mind wonder about that line which seems to be now very visible. It makes me think about the words such as periphery, boundary, limit, outskirts, perimeter, and border, among others. But this is probably a thought to follow on another occasion.

Returning to the notion of walking, walking intently. The difference between the painters walking to find an image to paint, and the practices that took place from the first half of the twentieth century (from the Dadaists to the Fluxus movement), lies in the focus of the surroundings; the physical structures per se (buildings), how they are seen, and our relationship with them; a focus on the dynamics of this relationship, the physical, social, political, and personal dynamics within everyday life.

While the first group walked to frame a portion of the landscape, relating to the image qualities of the space, the second relates through the embodiment and experiential relationship of the individual with the urban environment.

From the Dadaists in the 1920s to the Happenings of Allan Kaprow in the 1990s, we can see intentionality

in the walking practices within the city environment. Why the city? Paul Virilio mentions in his interview with Enrique Walker, “Outside of the city nothingness can perhaps exist – or almost nothing as Vladimir Jankelevitch used to say – but it certainly does not exist in the city. In the city there is never a void. There is always background noise, there is always a symptom, a sign, a scent.” (Virilio, Paul 2001). And it is precisely this approach, in an environment such as the city “without voids”, to which the practices from the twentieth century hold on as a platform filled with possibilities for observing, walking, thinking, and re-thinking topics within the context of their times. An example of this: Guy Debord of the Lettrist International, focused on the topics of psychogeography, “the study of the precise laws and specific effects of the geographical environment, whether consciously organized or not, on the emotions and behaviour of the individuals” (Debord, Guy, 2006, p.8) and the topic of *dérives*, which “involve playful-constructive behavior and awareness of psychogeographical effects, and are thus quite different from the classic notions of journey or stroll.” (Debord, Guy, 2006, p.62). Both concepts intend to approach the urban environment and re-being in them. I write “re-being” because this “being” within the city involves everything of how we are as beings living in a societal system. A system which seems (or is) very much in control of how we live, how we move, what we see, what we eat, all the whats, and even hows. So, what we have are intentions and awareness. A walk is a walk is a walk. We have routines and repetition in our daily lives. We might walk the same street every day until we don’t. We don’t walk the same street because of awareness.

Awareness is a type of change that can lead to newness. I can walk the same street every day without intention, lost in thought, looking but not seeing. And that street won’t be a place; it’s just a means to an end. A process I need to go through to reach something else, the end of the street or a place of interest. But a street can be something else depending on the intention. A walk is not a walk is not a walk is not a walk. (And as the cacophony resounds in my head, the quacking sound takes over “walk walk walk walk wak wak wak woak woak”).

The intention of each artistic movement from the twentieth century was to approach something of interest, something observed in need of awareness. In the case of the Situationist International, their intention came in the form of a demand. They demanded, “the right to construct life out of one’s own desires, as artists have always done with art” (Waxman, Lori, 2017, p. 95). A demand related to the urban environment where laws and systemic behaviour become more restricted. Where the walking becomes musically arranged with a semi-western tune in the voice of Johnny Cash, “I walk the line”. Where who we love and how we do it has to be defined, explained, justified, and clear for everyone (even when it’s no-one’s business but our own). The idea of a city can be a romantic thought that shifts around with different lenses reaching from the romanticized idea of a thick-grained black and white French utopia to the intrinsically dramas of a telenovela to a road CCTV camera showing what happens when nothing happens.

Each walk comes with an intention, even if we are not aware of it all the time. Or even if that intention comes in the form of a need. There is intention. There is also, however, a lack of awareness most of the time. And that is where the infraordinary emerges; the infraordinary reminds us of where we are, makes us aware of a moment, a time that places us somewhere and raises what we have forgotten from the unseen. It makes our relationship with a place, a thing, a something, visible.

→130

Image 18

→96



Infraordinary as encounter

The infraordinary is not something one can find.
It is something one encounters. → 75

Event and eventfulness

The infraordinary can be eventful, as in “it happens”, yet it differs from the notion of event. There is no infraordinary event but an unexpected encounter which by its significance or magnitude becomes an event, hence its eventfulness.

Event and eventful find a temporal dissent in their juncture. That is, while one (event) bases its significance on expectations, we know what will happen, and we measure the experience according to that. The other (eventful) finds its significance after something, which has not been planned, has happened and by significance or magnitude becomes a something. While the experience in the event is a posteriori, its significance has already been established, something is going to happen, and it will be something; the significance is *a priori*.

In something eventful, the experience happens before we have decided its significance. The experience is a priori, its significance *a posteriori*.

The awareness of the infraordinary is something that happens a posteriori. One evidences the infraordinary. The infraordinary can be eventful; it is not an event in the sense of arranging a time and a day; there is no making an appointment for an infraordinary experience.

To contextualize and evince the contrast between event and eventful, we can turn our attention to the writing practice of Perec in his work *An Attempt at Exhausting a Place in Paris* (Perec, Georges, 1975). And the practice of Kaprow within his Happenings at the end of the 50s and beginning of the 60s and his practice of *Just Doing* in the late 90s. → 31

Perec: eventfulness and encounter

Why is the practice of Perec in proximity to eventfulness and encounter? In 1975 Perec sat in the Tabac café to write, observe and wait. He waited until there was nothing left to wait for, as he wrote in his book (and later illustrated in his movie) *Une homme qui dort* (A Man Asleep), Perec, Georges, 1967.

He sat, he wrote everything he observed. There was an idea, a where, a sense of the how, an agreement on a practice. But there was not a specifying of what. What would he see, what would he observe? What would he encounter? One can read his book *An Attempt at Exhausting a Place in Paris* and end up feeling it is aimless since there is “nothing happening”, there is no event happening while he is there, no car crashes, no fights, no one giving birth in the café, no scene set up for one to gasp and feel it has been a meaningful moment.

If one goes around with the expectation of an encounter one is bound to be disappointed. Since usually the search for encounter is not something that can be found when searching (or so it would seem at times). In this expectation for what cannot be found when searching, in the stubbornness of forcing an encounter, one might as well listen attentively to Obi-Wan/Ben Kenobi (played by Alec Guinness) while he instructs us to “move along”. After all, “these aren’t the droids you are looking for”. *Star Wars: Episode IV – A New Hope* (1977) → 51

Sharing an encounter

A mosquito found by Lauren Reid in a notebook.
She crushed this mosquito while trying to write some
notes one evening in October 2018, in Koh Phangan,
Thailand, after it had already carried out its mischief
feeding. → 52



Life and art

We can find diverse approaches to the relationship in which the infraordinary presents itself on the topic of life and art. In one of these approaches, there is the infraordinary and life, those everyday experiences that have left the ordinary by becoming visible, by their oddity within the context and/or situation. And then there is the infraordinary and art, in which one takes an infraordinary experience, or even just the thought or idea of it, and attempts to make it permanently visible within an art form. For Georges Perec, this was by writing; for Richard Wentworth, it was through photography; for Bas Jan Ader, it was the actions he performed and the videos and photographs in which he made those actions visible. All of these artists have approximated an infraordinary experience.

It is in the experience of the encounter, between the artworks that approach the infraordinary and the spectators who experience it, where art and the infraordinary meet. → 18

Bas Jan Ader

I have no clear recollection of when I first encountered the work of Dutch artist Bas Jan Ader (b. 1942). I remember a friend used to have a postcard on her fridge of his artwork, *I'm too sad to tell you* (Ader, Bas Jan, 1971). The postcard was a still of the film, his face wet with tears, his hand positioned on his temple, and the handwritten text "I'm too sad to tell you". I'm confident it's a common postcard sold by museums and art stores of that still from the video.

The other time I remember encountering his work was in New York. I was visiting some exhibitions in the Chelsea gallery area with a friend when suddenly, in one of those spaces (who knows which gallery it was), there it was, Bas Jan Ader's image on a monitor. Again, the work was *I'm too sad to tell you*. When I think about it, I might have seen the postcard before seeing the video on the monitor. I feel there was a sense of recognition when I saw the monitor, and not the other way around, like saying to my friend, "Hey, you have a postcard of that video I saw in NY".

Over the years, I have encountered Ader's work through his videos, images, words and tales about his life and eerie disappearance. For readers yet to encounter him (lucky you), his disappearance began taking shape on July 9th, 1975, when he hopped onto his sailboat *Ocean Wave* as a single-handed sailor to make a journey crossing the North Atlantic. After nine months, his sailboat was found near Ireland, turned over and empty with no

sign of Ader anywhere. There is no clear explanation for this event other than speculations and theories that range from Ader making a grand disappearance from the world of art through his artwork, to a more technical approach related to bad weather and the lifeline which attached him to the boat being broken; hence him possibly falling overboard and not able to make it back up onto the boat (Dalstra, Koos and van Wijk, Marion, 26 September, 2017).

Bas Jan Ader's work is invariably attached to his persona and image. Firstly, he worked with his own body within the films. Secondly, since he is working with a body, that body is filled with gestures, in the way it moves, the way it tries not to move, the way it falls, the way it breathes, and all of these gestures are visible to the spectator through the image of his body. I write "fall" and "try not to move" above to refer to his series of works in which he falls: *Fall I* (1970), in which we can see him sitting on a chair on top of the roof of a house, then gently leans to the side and falls into a group of bushes at the bottom; *Fall II* (1970), where he dives into one of the canals in Amsterdam while riding a bicycle; *Broken Fall (organic)* (1971), where he lets go of a branch he was hanging on to and falls into a canal located in a more nature-like setting; *Broken Fall (geometric)* (1971), in which he stands still in the middle of a path in Westkapelle, then leans to his right, beginning a game of balance between his right leg and nothingness on the other, until finally letting go of his whole upright body and falling onto a wooden stand on his right and the bushes; and *Nightfall* (1971), in which he is purposefully being still (standing or sitting) and in

what seems to be an undetermined moment, he moves and falls. These gestures that come through him are not only present in the fall series. One can see them in his other works, such as *I'm too sad to tell you* (1971), *In search of the miraculous (One night in Los Angeles)* (1973), and *Please don't leave me* (1969).

There are various words and ideas which the work of Ader approaches. One can walk towards the notion of failure, but not the notion of failure as such, but as Alex Dumbadze points out in his book, *Death is Elsewhere* (2015), on page 28:

"There are hints of the element of failure, but not as commonly assumed: to the degree that he falls because gravity demanded it, his action is successful. To the degree that his interventions at once mark an interruption in the dominion of gravity's will and facilitate that which is preordained, he succeeds as well. Failure, in Ader's initial Fall films, lurks in the overall tragedy of the situation, not a tragedy that is necessarily romantic in the banal sense, but tragedy in the face of an inexplicable fall and the irredeemable loss of free will."

Ader's work balanced itself, much like the balance we see of his body in his work, on a tightrope which holds the notions of life, art, their relationship, failure, and gesture. They are all without the need for a definition but left visible and reachable for one to approach. The gestures present in his works are undefined meanings which speak within themselves. These gestures are hints as to meanings. We have the images and elements that one can read: a house, a chair, a person, a bush, a

canal, a bicycle, and so on. But, at the same time, it's within the relationship of those elements that intentions come forward in an anonymous manner. These intentions have no other name than the one that refers to their action: falling. However, within them, they carry a gesture — one that is present already, though it remains unnamed. → 32

Event and Allan Kaprow

“To the extent that a Happening is not a commodity but a brief event, from the standpoint of any publicity it may receive, it may become a state of mind. Who will have been there at that event? It may become like the sea of monsters of the past of the flying saucers of the yesterday. I shouldn't really mind, for as the new myth grows on its own, without reference to anything in particular, the artist may achieve a beautiful privacy for something purely imaginary while free to explore something nobody will notice.” (Kaprow, Allan (2003) *Essays on the Blurring of Art and Life*, p. 25-26.)

A happening is an event. Allan Kaprow's aim with these events was to unanchor art experience from how art was usually experienced in museums and galleries and to highlight the role art usually played within an art exhibition. In his 1959 happening *18 Happenings in 6 Parts*, Kaprow scripted and created an environment in which he provided instructions for the participation of his audience. Although this specific happening took place within an art institution, the Reuben Gallery in New York, Kaprow's aim was to “escape the inevitable death-by-publicity to which all other art is condemned, because for a brief life” referring to the happenings “they can never be overexposed; they are dead, quite literally, every time they happen” (Kaprow, Allan (2003) *Essays on the Blurring of Art and Life*, p. 59.)

The relationship in which Kaprow focuses his art practice is the relationship between life and art, how life,

the everyday with all its objects and qualities, relates to art, approaching art as part of life and not as something isolated from it. Just as Umberto Boccioni introduced everyday life to the gallery at the turn of the twentieth century with his work *La Strada Entra Nella Casa* (The Street Enters the House), 1912, Kaprow brings life into the gallery, or in his case, into the space he has established for the scheduled event. In this instance, he doesn't present everyday life; rather, he represents it in a scheduled and arranged environment.

One should notice then here the different approach in which the event and the eventful play in the work of Kaprow with his late 90s practice of *Just Doing*, a series of unplanned actions which he then writes about to convey the experience held in them,

“In answer to my suggestion to Brian Dick—that he might like to do the stupidest thing he could think of, and then the smartest—he hung a roomful of big pickles from a ceiling, wrapping them with electric wire attached to the house current. When he turned on the switch, the pickles glowed and sent out blue sparks before burning out and smelling bad. Then, for his “smartest” thing, he repeated the whole procedure the next day.”
(Kaprow, Allan, 1990, pp. 249-250).

In the last section of this book, *Essays on the Blurring of Art and Life*, Kaprow leaves the reader with the notion of *Just Doing*. A thought that had been present throughout the reading of the previous chapter when writing about the un-artists, un-art, and the differentiation he makes between game and play,

“Both” (referring to play and game) “involve free fantasy and apparent spontaneity, both may have clear structures, both may (but needn't) require special skills that enhance the playing. Play however, offers satisfaction, not in some stated practical outcome, some immediate accomplishment, but rather in continuous participation as its own end. Taking sides, victory, and defeat, all irrelevant in play, are the chief requisites of game. In play one is carefree; in a game one is anxious about winning” (Kaprow, Allan, 1972, p.122)

Just Doing refers to the nature of playing, and it is more closely related to the infraordinary in the sense that there is a spontaneity within; there is no plan, no intention other than playing, no preconceived intention set upon what is done. It's just doing something.

It is then that in this section, we can find a series of descriptions and tales of things that happened while just doing; not happenings, not pre-arranged events, no invitations to play a game, no tension, no expectation, just doing.

Within these two examples in the practice of Allan Kaprow one can draw a line between event and eventful. Not a line that divides, but a line that offers a moment of dialogue between different modes of approaching and doing art. → 122

Art and life

It is important to notice the emphasis on the relationship between the two elements: art and life. Within the artistic practices that precede the notion of the infraordinary, such as the Surrealist, Lettrist International, Situationist International, and Fluxus, as with the infraordinary, the separation of life and art becomes, in the words of Kaprow, blurry (Kaprow, Allan, 2003). A blurry state between what belongs to every day as something in it as part of life and what is found every day and then taken into artistic practice. An everyday not as a mere platform where things happen, but as Michael Sheringham points out in the chapter 'Lefebvre: Alienation and Appropriation' in his book, *Everyday Life: Theories and Practices from Surrealism to the Present*, the "everyday life is not 'where it all happens' – it is not co-extensive with praxis. But it is a 'niveau de réalité' (level of reality) characterized by movement rather than fixity" (Sheringham, Michael, 2006, p. 147).

Art seems to be, many times, an emphasis, or an observation, on life. Pinpointing something in particular – an experience, a thing, an observation – that we need to see and make visible beyond ourselves, for the other. A rose is a rose. But if I say it more than three times (Stein, Gertrude, 2016), like Betelgeuse (Burton, Tim, 1998), the noun, the name, and the word will not be just a word. We are making a call upon the word. It becomes an entity. A something else than a rose. It does not refer to a rose expressly or necessarily but to something else. It is hinting, winking at a meaning within.

These approaches to life through observations or emphasis on an experience range from the visible and yet unspoken to the heard and unseen; and everything in between. In the realm of the visible and unspoken, we have, for example, Bas Jan Ader's video work *I'm too sad to tell you* (1971). In this work, we can see him, framed from shoulders up to the head, crying, wiping his face with his right hand, and breathing intermittently between weep and sorrow. The title of this piece along with the image directs our attention to the experience of sadness, pain, and maybe even suffering. Another example is John Cage's approach to the heard and unseen role of silence in his musical piece *4'33"* (1952), a three-movement composition in which he instructed the performers not to play their instruments during this period of time. Cage's intention of silence was not the straightforward traditional definition of silence as the "absence of sound or noise" (Merriam Webster) but rather approaching it as a space where, "There is no such thing as an empty space or empty time. There is always something to see, something to hear. In fact, try as we may to make a silence, we cannot" (Cage, John, *Experimental Music*, p. 1).

In this approach of Cage towards silence, one can hear an echo of Virilio's proposal regarding the infraordinary as "what we do when we do nothing, what we hear when we hear nothing, what happens when nothing happens." This would present a point of inflexion in which the Fluxus practices connect with the practice of the infraordinary, offering a background to the presence and "visibility" of the infraordinary. → 62

Points of contact and point of divergence

The relationship between the infraordinary and the artistic practices of the twentieth century lies in their possibility of an encounter with everyday life. Everyday life that most of the time is hidden, that most of the time remains unaware of its role in our lives. We build our lives on routines, on repetition, and on things happening at events. Meanwhile, the day-to-day continues, without any other aim than setting another stone under our feet so we continue walking. It moves under our feet, slowly; so slow that it passes us by just fast enough to make our necks twist around and our minds wander into the past.

There is an encounter in the infraordinary. There is an encounter in the *dérives* made by the Surrealists, Dadaist, Lettrist International, Situationist International and Fluxus movements. How that encounter activates differs according to the intention.

Intention can have many directions, depending on where this intention departs from. When the Lettrists and Affichistes made and distributed the collages around the city, they intended to deliver a message to the passerby. The passerby is unaware of what is about to be encountered when walking on the street until it is experienced. There is the intention of a message being delivered.

When the Situationists practised their collective *dérives*, they had no goal but to move around (Waxman, Lori, p. 117). However, there is the intention in the walking, or in the action of drifting by not walking specifically somewhere, but the movement of the steps is the intention.

There is always an intention, a thought of these practices as moving towards this intention. Sometimes staying within their practice and at others expanding to deliver a message, an image, a thought to the other, the passerby, the city's dwellers.

The infraordinary has no agenda; there is no intention. The infraordinary happens; one encounters the infraordinary. One can willingly take on the city's streets, hoping to find the infraordinary. One can go to the forests of North America to find Sasquatch or to the Himalayas to find the Meh-Teh (or Yeti). But that is a chase, a pursuit, an intentional movement. The artistic practices of the first half of the twentieth century, such as Dadaism, Surrealism, Lettrist International, Situationist International, and Fluxus, took these intentional walks to pursue a thought, an idea, an ideal, a desire. The walk is the form of the intention. The intention is the (un)articulated desire.

One doesn't know when the infraordinary happens. It happens when it happens, and by the time it happens, it has already happened. This doesn't mean it has a short duration, but our awareness within is blindsided by the lived experience. We don't see it coming; there is no tumbleweed announcing its arrival. There is no eerie wind whispering in our ears nor smells of rain approaching. It just happens.

A point of divergence between these practices (from the Dadaists to the Happening of Allan Kaprow) and the infraordinary is that they went towards looking for places, or spaces, in the everyday which were in a way forgotten or made "invisible" since they were part of the everyday. One unsees them and replaces them by the actions or activities done in them. They were "finding the marvelous in the banal, in the spaces of everyday life, spaces overlooked and underappreciated, sometimes to the extent of being outmoded or even ruined" (Waxman, Lori, 2017, p. 12). They walked "intently". There was the intention of reactivating the visibility of a place. The infraordinary, although it does reactivate and resignify a place, is made by an encounter with something happening. → 136

On meaning, pursuit, and experience

Writing, thinking, and walking towards the infraordinary might be a quixotic task. A quixotic pursuit that resembles failure very much but which in time might slow down its rhythm enough that we can catch a glimpse of what is there.

The infraordinary is a word that refers to a sensibility, to the experience of the presence of something that cannot be possessed, cannot be accurately worded, but which through intention and representation one can approach. And one can attempt, in a futile attempt, to convey its meaning.

The infraordinary is an experience. This experience is encountered in everyday life, and it might find visibility through practice. However, that visibility is not that of the infraordinary but the visibility of the experience of it.

How does it change having the experience of something but not having that something? An experience is a relationship that happens between the things and beings that are having a given experience. An experience speaks of the elements but is not the elements. → 5

Repetition and routines

The contrast between the everyday and the quotidian is very slight. One could easily interchange them when referring to the ordinary stream of life.

However, when reflecting upon their use, distinctions emerge. The quotidian suggests routines, something specific repeatedly happening, a specific task. The everyday is more like a continuous line with no specific end, which we walk with or without the aim of fulfilling our lives. In this sense, the quotidian happens within everyday life.

Within everyday life, repetitions emerge as actions without reflection. While the quotidian refers to what those repetitions unfold on a communal level as a part of a social structure.

It is in the thinking and writing of Henri Lefebvre in *The Critique of Everyday Life* (1947–1981) and Michel De Certeau in *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1984) (*L'invention du quotidien*. Vol. 1, *Arts de faire*' (1980) where one can find the sociological theories that analyse the quotidian within the fabrics that weave the social spheres and habits of daily life.

Lefebvre's approach to the quotidian, as with those of De Certeau and Perce, departs from the act of awareness, "what is happening around us, within us, each and every day" (Lefebvre, Henri, 2014, p. 41). In Lefebvre's specific case, an awareness of the coloniza-

tion of everyday life and the dynamics with which the individual navigates the construction of the quotidian.

Repetition can transform what is found in the everyday to an ordinary measure, meaning it can take the individuality of the action, thing, or happening into the realm of the mundane and the uneventful.

Routines and repetition can make the most beautiful object or the most breathtaking situation disappear into our lives. However, just as repetition can take some quality from the thing, action, or happening, repetition might bring to light some information we haven't noticed before. Lefebvre writes in his chapter "Typology of repetition,"

"Repetition of cycles and cyclic rhythms differs from repetition of mechanical gestures: the first of these types belongs to the non-accumulative processes, which have their own time scales, while the second belongs to the processes of accumulation, with their linear time scales, which are now continuous, now discontinuous. Repetition of behaviour patterns (conditionings) stimulated by signals cannot be assimilated to repetition of 'states', emotions or attitudes linked to symbols and emotional nucleuses. We must distinguish between repetition of situations (notably in pathological cases) and repetition postulated by certain systems (by Kierkegaard and Nietzsche, for example). If repetition, return or renewal of the same (or more or less the

same) phenomenon should be understood according to each specific case and type, the same can be said of the relation between what is repeated and the newness which springs from repetition (for example, repetition of sounds and rhythms in music offers a perpetual movement which is perpetually reinvented). Similarly, repetition of the instant, so frequently studied by philosophers (the *hic et nunc*, pure immediacy, the purely transitory in perception and the 'lived'), cannot be assimilated to repetition of the moment" (Lefebvre, 2002, p. 340).

There are routines in everyday life. There is the ordinary, the pursuit and desire for the extraordinary, the pursuit of meaning and most of all, the pursuit of purpose. Everyday life seems to take on a poetic note for a willing eye that longs to get lost rather than focusing on quotidian tasks. These quotidian tasks meaning the activities set to repeat each day in the means of the production of everyday life.

I am unable to catch the meaning of the everyday if I think about it as life, the big L I F E and the pursuit of its meaning. But I am able to approach the notion whenever I stop and try to focus on different aspects of it, the different parts of what we refer to as the whole, on different questions that might exert a pull towards something; a pull that calls like a siren in the distance and which I willingly follow until the rocks hit and sink my body into the ocean of a meaningless pursuit.

→ 115

Image 19

→ 56



Quotidian

We have our days, our weeks, months, and years. We set out to be someone, and for that, we must be somewhere and do some thing(s). We walk and forget to see. We speak and forget to think. We sleep and have forgotten to dream. The quotidian is rapidly shaped into a purpose focused on a goal, but the end never arrives. We attempt to reach an accomplished goal only so we can invent a new one after we have passed the present one or failed it and learnt nothing. We get on with our lives because what other option do we have? When we stop, crises emerge if we are not prepared to justify why we have stopped because a reason must be had. → 141

A reason must be had

A reason must be had.

But T has been left behind at the last bus stop by reason.

T runs rapidly after the bus,

panting,

losing its breath,

screaming to the passengers to tell the driver to stop the bus,

T has to catch up with reason.

Sometimes, rarely enough, someone speaks up and tells the driver to stop, someone is running.

“Wait” they tell the driver.

Sometimes, very rarely, the driver stops.

The doors open.

T begins to catch up with the bus while way on the back hiding behind in the last seats is reason.

T arrives to the bus barely being able to breathe.

T steps in and walks towards reason.

T gets closer.

T reaches reason.

treason.

→ 166

Movement and visibility

The relationship between the infraordinary and the everyday seems to remain in constant movement in how they relate. This movement refers to the latency of the visibility of the infraordinary within our everyday lives.

The every-single-day is a stratum on which routines and repetition establish an everyday. And in time, these actions that form part of routines become normalized and ordinary.

It is only when the everyday has settled down, when the dust has become ground, and when we can no longer see the specks of dust floating around that, by chance, choice, or by the encounter, the infraordinary can emerge and becomes visible. → 14

Event

What is the event? And why is it relevant to write about it concerning the infraordinary?

We seem to constantly search for meaning. But no meaning of any kind. We don't seem satisfied by the linguistic context of what something means; instead, we seem to be starved for significance.

In this starvation, as it would be with hunger, we hunt (or shop nowadays). We track and gather, build, construct, make things, and process them into or towards being something. Often, the findings are not meaningful, so we take on the need for embellishment. Sometimes the finding is enough, but it seems impossible for us to let that be as is. We cuddle it, build a shrine for it, frame it, place it on a pedestal, and add a bell glass. And then, it's there, as something, it means, has significance, it is *it*. Whatever that it is (being physical or ideological).

The event locates things, objects, happenings, and occurrences in the realm of significance. The event is a pedestal; the event gives a place and visibility. This place might have as a baseline the notion of a physical place and, if not physical, a meaningful one. The event is a becoming of things. A permanence of things. The event is the need for things to be more (or something else) than they are. The event is that mechanism in which the ordinary can achieve meaningfulness towards the extraordinary.

While the infraordinary is an experience, one which happens without scheduling, arranging, or orchestrating, the event stands on what seems to be an opposite side. While events create a place for the experiences, the event itself is pinpointed and located, just as the process in which an undefined space (undefined in the sense of recognizing a location) is located and turned into a place by the experiences this space might hold. In a sense, the infraordinary could be contrasted with the notion of space, while the event would be compared to the notion of place.

The infraordinary has no objective nor purpose. The infraordinary happens, is encountered. While the event is a construction of an experience, the infraordinary is an experience in itself. → 94

A witness

The infraordinary has neither an audience nor spectators. I don't think one can call an "audience" that which experiences the infraordinary. Or a spectator one who encounters the infraordinary in an artwork.

In the quality of the infraordinary as something which is encountered then one would be a witness to the infraordinary moment. → 61

Image 20

→ 12

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN NOTHING HAPPENS

An art event

What happens when nothing happens – a sentence that, by itself and pondering around it, eliminates the premise of “nothing happening”. The moment one begins walking around that thought, through it, below and above, something is happening. However, let us get lost in thought about the words and possible meanings they may hold.

When I decided in 2019 to place a workstation as part of my artistic practice in the work *What happens when nothing happens* in the Huuto Gallery (an artist-run space in Helsinki, Finland) my main intention was to observe what happened in those days in which the exhibition is running but are days that seem in a way empty. I have always felt this emptiness in relation to the day after the opening of an exhibition, and when speaking with other artists, I realized this feeling was shared. What happens after the opening of an exhibition you have been working for? Often, nothing seems to happen; one works on the idea, develops the artworks and transports them to the exhibition venue, all fuzz and buzz. Finally, the exhibition opening day is here, friends, colleagues and other people arrive, say hi (maybe first) and then (for sure) move to the wine station (I do this too). Once a wine glass is in hand, it's time to move around and see the exhibition and people, and talk. The conversation is rarely about the exhibition or artworks, mainly about life in general if it's someone you know, or the most dreaded (by me) small talk – I really don't understand why people call it “small”, it feels like a monumental effort.

Time passes, the gallery is going to close, the opening is over, and it is time to move to a bar or another venue to continue socializing and unwinding from that feeling of time pushing you from behind and getting you there for the opening day. The night passes, the morning comes, you wake up, and it's the next day. You don't feel any different, maybe just without something pushing you from the rear towards a date, but in reality, there is always a date chasing you. Once you meet a deadline, there is another one waiting in line. Oh no ... here comes Bon Jovi ... "Whoaaaa we're halfway there. Whoa-a living on a deadline. Take my hand, we'll make it. I swear. Whoa, livin' on a *deadline* – Living on a *deadline*". I'm not sure which hand we are taking here, though; I don't wish for Bon Jovi to hold my hand for every deadline on sight (no offence).

What happens then? What happened in between the opening and the finissage? My role, me being there sitting at the desk in the exhibition, was to observe what happened. Something does, always. So, what happened?

While sitting at the workstation at the gallery, I kept a journal that accounted for things happening on the everydayness of being there. This journal contains the coming and goings, conversations, events that took place and observations. The full journal of the exhibition with text and images can be found online on my personal website:

- People came to the exhibition. They mostly came in groups with school or someone managing the group.
- The age group of these groups was between 15 and 25.
- Some individuals came randomly.
- Most of the people that came by themselves were in the age group between 50 and 70 years of age.
- Friends popped by.
- I had work meetings at the desk.
- I worked at my part-time job (technical support for online classes at Node Center for Curatorial Studies in Berlin).
- I made an appointment to get a tattoo there in situ (the tattoo was designed and made by visual artist Charlotte Glez. It features a slice of bread with a face – imagine that).
- I had a manual tally counter, a small device that one clicks to count something and is usually seen in museums where someone counts the number of visitors. I counted how many people came to the exhibition space every day.
- I documented via image or video observations. For example, my sweater being buttoned wrongly, missing one buttonhole and making it seem crooked; a bottle that I accidentally broke there; the contents of the trash bin at some point during the whole exhibition; how the desk looked when all the lights were out and it was time to close; how the desk looked from the other side and how from where I sat. I documented things that came into mind as I attempted to wonder what happens when nothing happens.

Ironically, or perhaps not much so, there is always something happening. Especially when secretly trying to spy on what happens when nothing happens. Then, very much so, a lot happens, or rather a lot is noticed. Awareness is the word. One becomes aware of noticing things, whatever they might be. However, they might come, whatever shape they might have. One can think of these things or exercise them as listening and writing every sound one can hear if one only pays attention to what one can hear; then, we suddenly notice how there is never silence. Unless one is inside an anechoic chamber which deadens most of the sounds, one becomes very aware of the respiration and pulsation of the bodily rhythm.

Many things happen between the opening of the exhibition and its end, but it takes presence and awareness to notice and experience those things happening. The focus on wondering (and wandering around) what happens when nothing happens was to propose a question on the idea or notion of the event. To doubt the event as a measure of what has been done, as if doing it wasn't enough, but something has to happen.

Nothing has to happen, and that is already a lot.
→ 108

For more information about the project, please visit <https://andreaoyotziborja.com/what-happens-when-nothing-happens/>

Image 21

→ 155



What happens when nothing happens

In 1864 the first edition of *Journey to the Centre of the Earth* by Jules Verne was published. That same year, Abraham Lincoln was reelected over George B. McClellan, winning overwhelmingly. A few months before that, on the 10th of April, Austrian Archduke Maximilian became Maximilian I, Emperor of Mexico.

And just a few months before, Mary Ann Nichols (the first victim of Jack the Ripper) was married to William Nichols, a printer's machinist.

It is 154 years later, and while I decide to take upon my favourite Finnish tradition: *kalsarikännit*, I wonder about What happens when nothing happens.

Andrea Coyotzi Borja, 2019

This was the text I wrote for the artwork I exhibited in 2019 at Huuto Galleria in Helsinki. The title of the piece was *What happens when nothing happens*, a direct reference to the wanderings and thinking by George Perec and Paul Virilio in their work and their reflections upon the city and urban life.

What happens when nothing happens consisted of the setting up of an office space within the exhibition where I would go every day for a few hours. I would sit, be in the gallery space, engage, try to write (emphasis on try), think (or be lost in thought), and observe what happens when nothing happens. This is related to the

thoughts many artists (myself included) have of that unknown time between an exhibition's opening and the finissage (the end date). That time in which nothing seems to happen.

So, I bought a desk, took my revolving chair from my apartment and a bunch of books that were related (or not) to the topic. I took working materials such as notebooks, typewriters, and markers that I usually use. I bought some plants, took a trashcan, and set up my office space.

After a place for the office was set up in the space of the exhibition, I drafted a text to display on the desk that would inform the audience about the work while I was not there, mainly containing the general idea and the schedule (continues on the following page),

The desk - What happens when nothing happens.'

Dear reader,

Since the beginning of the exhibition, I have been coming every working day to this desk. The intention of this desk is to provide a space (or place?), a chance to meet, to talk, or read, or do, or discuss, or have lunch, or neither of that and just be.

This past week I was here Monday to Friday from 10 am to 14h just sitting here and being here while doing or not doing, thinking or not, but being here and waiting to see what happens when nothing happens. It might be that is as they say that when you wait for something to happen nothing happens.

Me being here is not a performance, there should be no expectations of something happening while I am here but I also know it's difficult no to have expectations, we all have them; and, in a way, expectations are there to allow us to think of the possible, of what could be, of the "if".

The schedule changes due to work (job jobs). For the week of the 21st to 25th of October I'll be here the following days and times:

Monday - Closed
Tuesday - 15:30 - 19h
Wednesday - 13 - 15h
Thursday - Not present, only by phone +358451125655
Friday - 10 am - 14h

Thank you for your time and attention.

Andrea Coyotzi Borja → 151

The desk and the books at the exhibition

When I decided that I was going to create an office space for the exhibition at Huuto Galleria in Helsinki, I thought of a desk. Nothing specific, but a desk in general. At the time, in my apartment, I only had a table that I used for working, but I needed something more office-like for the exhibition.

I went online and bought this fantastic desk which has a bookcase on the front as part of the desk. It is perfect (I still use it daily). I knew that I wanted to have some books with me and having that bookcase as part of the desk gave me the possibility to have the office as a complete hub where I had all the things I needed. Now, the books, what books to take?

The topic of the piece was related to the extraordinary, but more specifically, to the concept of the event. What is an event? How do events happen? What is an art event? All these questions revolved around what Paul Virilio and George Perec wrote in their reflections about things happening, "what we do when we do nothing, what we hear when we hear nothing, what happens when nothing happens." (Virilio, Paul, 2008). None of those questions were answered in a linear mode during the exhibition, but rather they were thought upon, and conversed with people who sat and engaged with me while I was there.

However, some of the books I brought to the exhibition revolved around those questions, topics, and ideas; other books were not so directly related to these; and the rest were there for no apparent reason, but for a need within myself:

- *George Perec: A Life in Words*, David Bellos
- *The Everyday*, Whitechapel: Documents of Contemporary Art, Edited by Stephen Johnstone
- *Failure*, Whitechapel: Documents of Contemporary Art, Edited by Lisa Le Feuvre
- *Chance*, Whitechapel: Documents of Contemporary Art, Edited by Margaret Iversen
- *Memory*, Whitechapel: Documents of Contemporary Art, Edited by Ian Farr
- *Everyday Life: Theories and Practices from Surrealism to the Present*, Michael Sheringham
- *Carne y Piedra: El cuerpo y la ciudad en la civilización occidental*, Richard Sennett
- *Las cosas*, Georges Perec
- *Lo infraordinario*, Georges Perec
- *Tentativa de agotamiento de un lugar parisino*, Georges Perec
- *Un hombre que duerme*, Georges Perec
- *Me acuerdo*, Georges Perec
- *El aumento - El arte de abordar a su jefe de servicio para pedirle un aumento*, Georges Perec
- *Keep Walking Intently: The Ambulatory Art of the Surrealists, the Situationist International, and Fluxus*, Lori Waxman.
- *All my friends are dead*, Avery Monsen and Jory John
- *Nothing* (a book filled with stills of movies in which the subtitles say the word “nothing”. The book has no

- information about the author, nor the publisher. It was a gift from a friend).
- *Essayism*, Brian Dillon.
- *Essays on the Blurring of Art and Life*, Allan Kaprow.
- *Para los pájaros*, John Cage
- *Bailando en la obscuridad (Mi lucha #4)*, Karl Ove Knausgård
- *Ugly feelings*, Sianne Ngai
- *Fluxus Experience*, Hannah Higgins
- *The Readymades*, John Holten
- *On Writers and Writing*, Margaret Atwood
- *El cine según Hitchcock*, Francois Truffaut
- *Space and Place*, Yi-Fu Tuan
- *Borges, cuentos completos*, Jose Luis Borges
- *Habitar*, Juhani Pallasmaa
- *Artistic Research*, Juha Varto
- *Making Do and Getting By*, Richard Wentworth
- *La invención de lo cotidiano. I. Artes de hacer*, Michel de Certeau
- *La invención de lo cotidiano. Habitar, cocinar*, Michel de Certeau
- *I remember*, Joe Brainard.
- *The Book of Disquiet: The Complete Edition*, Fernando Pessoa
- *The World as Will and Representation*, Arthur Schopenhauer.

→ 147

The revolving chair

I have never had a chair before where one could modify so many of its features. The chairs I knew were the revolving kind whereby only the height can be adjusted, going up or down. But the chair I had during the exhibition at Huuto Galleria knocked it out of the park.

I obtained this chair from the former research room at the Department of Art at Aalto University. The whole school was being relocated to a new building and most of the furniture was going to be thrown away due to the possibility of it having mould (I don't think this chair has mould, I'm sitting on that chair. So far nothing has indicated it has mould). I asked if they were going to throw away the chairs, and yes, they were. So, one day, before it was too late, I decided to take the chair I used there at my desk. I turned off the computer, got up, put on my backpack, and walked out rolling the chair with me. I had no car or van to transport the chair, but the chair has wheels, so I just rolled with it ('it' being the situation and the chair).

I went out from the art department, rolled down the corridor, into the elevator, out of the front door to the tram stop, into the tram (where I didn't have to find a seat because I had one), out to the street, into my apartment building where I took the elevator up and into my apartment.

In Helsinki, it's not a part of the everyday to see people walking down the street with furniture, not even if it's

something as small as a chair (granted, this chair is not exactly a small chair), so there were some stares here and there, and a comment from my neighbour whom I bumped into on the way to the front door of my building. The comment didn't have anything in it but the acknowledgement that something was happening, something unusual from his everyday goings on.

Moving furniture down the street is not abnormal for me, nor is it in other places I have lived, such as Mexico and Spain. I had this "not normalcy" realization of moving furniture in Finland even before living in Helsinki, when I lived in Pori (a town in southwest Finland, on the coast), and where I had to move a mattress down the street with my roommate. We placed the mattress on a tall, folding, steel wire cage cart (if you think I knew the name of that contraption, on the top of my head, you are wrong, it took a bizarre internet search to match the memory with the name) and rolled it down the street. Now, the wheels of that type of cart are not made for asphalt, they are not made of soft rubber which can self-adjust to the terrain, rather they have a hard wheel that made the whole thing shake and the resulting cacophony interrupted the Frisbee golf players in the park when we were passing by (not Frisbee and golf players, Frisbee golf players, a game which before I moved to Finland I had never heard of. But if you think that is something, you should also dive into an internet search of the Hobbyhorse competitions in Finland. Unreal and spectacular).

Now, back to the chair. How many things can one modify in this chair? Seven things (that I know so far):

- the height
- the inclination of the chair
(not only the back support but the whole chair)
- the seat of the chair, forward or back
- the height of the armrest
- the position of the armrest, forward or back
- the head support.

And of course

- it revolves and glides.

The longer I sat on the chair, the more things I discovered could be modified. In the beginning, I just expected it to go up or down, but one day I touched a different lever by accident and discovered I could modify the inclination of the chair. And so, in the same way, I discovered the other changes I could make by chance. An encounter with the anatomy of the chair.

Maybe some people would have investigated the chair when they first sat on it, trying to learn all the chair's features: just as some people like to explore the cities they arrive to live in. They go everywhere. They go to the main places, research what there is, and by the time they have been there for between six months and a year, they know all the highlights of the place. I'm different in that respect. I go where I go when I go, there is no rush to visit all the places in the city, but rather I visit them by chance or because they come with my everyday life. I experience them through the encounter. This, of course, results in me not having

been to places where I live that are so common that people can't believe I haven't been there. They ask "why", and I just shrug, not knowing what they expect me to say. I don't feel a need to consume the city. There is no urgency.

I have been made aware (while talking with Lauren Reid about this in one of our many feedback sessions while writing this document) of how this knowledge by experience doesn't pertain only to the city but also to objects, such as the chair and even people. The way in which I relate to otherness begins with, in a way, doing nothing, waiting, staying still, observing, thinking, wondering, and wandering. It is not until the everyday requires action that my engagement and relation with these elements unfolds, it opens up, and the interaction between me and otherness begins. → 169

Image 22

→ 58

The typewriter

I have always liked writing, and more specifically, I have always liked the tools for writing. Starting with the classic pen and paper, to more mechanical devices such as the typewriter, to the digital medium of the computer. Each has subdivisions and observations depending on how I feel I need to write. There is reasoning, not in the form of justification, but shaped by my relationship with writing.

Pen and paper. Not all the ink runs the same on every paper. Not every type/piece of paper absorbs the ink in the same way. After I noticed a relationship between paper and pen, I tried to find the best paper for each pen and vice versa. Writing by hand is a matter of feeling. Sometimes I like to put some pressure on the paper, and my fountain pen is not the best for it. Sometimes I like writing slow, and the ballpoint glides too fast. There are many things one can consider with writing by hand, and I enjoy thinking about and deciding on my tools for writing.

The distinction between writing by hand, typewriter, and computer is based on speed, sound, and accessibility (not to mention that one cannot erase as effectively with the computer, what one has written by hand or with the typewriter). I do not write fast by hand, and I feel my thoughts flow faster than how I write, so if I would like my stream of consciousness to stream more freely, I don't choose to write by hand. Writing by hand is a more contemplative experience for me. So, for the

exhibition at Huuto Galleria, I needed some other device, either the typewriter or the computer. I had set up my computer in the exhibition space, but I also needed some force and intention. One can press as hard as one wants the keys on the laptop's keyboard, but that carries the risk of damaging the equipment. With the typewriter, one needs pressure and force. The mechanics require one to type intently so the keys hit the paper and the ink passes onto the paper. Hit the key on the typewriter too softly, and the letter might not be visible or only very faint.

Sometimes I don't choose the typewriter, since the sound is too hard, so I opt for the computer. But in the exhibition space, I needed the visibility (through sound) and cacophony of something happening. Things happen on the computer, but at the same time, they are there, somewhere. I can't put the words in my pocket and pull them out when I want to read them. But I can take the piece of paper written with the typewriter, fold it and take it out to accompany me for a casual read on the tram.

Writing is a relationship with many things, thoughts, feelings, ideas, intentions, people, paper, a blinking line waiting for you to move, and all that comes with language use. There is the physical realm of writing, the visible quality of this, and then there is that black hole at the bottom of the magician's hat waiting for the rabbit to be pulled out of it. → 140

On subtlety

For me, the importance relies on things usually labelled as common, ordinary and seemingly unimportant. I think these things are poetic, and they carry a lot of meaning. For me, the subtlety of things is important and essential; it is what gives meaning. That subtlety allows me to explore.

I do not care for the spectacle. I do not care for the bling. I do not care for the grandiose just for the sake of it. → 132

The doing and the communal

When thinking about everyday life, it is important to remark on the differences between the everyday and the quotidian.

As I wrote in the section *Every day / Everyday*, the demarcation between those two concepts relies on the one side in the sequential quality of every day, the singularity of its units and their rhythms (days, hours, capsules of time), one after the other; and on the other side, the quality of togetherness (the relation between each individual part forming the whole) in which these singularities come together to form an everyday. These build a whole that settles, grounds itself, and which we hold on to or turn our heads to when needing a reference point to locate ourselves.

However, when we focus on the differences between the everyday and the quotidian, then the word “differences” would not be the one to rely on. It is not the differences which define them, nor their relationship; it is the processes in which each one unfolds that make visible how they relate to one another and where they diverge.

The everyday is continuously approached from various lines of thought and practices. This allows one to settle thought and practice into a perspective of the everyday, which sheds light on another possibility into how we relate to our own lives. This sounds odd when thinking that we relate to our lives since we mainly “just live”

and go on one day after the other. But it is not until we slip, bump, fall, encounter, or wonder about something that is ordinarily so invisible to us every day that one begins to wonder, “What just happened? What was that?”

Positioning this thought, the processes in which the everyday and quotidian relate to each other and diverge from one another, one can focus on an idea from Michel Maffesoli. From a sociological point of view, Maffesoli refers to the everyday as these “innocuous activities and daily little rituals” as the “bedrock of being together” (Maffesoli, Michel, 2002, p. 77-78). Following this line, the everyday is that stratum in which our activities, or rituals, unfold. They are not herded together like sheep in a corral, but rather the everyday is an open field in which they can run in any direction.

It is in one of these innocuous activities of the everyday in which Maffesoli shores the relationship between an “ordinary” activity and the notion of “being together” through the origin of the word banal, “it is worth recalling the origin of the word ‘banal’: in medieval France, a ‘banal’ baking day was one when the bread that came from the oven was not owed to the lord of the manor. It was a day of common bread, a day of quiet celebration when life was not owed to the powers that be” (Maffesoli, Michel p.77, 2002).

Common or ‘banal’, which in Old French also meant ‘communal’ in the twelfth century, is now a synonym for “ordinary”, something that lacks relevance when in fact, the word itself points to the act of coming together.

Suppose we follow this fermented scent from the “baking day”. In that case, we can walk from the making, the everyday activity of making the bread, to the communal experience of the bread through the idiom “breaking bread,” which is understood as the action of sharing food in the context of Maffesoli, the banal baking day, the common bread.

In the relationship between the everyday and quotidian, the everyday is the making of the bread, that action which is done every day and becomes an everyday doing. While the quotidian is the communal quality of what this bread offers. → 21

Quotidian and context

The quotidian is our everyday unfolding within the social structures. Our individual quotidian is defined by contexts and histories of our surroundings, each unfolding in a particular way, portaging our individual selves. Within the quotidian, we formulate sociological patterns, economic structures, and anthropological reflections of what is held in the everydayness of each individual.

The intrinsic elements surround us in each context we live, shape our everyday and settle routines within them. Walking is not the same in every city; our movement is outlined by urban planning (or lack of it). My walking in Mexico, where I was born and grew up, is not the same as it is in Finland today. In Finland there are less things happening on the streets, a different kind of life, a more austere and calmer one in a way, from my perspective. On the other hand, in Mexico I feel the need to be more aware of my surroundings; I feel the need to turn my head and know who is walking behind me, beside and ahead of me (even though I still do this in Finland it’s only because this has become an embodied learning that is hard to shake off). There are many differences in walking between these two places. Accessibility to places of nature is also different. Places that are accessible in Finland, such as forest areas, are not always possible to access in Mexico because of safety concerns. And in terms of social interactions, my relationship with the vendors of my local shop is not the same in Finland as it was in Mexico. In Finland I

am unable to build a bond between myself and the person working in the local shop. Even when I go to the same store, where most of the time the same person is there for months, there is no rapport. Rapport seems to happen naturally in Mexico, where in the shop our names are known to each other, and where one can exchange casual, funny remarks with the people behind the counter, one builds a familiarity in a matter of days. There are many contrasts in the everyday life between Finland and Mexico, too many that require reflection and time to unfold.

The quotidian not only refers to the cycles and routines we build into our everydayness but their relationship to societal structures, thus implying a sense of community, a communal rhythm that is particularly dependent on the environment. → 195

Nonlinear thought

Writing and thinking about experience, when referring to a specific moment or meaning, can only be done after the fact. That is, after the end of that experience. We can try, and we all do, to hold on to the moments, the lived, and life. But as luck would have it, that can only become a path in the shape of a Möbius strip, in which our journey continuously eludes a straight thought.

→ 70

Becoming

Things* are always in the latency of becoming, emerging and achieving visibility, even when they are not acknowledged. → 47

* Things: object, subjects, entities, qualities, facts, ideas, matter, stated, occurrences, happenings, events, circumstances, activities, substances, material, and so on and so forth with things.

Art and the infraordinary

The infraordinary and art have a point of convergence which is not an infraordinary experience but the reflection upon such experience and its re-presentation. The experience and the medium act as a bridge between an experience and a recipient of that experience.

Art practice is the bridge of communication. One (the artist) selects a medium, how that artwork is displayed in the chosen space, and the space itself. When the artwork is displayed and available to the spectator, the artwork is left to live a life of its own, relate to the viewer, and create its own new experiences.

That is not to say that an infraordinary experience cannot be had within art. However, when the intention of doing an infraordinary artwork is there, the intention ruptures the possibility of the infraordinary. The infraordinary cannot be scheduled. It occurs. It is an encounter between life and being. → 145

Space: A background

My approximation to the concept, idea, or meaning of the word “space,” as with many other words and thoughts in this document, comes from a time that no longer exists, yet I can vividly relive it in my memory. I will leave aside times and dates and remember the place where I was, contextually and physically.

I loved going to the university library when I studied in Mexico. In general, I love going to libraries. I love the sombre silence, which makes the body move differently; sounds are bound, and breathing becomes an act of self-awareness. I love the smells of old books, the density of the air, the soundless landscape that filters through the windows, and the distance between the temporary dwellers in either a search for meaning or something else that those walls had to offer. Many people, myself included, went there to take a nap; the couches were delightful, the temperature perfect, and the silence and the lack of chaos and people made it an ideal setting. Some other people, me too, seemed to go there to unwind, to isolate from the noise of the city, the noise of people, the noise and unstoppable chaos of people living their youth intensely and confusedly (sign me in for the confusing part). And many other times, people went there to look for information, solace within words, depth in meaning, signifiers and whatnot (me included).

At that time, I was working on my BA thesis, and the subject was “space, image, and their relationship to

each other.” The title was *Reflexiones Sobre el Espacio y su Imagen* (Reflections on Space and its Image). Because of this, I went to the library searching for meaning, the meaning of the word space. The first floor of the library contained a section of dictionaries, thesauruses, encyclopedias and everything related to the categorization of information, and so that was my place of destination.

I browsed through the etymological dictionary, finding the root for the word space in Spanish *espacio*, which comes from *spātium* in Latin:

“Spātium, a raceground; a place to walk in; any place of extent; space room (...),” An Etymological Dictionary of the Latin Language.

Now, what I found that day was not “a raceground” but “*campo para correr*” (a field to run). Unfortunately, due to my lousy research skills at the time, I cannot find the reference for this in my BA thesis (yes that’s right, I did not reference where this comes from, a horrible thing to do), and perhaps I will go and look for it when I find myself back in Mexico, in that library.

“Field to run” and “a raceground” refer to an action made in an area. Both refer to an openness, limitless, undefinedness. Most of all, they refer to the possibilities of an undetermined area, of a space.

Within this approach, space remains a field of possibilities for engagement. This engagement ranges, changes, and differs depending on the approaches made with it on how we relate to it.

In this document, I will not pursue an endless in-depth analysis of the approaches to the word, the idea, the concept and the meaning of space. Instead, I will focus on its relationship with the notion of place and the urban environment. And how these relate together with the infraordinary. → **36**

Infraordinary: nomadic and settlement

When thinking about the visibility of the infraordinary, two words come to mind: nomadic and settlement. The infraordinary is not something that “just appears” out of nothing like spontaneous generation. Even bunnies popping out from a magician’s hat come from somewhere or appear from someplace. They have always been there; we just didn’t see them until the magician had built the narrative through anticipation and excitement that the bunny makes its entrance.

The infraordinary is always present yet not visible; it is latent, active, but not yet perceived. It is moving in a nomadic state, and it’s not until one engages with it that it settles down. It dwells in place and time; it becomes a bridge of affection between us and the world. → **109**

Perec and space

“To question the habitual. But that’s just it, we’re habituated to it. We don’t question it, it doesn’t question us, it doesn’t seem to pose a problem, we live it without thinking, as if it carried within it neither question nor answers, as if it weren’t the bearer of any information. This is not longer even conditioning, it’s anaesthesia. We sleep through our lives in a dreamless sleep. But where is our life? Where is our body? Where is our space?” (Perec, Georges, 1973, p. 210).

I remember sitting at the open-air café at the university in Mexico for hours. It started as something I did between study courses, but eventually I would just stay there even if I had more than an hour to spare. I would remain there for hours, half days, or full working days, just sitting there watching, observing, writing, playing backgammon, drinking coffee, drinking tea, eating, and getting lost in thought. People I knew would pop in and out on their way to classes or home. They would go away and come back, and I would still be there. I would have coffee, eat lunch or a snack and just not move from the table where I was sitting. Sometimes, if I didn’t like the table, I would move to others I did like, but that were already being used, and their inhabitants would eventually move on.

I haven’t done this for some time, sitting in the same spot for hours because of context, adaptation, or forgetfulness. By this, I mean context because I now live in Finland, and sometimes the weather doesn’t allow

one to sit still in the open air and do nothing but just be. Too cold. And I haven’t found a spot where I can sit for hours that meets all the requirements: table, chair, food, refillable coffee for hours (or at least affordable if you wish to have more than one), and a toilet. The seasons here really do shape one’s state of being, one’s state of mind and wellbeing. In the summer it is possible to work something out, but when it is summer, the last thing one wants to do is “nothing”. There is the deep need to take advantage of the season, go swimming, go to places, rush, live, go, do, and be.

Perec sat at the Tabac café in Place Saint-Sulpice in 1975 to observe and list everything he saw, anyone he saw, and anything that caught his eye. To observe and recognize. And just as he recognized the elements that moved in front of him, he recognized a place. Perec wrote and reflected upon the concepts of place and space in his writings collected in *Species of Spaces and Other Pieces*. For him, space is not self-evident, “space is a doubt”, he writes, “I constantly have to mark it, to designate it” (Perec, Georges, 1973–1974, p. 91). For Perec, space is “what arrests our gaze, what our sight stumbles over: the obstacle, bricks, an angle, a vanishing point. Space is when it makes an angle, when it stops, when we have to turn for it to start off again. There’s nothing ectoplasmic about space; it has edges, it doesn’t go off in all directions, it does all that needs to be done for railway lines to meet well short of infinity” (Perec, 1973–1974, p. 81).

Through his practices of observation, occupation, and dwelling, he cultivated a familiarity with the surroundings of the Tabac café; its spatial arrangement and location were discernible. When Perec speaks of a place, he is referring to a specific location, a construct which, through the act of designation, transforms that space into something more — it becomes a place. Places are then catalogued or sectioned by the activities and relationship between the subject and the place. Hence, there are “places of residence” and “places of work”, for example (Perec, Georges, 1973–1974, p. 57).

For Perec, our relationship to space is determinative, meaning our relationship to space is determined by the awareness and/or recognition of the actions unfolded in that space and the way one relates to the space. Experiences relate us to spaces and places; as an experience, the infraordinary can shape space into a place and/or re-signify a place.

And within this relationship to places and spaces, Perec is aware of the fleeting quality of the bonds we relate to things, spaces, places, people, and even experiences. Although these places are locations and designations, he is also aware that for him, “time is going to wear them away, to destroy them”, and what is left? “To write: to try meticulously to retain something, to cause something to survive; to wrest a few precise scraps from the void as it grows, to leave somewhere a furrow, a trace, a mark or a few signs” (Perec, Georges, 1973–1974, p. 91–92).

Maybe that is why we do things, or why we do the things we do, to hold on to something. In many cases, survival has been long detached from a mere living conditions to the survival of meanings and signifiers.

The infraordinary may find something to which is attached for its visibility to survive. But the experience is long gone. Buried with a string attached to a bell above ground, ringing and echoing in our memory as the scent we can no longer smell behind the thick glass.

→ 143

success of this physical identification depends on duration. The coughing and screaming are agony to listen to only if they don't stop. If the tapes are turned off or can be walked away from before the action builds up sufficient empathetic agony in the viewer, the works cannot act upon the senses. We could not, in this case, suspend disbelief sufficiently to internalise the plight of the artists. I once made a tape about a crying baby.⁹ It played on a looped compilation along with tapes by other artists. Each time my work came around, the gallery staff turned it down because they couldn't stand the crying. They got the point of the work and nullified it. This use of performed, embodied experience to induce a somatic response in the viewer finds an echo today in a recent video from Canada. In *Heaven* (2000), Lloyd Brandson and Jack Lauder point a fixed camera at an expanse of frozen lake separated from a dull sky by a thin, barely visible horizon line. This is Lake Winnipeg gripped by sub-zero temperatures in the depths of winter. The two artists run past the camera, naked but for some roughly made boots. They gradually disappear into the white horizon and nothing happens for an agonising 60 seconds. Just as we become convinced that they have died of exposure, the painfully vulnerable figures reappear and slowly grow back into men who have somehow survived the cold.

Image 23

→ 10

A one day project and the question on the infraordinary

The *A one day project* (here on *aodp*) was a project that ran for four years. Its intention was to question what is a project? What do we consider a project to be? What are the technical, theoretical, and practical requirements for something to be a project? Does something being a project depend on the seriousness of the endeavour? In overcoming adversity? To address these questions, on the 26th of May 2011, a friend and colleague, Mayra Morales, and I started using a website we set up for this specific purpose that followed the intention of doing one project every-single-day. We decided to make a website because, although we wanted to work together on these questions, we weren't living in the same city at the time, so it would have to be online. In the long run this ended up transforming into a digital archive of the project. The format or medium, the topic, intention, duration, or implementation were irrelevant. There was no requisite on addressing the questions other than doing a project every day and uploading it to a public site.

Both of our first projects were photographs of something we did. I positioned myself between two mattresses and called it *Takeout paninni* and Mayra superimposed a photo of her mouth on the phone on top of her actual mouth and calling it *Picture over picture over face*. And so, it began.

This project continued for four years, accompanying me through all the places I went on to live and visit. It followed me all the way to my two years completing my master's degree in Finland. During these four years, there were thousands of questions, many of them by others. Those questions would often take the form of a more inquisitive interrogation rather than a (non) articulated dialogue between two (or more) people. I wish I had noted down all the questions I was asked, but I didn't (although most of the questions did contain a "why?", "why are you doing this, why?"). Although I didn't save all those questions, after four years, after all the projects realized, the mediums used, and the people involved (by participation or observation), there was one question that never left me, "What are these? What are these things in this archive?". These questions were not directly tied to the initial inquiry that sparked the project, "what is considered a project?" Instead, they served as an invitation to do something without the necessity for defining or labelling them. These aspects became apparent to me over the course of the four years engaging with the daily doings, yet I believed I had not actively pursued them until I gained the opportunity to step back from the actions and contemplate them. A resistance to labelling the "things" done as part of the *aodp*. A resistance to constricting it into a definition of the practice. To have the possibility to just *do*, as Sol LeWitt would invite Eva Hesse, to,

"stop thinking, worrying, looking over your shoulder, wondering, doubting, fearing, hurting, hoping for some easy way out, struggling, grasping, confusing, itching, scratching, mumbling, bumbling, grumbling, humbling, stumbling, numbling, rambling, gambling, tumbling, scumbling, scrambling, hitching, hatching, bitching, moaning, groaning, honing, boning, horse-shitting, hair-splitting, nit-picking, piss-trickling, nose sticking, ass-gouging, eyeball-poking, finger-pointing, alleyway-sneaking, long waiting, small stepping, evil-eyeing, back-scratching, searching, perching, besmirching, grinding, grinding, grinding away at yourself. Stop it and just DO."

(Letter from Sol LeWitt to Eva Hesse, 14 April, 1964)

Or as Allan Kaprow writes in his article "Just Doing", where Ihe shares a series of seemingly unrelated doings such as trading dirt from his garden that he would then trade for someone else's dirt. He does this regularly for some time until one day, this doing invited an exchange of understandings,

"I asked the woman there, "Can I have a bucket of your dirt? I'll give you one in return." She stared at me. "You want a bucket of dirt? From here? Why?" She pointed to the barren clay of the roadside. She thought she hadn't heard me right. I said, "It's heavy-duty Buddhist dirt," (this referring to the dirt he got from the Zen Center at some point) and I told her the story. She was clearly impressed with the Buddhist part. "I thought you were an artist." I said to her yes and that this was what I did. "I thought you were a college professor." "Sure. I teach this sort of thing, trading dirt." "They pay you for it?" she asked me. Then she thought a moment. "But it's not se-

rious; it's what my grandson does." She gestured toward the child playing on the floor with cornhusks. "What's serious?" I said to her. So, we had a long talk about the meaning of life while I dug a hole at the side of the road. As I was about to pour the Buddhist dirt into it, she tossed some dry seeds into the bucket. I said, "What did you do that for?" "Why not? It can't hurt," she said. (The dirt trading and the stories went on for three years. It had no real be-ginning or end. The stories began to add up to a very long story, and with each retelling they changed. When I stopped being interested in the process [it coincided with my wife and I having to move after our rental property was sold], I put the last bucket of dirt back into the garden.)" (Kaprow, Allan. "Just Doing," TDR (1988–), vol. 41, no. 3, 1997, pp. 106.)

Just as some of the doings included in this article and Kaprow's chapter Just Doing from his book *Essays on the Blurring of Art and Life* can raise questions such as "What's the point?" or "Why" or "Is that art?" or "They pay you for it?" many of the projects in the *aodp* may be seen as unconventional approaches to various subjects. But doing those approaches is a dimension of doing research. At first, the approaches might be elusive, unclear, or seemingly unfounded. After some time, after thinking about the process, dwelling on the thought they are approaching, after perhaps doing it again and seeing what happens, or doing again modifying some element that composes the doing, then one is engaging with experimentation. Doing, experimenting, observing, elaborating on those things, and proposing what those things are perhaps showing or bringing forward. That is doing research.

After four years of doing the *aodp*, just about the time I was trying to figure out the topic for my MA thesis, something came to light about the project. It was something that I began to notice around 2014 (a year before beginning the MA thesis) but which I had let slip from my mind while doing. When doing a project every day, one after the other, I was confronted with the question of what to do that day. And if what I was doing was valid. In the beginning, the validity of the doing was attached to the project's premise in terms of just doing, but after a couple of years, that premise began to move from a statement to a question. From this is doing to: is this doing? And what is this doing?

Those questions dwelt on the backburner of my mind until one day (maybe at the beginning of the fourth year of the project in 2015), I realized that some days the projects were not about the projects themselves but about fulfilling a demand, "I have to do a project". Doing something for the sake of not letting the day pass without a project. I realized that the online platform had become a box in itself, something where I could fit things done rather than have those things/doings be something by themselves. The *aodp* had become an excuse, rather than the free roaming of the practice of doing. And it was then that I decided to end it.

I then decided to expand on a phenomenon that had been present for the four years of the project. Present yet not fully aware of. After realizing that I had created a box for these things happening, a place, I wondered why I made a box; wasn't there already one where I could place the things I did? In my perspective, there

wasn't. Aren't those doing *something*? How can I call those *doings*, those things *happening*?

In the case of Allan Kaprow, the relationship between just doing, his happening and life are tied down with the phenomenon of experience since Kaprow “embraced the conventions of everyday life – brushing teeth, getting on a bus, dressing in front of a mirror, telephoning a friend – each with its own formal, if provisional, integrity. Ultimately, Kaprow’s notion of ‘forms’ is that they are mental imprints projected upon the world as metaphors of our mentality, not as universal ideals. Templates for modern experience, they are situational, operational, structural, subject to feedback, and open to learning.” (Kelly, Jeff, 1992, p. XVII)

This notion of form and experience as a medium is the point of contact where the *aodp* finds its propulsion for doing. In the case of Kaprow, his doings would find a place in the art event, in the happenings. But what happens with all those things that don't belong to the event? To the uncanny, the futile, the quixotic, that which is disregarded as unremarkable, uneventful, unimportant but which, as a failure, contains a field for research.

Quixotic: foolishly impractical,
especially in the pursuit of ideals
(Merriam Webster dictionary).

→ 193

For more information about the *A one day project* please visit: www.aonedayproject.com

On the infraordinary: thought and form

My masters thesis, *On the Infraordinary* (2015), approached the infraordinary from different levels that attempt to articulate it. This articulation ranges from the elaboration of mind maps, texts and images that could shed light on the phenomenon; to the form of the thesis itself. The aim of the form of the thesis was to reflect the ephemeral quality of the infraordinary experience. That is why the medium chosen was an audio format on a vinyl disc.

Just as the infraordinary is not always present or visible, the medium of audio shares the same ephemeral quality when considering the permanence of the infraordinary. The vinyl disc provides coherence between the concept and the form. Working on the thesis in an audio format allowed me to express the concept within the concept's framework. As I spoke about the infraordinary, the words were gone after being enunciated. Just as one experiences the infraordinary. One lives through an experience which passes, which is fleeting, and life continues, only leaving its residues for us to attach our memory to.

Since there is no permanent settlement to the phenomenon of the infraordinary, I needed a medium that could represent this temporary visibility as it talks about it. Something that is about the concept and talks at the same time about it. A continual loop. The vinyl

disc has a duration of 43 minutes in total (23 minutes on side A and 21.09 on side B). This audio was made by reading texts that I wrote for my thesis and explaining all of the conceptual maps, images, and texts that I had been working on and kept on the walls of my studio to consider while speaking into a tape recorder.

These maps, images and texts helped me link the ideas to find a sense of direction to approach the question of “what is the infra ordinary?” After 43 minutes, I never replied to the question on what the phenomenon was but rather approached it by practising it. The audio work is more of a conversation with myself while trying to make sense of the experience. I was explaining at the same moment as trying to understand how this concept can possess a temporary settlement and then be gone. But being absent not in the sense of leaving, but as a lack of visibility. The infraordinary as a latent state of visibility.

The infraordinary is something present but not always visible. However, it achieves a temporary settlement that allows its visibility and recognition by the subject-practitioner. → 48



The infraordinary as it happens

Something infraordinary can become something eventful when it happens. But it cannot be scheduled to happen. → 88

(Just) Doing research

This document, *In the Middle of Things*, has a concept, sentence, or idea that keeps recurring in different sections: a field to run.

Initially, this sentence is related to the section *Space: A background* and my first approach to the concept and notion of space. As stated in that section, a field to run was the Latin etymology for the word space, which I found while browsing a thesaurus in the library. This notion, a field to run, related to the concept of space, gave me a sense of relief. The idea of space became loose, free to roam and be what needed to be in the different approaches and situations in which one engages with space.

The attitude that a field to run filters through the document greatly illustrates my approach to research practice. Doing research for me is a field to run, somewhere to roam free and follow thoughts, ideas, concepts, hints, and crumbs. The act of following is not determined by any type of practice or medium, meaning the following can be done by observation or by doing, in my case, by my artistic practice. In the doing, there is thinking; in the thinking, there is doing. As in Heidegger's thought regarding building and dwelling, "building as dwelling" goes with thinking and doing "doing as thinking" and vice versa.

Following, not as a pursuit, but as the drifting of a scent. A scent can be a thought or a something that is not something yet, but a shapeless blob that shapes itself as it is finally encountered. With this, I would like to refer to John Cage's approach to hunting mushrooms and ideas, "Ideas are to be found in the same way that you find wild mushrooms in the forest (...) instead of having them come at you clearly, they come to you as things hidden" (Cage, John, 1973, p. 90)

Researching feels very much like hunting for mushrooms, following the intention of searching, an idea which might not be complete yet, but there is the scent, so one follows the intention. One walks, moves, and keeps walking with an intention, the intention being wandering, sometimes aimlessly, other times with aim. One walks, and the mind follows. The mind stops, the idea is there, the mind focuses, the mind settles down, and the idea finds a shape. A shape through a medium, from writing to imaging, to speaking, to whatever the idea needs to exist, and then, we let go. It is there to have a life of its own, to create its own relationships with the world and everything in it. →27

Infraordinary and presence

The infraordinary is the awareness of an encounter.
→196

LIST OF IMAGES

IMAGE 1	Quote from John Cage in the book <i>Keep Walking Intently. The Ambulatory Art of the Surrealists, the Situationist International, and Fluxus</i> by Lori Waxman, p, 220.	5	IMAGE 18	Candy and chips on the floor	179
2	Line pattern	9	19	Single ice on pavement	186
3	Toothpaste	19	20	What happens when nothings happens plate	191
4	Chairs on the wall	27	21	The desk - <i>What happens when nothing happens</i> - week 2 Photo by Laureline Tilkin	213
5	Oranges on the floor	30	22	Green chair	227
6	Red balloon	34	23	<i>Conveying meaning.</i> a one day project from 30 July 2011. Elwes, Catherine (2005) <i>Video Art. A Guide Tour.</i> I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd	237
7	Light meter shadow	36	24	<i>On the infraordinary</i> vinyl disc	241
8	Corona pools	41			
9	Styrofoam houses	54			
10	Mind maps	71			
11	<i>There was no thought, but a thrive for the visibility of something yet to be named</i> exhibition. Watercolour by Patricia Borja Osorio. Photo by Laureline Tilkin	88			
12	<i>There was no thought, but a thrive for the visibility of something yet to be named</i> exhibition. Houses on fire. Photo by Laureline Tilkin	91			
13	Grass on asphalt	97			
14	Dead animals. Photos by Dominika Mroczkowska-Rusiniak	112			
15	Drawing houses on fire	117			
16	Beer bottles	141			
17	Rayulea book (Hopscotch)	171			

Unless specified in this *List of images*, all the photos in the dissertation are by Andrea Coyotzi Borja.

NAMES MENTIONED IN THE DOCUMENT

Charlotte Glez
Eduardo Gutiérrez (Lalo)
Joaquín Conde
Lauren Reid
Marcelino Barsi
Mario Martínez
Mayra Morales

→ 197

→ 198

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Beetlejuice 1988, Directed by Tim Burton. Benches and tunnel man in BW, Truan Munro.

Broken fall (geometric) Bas Jan Ader, 16mm, duration 1 min 49 sec © 1971, Mary Sue Ader-Andersen.

Broken fall (organic) Bas Jan Ader, 16mm, duration 1 min 44 sec © 1971, Mary Sue Ader-Andersen

Camdem 2009, p.86. Making Do and Getting By by Richard Wentworth, 2015.

Duntroon Castle Simon Marsden, 1948.

Fall I Los Angeles, Bas Jan Ader, 16mm, duration: 24 sec © 1970, Mary Sue Ader-Andersen.

Fall II Amsterdam, Bas Jan Ader, 16mm, duration: 19 sec © 1970, Mary Sue Ader-Andersen.

I'm too sad to tell you Bas Jan Ader, 16mm, duration: 3 min 34 sec © 1971, Mary Sue Ader-Andersen.

Is that all there is written by Jerry Leiber and Mike Stoller. Performed by Peggy Lee in 1969.

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Nightfall Bas Jan Ader, 16mm, 4 min 16 sec © 1971, Mary Sue Ader-Andersen

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→ 52

On researching the infraordinary

Content

ON RESEARCHING THE INFRAORDINARY

CONTENT	2
INTRODUCTION	3
IN THE MIDDLE OF THINGS: A DOCUMENT	6
PART I: ON METHODOLOGY	9
IN THE MIDDLE OF THINGS	14
WAYFINDING	18
RESEARCH PRACTICE ON THE INFRAORDINARY	22
(EXPERIMENTAL) WRITING & FORMAT	25
AUTOBIOGRAPHY AND OBJECT	30
WAYS OF KNOWING: AUTOETHNOGRAPHY	33
PART II: RESEARCH	36
PEREC AND THE INFRAORDINARY	37
CAUSE COMMUNE AND THE ANTHROPOLOGY OF CONTEMPORARY MAN	40
THE INFRAORDINARY AND RESEARCH FIELDS	43
LITERARY STUDIES APPROACH TO THE INFRAORDINARY	46
ARTISTIC RESEARCH APPROACH TO THE INFRAORDINARY	54
EVERYDAY AND THE INFRAORDINARY	69
BIBLIOGRAPHY	74

Introduction

“What’s really going on, what we’re experiencing, the rest, all the rest, where is it? How should we take account of, question, describe what happens every day and recurs everyday: the banal, the quotidian, the obvious, the common, the ordinary, the infra-ordinary, the background noise, the habitual?”¹

(Georges Perec, 1973)

The present study investigates the phenomenon of the infraordinary.

This intentional search towards the phenomenon begins with the question, *What is the infraordinary?* However, this is not a question that is intended to be answered, but one that is to be asked. By inquiring about the phenomenon of the infraordinary, one can delve into everyday actions and happenings that have more to say than what we have systematically learned through traditional learning methods.²

Inquiring about the infraordinary invites us to observe and reflect. Everyday customs and habits echo social mechanisms and generate an awareness of what seems to be moving/working “below”³ out of our immediate sight. Inquiring about the infraordinary means not only questioning and exploring *what* the infraordinary could be, but also asking about the phenomenon’s behaviour: how does the infraordinary happen? Why? How does it become visible? Through what mediums? How do we relate to it?

This research addresses these questions by investigating a series of concepts, ideas, experiences, methods, and art practices, with the intention of reflecting on the phenomenon of the infraordinary and its visibility.

This visibility is considered not only from an experiential point of view in everyday life, but also through artistic practices and research that focus our attention to it.

Georges Perec (1936–1982) invited us to question and observe our daily life and everything that is in it; to consider what we have forgotten, and to dwell in places and moments that we have already disregarded. He invited us to re-consider the ordinary so that we can approach what he described as the *infraordinary*.

Based on Perec’s question – “What’s really going on, what we’re experiencing, the rest, all the rest, where is it?” – quoted at the beginning of this introduction, asking what the infraordinary is actually means asking many other questions. What is in one’s everyday life? What is seen? What is one not paying attention to? What has one forgotten was there? What is made visible?

In this research I address these questions through a wayfinding⁴ practice to approach the phenomenon. In the first instance, the prefix *infra*⁵ refers to a space, to what is underneath something.

However, it also refers to the state of visibility. When something is “below”, it is beyond a visible thresh-

old. The visibility of what is “under” has the potential to be activated, brought onwards or made visible. This means that there is a temporal quality to the “infra”.

In the context of the work developed by Georges Perec and Paul Virilio, this phenomenon working “below” is referred to as the *infraordinary*. What is working “below” becomes visible through the experience of observing “symptoms”,⁶ or signs, at work in everyday dynamics. Fields in the cultural practices and social sciences, such as contemporary art, artistic research and literary studies, observe and portray the everyday, attending to the “symptoms” of that which seems to be working below the surface.

This dissertation is structured as follows. There are two main sections: *In the Middle of Things* and *On researching the infraordinary*.

On researching the infraordinary sets a framework on the infraordinary and is divided into two parts. *Part I: On methodology* identifies the research methods employed in this dissertation. It also elaborates on the methodology that shaped the practice of the three artistic components of this dissertation⁷: the exhibition *There was no thought, but a thrive for the visibility of something yet to be named* at the HAM gallery in 2018; the happening *What happens when nothing happens* in Huuto gallery, 2019; and the document *In the Middle of Things*.

Part II: Research sets up a research framework, which includes research on the infraordinary by areas of study

such as Perec's approach, literary studies, and Artistic research.

The section entitled *In the Middle of Things* is intended as a practical part of researching the infraordinary. By pursuing thoughts,⁸ concepts, and ideas related to the infraordinary this section aims to *dérive*⁹ around the phenomenon, to approach it and observe what surrounds the experience of the infraordinary.

This section also contains an approach to the exhibition entitled *There was no thought, but a thrive for the visibility of something yet to be named* at the HAM gallery in 2018; and the piece *What happens when nothing happens* in the Huuto gallery in 2019.

IN THE MIDDLE OF THINGS: A DOCUMENT

Georges Perec is most commonly described as a writer, a novelist, filmmaker, essayist, and a documentalist. This last attribute refers not only to his job as a *documentaliste, or scientific archivist*¹⁰ but also to Perec's methods of writing and observation of what happens in everyday life. In his book entitled *An Attempt at Exhausting a Place in Paris*,¹¹ Perec wrote (recorded) the things he saw and heard, the people he met, the actions that surrounded him, and the recurrence of rhythms and repetitions (such as a certain bus passing by a number of times).

This practice of documenting focused not only on present elements and things in the written form of lists and statements, but also on the relationship between mem-

ory and present experience. This can be seen, for example, in his work *A man asleep*,¹² in which Perec interweaves the actions of the main character in the book with his memories and relationship with places in the city.

In the context of the mundane and everyday use of the word, "document", as a noun, refers to "a writing conveying information". A file is something that contains data that, until it is accessed, remains undefined as the container of something we do not yet know. Document as "something that serves as evidence or proof" or as "proof, or support of something"¹³.

However, as a verb, the word "document" refers to a type of practice that has its basis in the pursuit of something.

Taking into consideration this starting point in which a document is the practice of following, or pursuing an idea or concept through the everyday, the *In the Middle of Things* section documents approaches to the infraordinary from the perspectives of artistic research and practice. After all, the research is the practice and the practice is the research. This means that there is a constant undulation with undefined boundaries between art practice and artistic research.

Therefore, throughout this research I used the word "document" when I refer to the research conducted in the *In the Middle of Things* section.

- 1 Perec, Georges. "Approaches to what?" *Cause Commune*, no. 5, Denoël-Gonthier ed. Paris, 1973.
- 2 By "traditional learning methods" I mean the classical education model where information is delivered by a single individual to a group and in which experiential learning is not considered. In the classical academic environment, priority is given to bulks of information about selected areas of study, contexts, backgrounds, and implementation of the information. In contrast, inquiring about the infraordinary, or investigating through research methods such as observation, reflection and analysis, brings forward an experience of information that engages the individual with experiences and not with the automatization of memory methods. (Lave, Jean. *Learning and everyday life*. Cambridge University Press, 2019. P. 68–71.)
- 3 This quality of the infraordinary being something "below", and located, is addressed in the document *In the Middle of Things*.
- 4 The concept of wayfinding as a method is explored in *Part I: On methodology*.
- 5 Helen Verran defined the prefix infra- when writing about "infra critique", which refers to a fluidity of a process. See the *Ways of knowing: autoethnography* section for further reference. (Verran, Helen. "Working with those who think Otherwise." *Common Knowledge*, vol. 20, issue 3, 2014, pp. 527–539.)
- 6 Virilio, Paul and Enrique Walker. "Paul Virilio on Georges Perec." *AA Files*, no. 45/46 (Winter 2001), pp. 15–18. Architectural Association School of Architecture p. 15.
- 7 These artistic components are also addressed in *In the Middle of Things*.
- 8 The word "thought" is understood here as the mental meanderings and 'concepts' as the elaboration of thoughts and ideas. There also exists the pursuit to turn those ideas and concepts into research.
- 9 This word is related to the practice of the *dérive* by Guy Debord in 1956 in *Theory of the Dérive*. The practice of the *dérive* invites oneself to be "drawn by the attraction of the terrain and encounters they find there" (Debord, Guy Situationist International Online). Here, the word is related to a practice and behaviour of the individual in the urban environment. To *dérive* is a methodology on how to engage with the city.
- 10 Bellos, David. *Georges Perec. A life in words*. The Harvill Press, London, 1995, p. 250.
- 11 Perec, Georges. *Tentative d'épuisement d'un lieu parisien*. Christian Bourgois Éd., Paris, 1982.
- 12 Perec, Georges. *Un homme qui dort*. Éditions Denoël, Paris, 1967.
- 13 Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary (10th ed.). (1999). Merriam-Webster Incorporated.

Part I: On Methodology

As a visual artist in the field of contemporary art, writing a dissertation brings plenty of challenges. The main challenge relates to the practice of opening a process, which is very much the intention when analysing and reflecting upon the methods and methodologies that are utilised for either doing art or artistic research.

Opening the process is not easy for me. It is challenging to open and have clarity on something that feels very much hidden, even for myself, most of the time; that is, to have clarity on knowing why I do the things I do.

In this dissertation I do not intend to go into detail on why I pursue what I do within my general artistic practice. However, I do intend to share methods and practices related to my exploration of the phenomenon of the infraordinary.

The process that I engage with while doing art has never focused on mastering a skill. I have an artistic practice that engages with different media (video, sound, text, drawing, and installation, among other variations). It has never been about choosing a medium and developing an expertise in any particular discipline; instead, it is about the pursuit of an idea, concept, observation and/or reflection on the different subjects that I encounter in everyday life. This process is close to an intentional wayfinding practice that follows a thought/idea. This intentional wayfinding is, in fact, research in practice. According to Juha Varto, “... research is an attempt – which satisfies the human need to know and understand – to clarify something related to the practices that the researcher encounters in his or her work or in other spheres of life.”¹⁴

These everyday encounters – as well as the process of an artistic practice that, for me, has always been linked to ludic and autobiographical inquiries – paved the way for the research practice on the infraordinary that led to the document *In the middle of things*.

My practice as a visual artist and researcher has always been intertwined with the practice of observing and reflecting on topics related to everyday life. These topics usually arise from methods¹⁵ through which I engage with daily life, such as observation, repetition, and questionings¹⁶ related to everyday phenomena; for example, *what is a gesture?* Saying the word “gesture” brings to mind a meaning, an idea, a thought. I understand and interpret the word and the context in which it is said; thus, an understanding is reached. I might

think that I know what “gesture” is, but when I consider it more, perhaps I don’t. What is really a gesture? What are the possibilities of the meaning of that word? What is that word trying to reach?

This method of observation, repetition and questioning was employed in my exhibition entitled *There was no thought, but a thrive for the visibility of something yet to be named*, at the Helsinki Art Museum, 2018 and the process of doing so is elaborated upon in the *In the Middle of Things* section.

This method also instigated my first approach to the infraordinary, which came about while researching my MA thesis, entitled *On the infraordinary*¹⁷ (2015).

In the years leading up to my MA, starting in 2011 until 2015, a central question was pursued: “*What is a project?*” or rather “*what is considered a project?*” So, what can we begin with? How can we approach this question? What defines what a project is? If I make a self-portrait, is that a project?¹⁸ If I take a video of myself walking while my knees are joined together, is that a project?¹⁹ If I document myself giving my mother a haircut, is that a project?²⁰ If I take a photo of how the position of the sun changes the shape of the shadow of an object onto the surface, is that a project?²¹ All these proposals are projects that are part of a body of work titled *A one-day project*²² (hereafter, *aodp*). *Aodp* followed a methodology that I define as “trajectory happenings”. Trajectory happenings are actions (occurrences) that follow a specific path of questioning (or research questions) and take a form within an art practice.

The main research question – *What is a project?* – was accompanied by an underlying phenomenon that is part of my artistic practice and, at the time, was acknowledged but waiting to be named.

It was in 2015, when writing my MA thesis and deciding to end the *aodp*, that my search for that which was recognised but not named yet became present and needed. It was in this search, and re-search, that I found the word for this phenomenon: infraordinary. This was also the moment at which the walking²³ became intentional, meaning that I began a trajectory towards the question, *What is the infraordinary?*

Although this question only became apparent while I was working on my MA, it was clear to me that the phenomenon of the infraordinary had been present in my everyday life years before I could name it.²⁴

After finding the word *infraordinary*, the artistic practice took over the research of the phenomenon and shaped the output into a vinyl disc. Throughout the audio play, one can listen to me talking about a series of ideas and approaches that I found at the time around the phenomenon of the infraordinary. There were a few concepts that I identified as being part of the infraordinary, such as the notion of “event” (in relation to the *aodp*) and how this concept relates to the legitimisation of artworks²⁵. This work did not offer a definition of the infraordinary, but rather an invitation to the question of *What is the infraordinary?* and what might be within the act of inquiring.

From then on, it was clear that the phenomenon of the infraordinary was (and still is) something that I want to continue exploring through my artistic and research practice. And that is how the section *In the Middle of Things* came to be, through the practice of repeatedly asking, *What is the infraordinary?*; observing, reflecting and analysing everyday phenomena, and engaging with experimental writing in order to try and make that question as present as possible.

- 14 Varto, Juha. Artistic Research. *What is it? Who does it? Why?* Aalto University Publication Series, p. 21, 2018.
- 15 Balkema, Annette W. and Henk Slager, eds. *Artistic research*. Vol. 18. Rodopi, 2004.
- 16 Hannula, Mika, Juha Suoranta, and Tere Vadén. “Artistic research methodology.” *Narrative, Power and the Public*. Peter Lang, 2014.
- 17 The abstract of the thesis can be found here: <https://aaltodoc.aalto.fi/handle/123456789/16274>
- 18 <https://aonedayproject.com/> April 25, 2015 To see these projects, please refer to the link. Select the month and scroll to the day.
- 19 Ibid, April 23, 2014.
- 20 Ibid, May 6, 2012.
- 21 Ibid, December 6, 2011.
- 22 A project started in collaboration with artist and researcher Mayra Morales.
- 23 An intentional “walking” as a reference for a purposeful search described by Lori Waxman throughout her book *Keep waking intently. The ambulatory art of the Surrealists, the Situationists International, and Fluxus*.
- 24 This is approached in the *In the Middle of Things* document while I write about previous artistic practice activities and everyday life encounters.
- 25 For more on the *aodp* and these ideas, please refer to *In the middle of things* section of *A one day project*.

In the Middle of Things

Thinking, writing, and engaging with the phenomenon of the infraordinary offers the possibility to find new ways to approach concepts, ideas, objects, experiences, and actions.

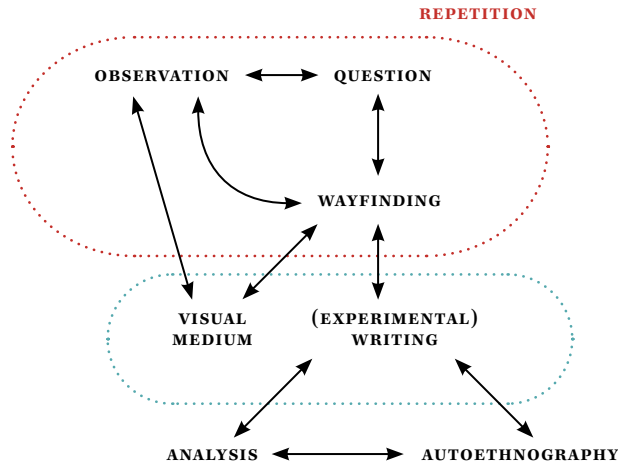
The research conducted *In the Middle of Things* refers to the experience of thinking and writing about the infraordinary. When investigating a phenomenon that is intrinsically woven into the fabric of everyday life, and whose encounter cannot be performed at will, it is easy to wander around, not knowing where the phenomenon begins or when it ends. Whenever the search and re-search for the infraordinary begins, one seems to be already standing in the middle of something; something that one calls a beginning, but that is not the start. In that sense, it is challenging to pinpoint in which sphere of our lives the infraordinary belongs. Do we only find it in the mundane activities of our everyday life? Is it subjected to the ordinary actions, repetitions, and routines that we engage in day by day? The infraordinary is not subjected to any particular place or action; its occurrence is part of our relationship with the world, and its visibility at times is determined by our actions. These actions are the conscious awareness to this phenomenon, or what we activate in the everyday in any determined practice. Taking a walk does not guarantee an encounter with the phenomenon, but it certainly invites the possibility of one.²⁶

The document *In the Middle of Things* offers ways to think about the infraordinary, to meander through what the phenomenon could mean, could be, or could approach. It offers the possibility of an engagement with the phenomenon.

Within the research of the infraordinary there is a consideration of everyday life, but the concept of the everyday is not the main focus. The thought of everyday life provides a possibility to place the focus on what surrounds us and it is not something defined but lived. This research does not aim to define what the infraordinary is, but to question it, and, by the act of questioning, a path, an unmapped trajectory opens up.

As mentioned before, this questioning is part of the methodology of both my artistic and research practice. Along with the process of inquiring, other methods, tools, and methodologies are used to shape the trajectory of the questioning: observation and repetition, but also (experimental) writing, wayfinding, and autoethnography.

These methods interact with, work, and influence each other (see Figure 1 on the following page).



There is no specific order or direction to how the methods of observation, repetition, (experimental) writing, wayfinding, and autoethnography interact, or from where the process begins. I might begin a process with a question, or perhaps with writing or the movement of wayfinding. Once the process has begun, these methods interact with each other without any pre-determined methodology or path. The research questions or topic shape the path depending on the project's needs. The process sometimes leans towards something text-based, which requires more writing. On other occasions, the writing brings out questions that were not present before and then move the trajectory of the process back to the question, or a wayfinding practice. The idea leads and I follow.

Questioning the infraordinary creates a possibility to encounter it; to observe it and to use writing as a tool for thinking and approaching the phenomenon. This approach is made through the process of wayfinding, inquiring and searching without a brick layered trajectory. Rather, it is a trajectory towards an unknown; the unknown as a mode of research. Chasing the futility of asking a question over and over again as a method for an encounter with the research topic through a wayfinding practice.

26 Deuze, Anna. "Origins of the Fluxus Score." *Performance Research*, vol. 7 no. 3, 2002, pp. 78–94. DOI: 10.1080/13528165.2002.10871876

Wayfinding

Wayfinding often resembles the feeling of being lost. We walk, turn, think and doubt. But the main thing, which is often overlooked, is that there is movement. Even waiting is a movement.

In his article *Complementarity of Cognitive and Experiential Ways of knowing the Ocean in Marshallese Navigation*,²⁷ Joseph Genz researched cognitive approaches to wayfinding based on the egocentric sensing of environmental phenomena.²⁸ Genz described the way in which Marshallese²⁹ sea navigators are guided by an embodied knowledge of the relationship between currents and sea waves and how these impact the vessel in which they travel from island to island.

Marshallese sea navigators guide their vessels from island to island using methods and tools other than those employed in Western-style navigation.³⁰ “Marshallese navigators set a course, orient themselves, and track their progress primarily according to their visual, auditory, kinaesthetic, and vestibular knowledge of the wave field and its transformations.”³¹ The navigation methods employed by the Marshallese navigators are not learned by knowing from reading nautical charts or maps, but through practical experience of the ocean’s wave motion, which guides them by evaluating “their experience in light of their background knowledge of wave action and direction.”³² This learning and application of Marshallese navigation methods point to what Genz referred to as “experiential ways of know-

ing”, which rest on the embodiment of the experience rather than the conceptualisation of the information.

These “experiential ways of knowing” resemble Perec’s methods, which he applied when writing. In his *Statement of Intent*³³ Perec wrote about what he called his “modes of questioning”: “As I see it, I should rather compare myself to a farmer with many fields: in one field he grows beets, in another wheat, in a third alfalfa, and so on. In like manner, the books I have written belong to four different fields, four different modes of questioning, which, in the last analysis, perhaps address the same problem, but approach it from different perspectives, each of which corresponds, for me, to a specific kind of literary work.”³⁴ Perec wrote that these fields (or modes of questioning) are sociological, related to the ordinary and the everyday; the autobiographical; the ludic, related to “constraints, exploits and “exercises””³⁵ associated with the Oulipo group;³⁶ and the novelistic mode, related to his writing practice in his books.

Perec’s autobiographical and ludic methods of cultivation ignite a movement directed by a playful engagement with memory and the desire to lean into the questioning of everyday life. Like the Marshallese navigators, Perec engaged with a wayfinding practice throughout his process, methods, and writing outcomes.

Instead of having physical waves crash into his vessel, it was memories and experiences in places that came crashing into his daily life. Although his work and ties with the Oulipo group distance him from a wayfinding practice (as the Oulipean practice sets rules in the form of a game rather than play, moving away from a wayfinding quality), Perec's ludic inquiries keep his practice tied to a field of search, pursuit, and encounter.

The research methodology employed in the *In the Middle of Things* section moves along in a wayfinding manner. Researching the infraordinary is a wayfinding practice, a movement between research and art practice. My roles between researcher and artist are not pinned; they are movable. The balance between these two practices does not weigh on opposite sides, but rather a whole body whose centre of gravity moves depending on the research/practice subject, just as the relationship between verbalisation and embodiment does. In the case of this research work and art practice, the centre of gravity is the infraordinary and the body of work moves towards that direction in both sections of this research.

Both sections of this research aim to investigate the infraordinary. They create a place where verbalisation (research) and embodiment (practice) do not collide but are part of the same body. They are not opposed by being “one allegedly explicit, the other tacit”;³⁷ rather, both are “animated, carried forth on the breath of life” as Tim Ingold pointed out in *Imagining for Real. Essays on Creation, Attention and Correspondence*.³⁸

The fabric of the document *In the Middle of Things* is the infraordinary, and the reader is invited to follow its threads, the thoughts, ideas, and experiences within the pages. Just as the Marshallese navigators observe the waves crashing against the canoes, reading what the waves and the movement of the vessel are trying to say, where to go, and what to follow, in this research practice the reader is invited to observe and follow the thoughts offered.

27 Genz, Joseph. “Complementarity of Cognitive and Experiential Ways of knowing the Ocean in Marshallese Navigation.” *Ethos*, vol. 42, 2014, pp. 332–351.

28 Ibid., p. 332.

29 Referring to the inhabitants of Marshall Islands located in the Central Pacific Ocean.

30 Usual Western tools for navigation include radar, sonars, and compasses. Marshallese navigation uses “stick charts” made of pandanus aerial roots. These stick charts represent models of the ocean that are used to estimate distance and wave patterns (Genz).

31 Ibid., p. 339.

32 Ibid., p. 337.

33 Perec, Georges. Thoughts of sorts, trans. David Bellos. *Verba Mundi*. David R. Godine Publisher, 2011, pp. 3–4.

34 Ibid.

35 Ibid.

36 More on the Oulipo group in the *Literary studies approach to the infraordinary* section.

37 Ingold, Tim. *Imagining for Real Essays on Creation, Attention and Correspondence*. Routledge, New York, 2022, p. 242.

38 Ibid.

Research practice on the infraordinary

My research on the infraordinary did not start when I began my formal studies as a doctoral student at Aalto University. Nor did it start in my first approach to the phenomenon when writing my MA thesis, nor while working on the *aodp*. There is not always awareness of the precise moment when research on a topic begins. Conducting research is a continuous flow of experience and the content of the practice of research begins to take shape when the subject (the practitioner, artist, or researcher in the case of artistic research) reflects upon the experience and works on approaches to convey their observations through a medium.

As Ingold wrote, “In its literal sense, research is a second search, an act of searching again.”³⁹ After my first approach to the infraordinary through the reflection in *A one day project*, the question on the phenomenon of the infraordinary lingered.

The question did not haunt me or chase me, but rather accompanied me in the quotidian as an interrogation of what was observed, experienced, and thought in relation to many aspects of my research and artistic practice.

The document *In the Middle of Things* conducts the research on the infraordinary from a point of *knowing-in-being*,⁴⁰ which means it is the agent that partici-

pates in a relationship in constant oscillation between experience and practice, observation and reflection, and the convergence of these for the visibility of the object/subject of research.

The artistic practice in relation to the investigations in this research is found in the three artistic components.

Each component approaches a feature of the phenomenon of the infraordinary.

Whereas the exhibition *There was no thought, but a thrive for the visibility of something yet to be named* (HAM Gallery, Helsinki, 2018) dwells on the question of what a gesture is, the second artistic component is the happening *What happens when nothing happens* (Huuto Gallery, Helsinki, 2019).⁴¹ This piece revolved around the proposition of *what happens when nothing happens*,⁴² which Paul Virilio mentioned in his interview with Enrique Walker in 2001 when talking about the infraordinary.

The third artistic component is the *In the Middle of Things* document, which consists of the re-search practice of wayfinding towards the infraordinary, with the aim of bringing the phenomenon forward and visible and making it present by the act of naming it.

It is within this section that the method of observation plays an important role. In this section, observation⁴³ acts not only as a mediator of the experience on the practice, but as experience itself. On one side, observation is part of the practice of the approach to the infraordinary, which means that observation acts as a tool, as a device for experience. On the other side, observation can also perform as a distancing agent from the experience.

In the case of the research practice on the infraordinary, this distance is related to the practice of writing, and it was not a distance where the subject becomes detached from experience itself, but one where the subject engages with another mode of experience.

39 Ingold, Tim. "Art, Science and the Meaning of Research". *Research in Arts and Education*, vol. 2018, no. 3, pp. 3.

40 Ibid.

41 This is elaborated in the *In the Middle of Things* document.

42 Virilio, Paul and Enrique Walker. "Paul Virilio on Georges Perec". AA Files, No. 45/46, 2001, p. 15.

43 Chang, Heewon. *Autoethnography as method*. Vol. 1. Routledge, 2016, p. 90.

(Experimental) writing & format

Art practice and research are linked by theories and concepts that find expression in various mediums. Conducting research offers the possibility to engage in-depth with different phenomena through various methodologies that can be conveyed through the performativity⁴⁴ of the writing; that is, through the embodiment of the ideas, thoughts, observation, and analysis of the experience.

A difference between artistic research and art practice might be found in the use of language. Language in art is never exclusively bound to a body of words. The language that art deploys with a particular or general aim to communicate, share, express, or be, finds a form in the medium chosen by the artist. This medium functions as a mediator of the idea (topic, subject, or concept).

In the field of research and in the field of artistic research in particular, this body of words aims to build a temporal bridge of ideas over a specific topic or research question. In the case of the document *In the Middle of Things*, the aim is to set a stepping stone, a piece that is both part of the bridge of communication of the phenomenon of the infraordinary, and the enactment of the phenomenon.

The research practice on the infraordinary found in *In the Middle of Things* follows the autobiographical and ludic modes of Perec's *modes of questioning*.⁴⁵ *In the*

middle of things moves away from Perec's field of focus on the sociological and novelistic mode and engages with the artistic research and practice dimensions. All of these methods intersect in approaching the phenomenon of the infraordinary and forming (into) the written document.

When writing, the distance provided by reflection on the phenomenon of the infraordinary results in the written elaboration of the practice of observation.

The writing practice of concepts, ideas, experience, and research become a tracing of the concept of the infraordinary, and of Georges Perec, along with a study of everyday life.

For the writing practice of *In the Middle of Things*, it was necessary to let the research topic shape the writing mode. How and from where does one begin to write about a phenomenon whose temporal demarcation is ephemeral? When writing, it was important to have the possibility to follow thoughts and concepts without the constriction of defining at every turn what was reflected upon. It was also important to have a moveable structure that would allow both the writer and the reader to engage with the concepts, thoughts, experiences, and ideas surrounding the wayfinding act of approaching the infraordinary.

That is how the work of Julio Cortázar came to play an essential role in the elaboration and structuring of *In the Middle of Things*.

In 1977, Cortázar was interviewed for the RTVE⁴⁶ (Spanish Radio and Television Corporation) in relation to his novel *Hopscotch*.⁴⁷ One of the main questions within this interview was whether he considered that his novel fell into the category of an “anti-novel” due to the nature of the format he had chosen. The format of *Hopscotch*, which was published in 1963, offers the reader a sense of choice of how to engage with the reading; there is a hyper-narrative structure that can be followed. One can read the novel in sequential order (from Chapter 1 to Chapter 155) or follow a suggested order by Julio Cortázar from the “table of instructions” page. There, the author writes, “In its own way, this book consists of many books, but two books above all.”⁴⁸ *In the Middle of Things* references the work of Julio Cortázar. The reason for this is not only the close autoethnographic character that the document holds, but the relevance and coherence between format and topic of research. The phenomenon of the infraordinary has no anchored “nature”; there is no defined behaviour to which the infraordinary is tied to. This research took on the same form, without a defined behaviour to which the reader should strive while engaging with it. The form of the document follows the latency of the phenomenon, the practice of research, and the autobiographical references. The trajectory and methodology needed for my research followed the intention of presenting a choice and the possibility of a chance encounter with the text and ideas presented. Both of these elements – choice and chance – are part of the process of writing, as well as the reading experience.

When Cortázar replied to the question of whether *Hopscotch* is an anti-novel, he elaborated on an alternative definition of “counter-novel”, stating, “(counter-novel) is a bit closer to the truth because it was an attempt to eliminate, of seeing in a different way, the contact between the novel and its reader.”⁴⁹

In a sense, the present research can be taken as “counter-research”, or, rather, as alternate research. This not only because it offers another mode of engagement to artistic research, but because it alternates between artistic practice and research methodologies, autoethnography tools, autobiography elements, and futile everyday observations.

- 44 As Barbara Bolt noted on Judith Butler’s work on performativity, performativity “must be understood as the iterative and citational practice that brings into being that which it names” (Bolt, Barbara. “Artistic Research: A Performative Paradigm?” *Parse Journal*, issue 3, pp. 129–142). Butler defined this iteration regarding performativity as “not a singular ‘act’, for it is always a reiteration of a norm or set of norms, and to the extent that it acquires an act-like status in the present, it conceals or dissimulates the conventions of which it is a repetition” (Butler, Judith. *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of ‘Sex’*. New York, 1993, p. 12). When researching a phenomenon in everyday life, it is relevant to take these definitions into consideration since these things that are “happening”, these practices, become something by happening. These happenings are not singularities, which means they are not events. Rather, these happenings find visibility by the iteration of everydayness. These “happenings” are not the representation of a concept, nor the presentation of an idea; what is seen or visualized is the thing itself, the phenomena itself.
- 45 Previously written in the *Wayfinding* section.
- 46 Radiotelevisión Española.
- 47 Original title: *Rayuela*.
- 48 Cortázar, Julio. *Hopscotch*. Table of instructions, 1966.
- 49 Interview in “A fondo” at RTVE (Spanish Radio and Television network) in 1977 with Joaquín Soler. Translated from Spanish to English by Andrea Coyotzi Borja. See the *Rayuela* by Julio Cortázar: A counter-novel section in *In the Middle of Things*.

Autobiography and object

When engaging with research related to one's own experience of everyday life, a conversation arises between the object and the subject of study. Who is the one that speaks, and from where?

There are areas of study in which the object of research seems to be alienated from the subject's experience. In her book *Stylish Academic Writing*,⁵⁰ Helen Sword wrote about the use of pronouns in academic writing. It is so often the impression that scientific research remains objective, using a pronoun in the third person, while humanities tend to overuse the first-person pronoun. However, Sword's research elaborates on how this is in fact the opposite, with the *I* voice being more present in the sciences than in the humanities.⁵¹

When engaging with artistic research and, even more so, with topics of investigation that trifle with everyday life, this distance between object and subject become intertwined, not mixed beyond recognition but in a relationship of affectedness between both parts. One part affects the other and modifies itself at the same time. This dynamic of the relationship between the object and the subject through an active observation can be seen in the work of Georges Perec, Roland Barthes,⁵² Sophie Calle,⁵³ Tracey Emin,⁵⁴ Richard Wentworth, and Bas Jan Ader,⁵⁵ among many others in the art and literary world.

The role of the subject is to dwell in the experience of everyday life, everyday life being the object of observation and research, and to come back from the experience and formulate it, mediate it, through a practice. In the case of Georges Perec, it was through his literary work and films; for Sophie Calle and Tracey Emin it was through their approaches to elements of observation, witnessing and evidence in everyday life; and for Richard Wentworth it was through photography and his pedagogical approach. Bas Jan Ader would utilise different mediums such as text, photography, performance, and video that play with the *blurry boundaries* (as Kaprow would call it) between art and life.

In the research practice of the infraordinary, the autobiographical dimension is constantly present as it is the experience in everyday life that conveys or brings forward the possible sightings and formulations of what the infraordinary can be, how it can happen, and when it can happen.

The autobiographical dimension is brought into the research practice, not as a strategy that shelters the research from questioning, but as a proposed ground for encounter and dialogue with the reader. The infraordinary is a phenomenon that dwells in experiences from everyday life; therefore, researching the infraordinary means researching experience: *knowing-in-being*.⁵⁶

- 50 Sword, Helen. *Stylish Academic Writing*. Harvard University Press, 2012.
- 51 *Ibid.*, pp. 39–43.
- 52 For example, in his work *Mythologies* from 1957, Barthes analysed contemporary French culture. Through different everyday life areas and elements (from detergents, to milk, cars, literature and striptease, to critical approaches on language, politics and concept, among many others), Barthes observed everyday life and examined different systems that create and hold the construction and unfolding of the myths.
- 53 *Suite Venitienne*, 1979.
- 54 *My Bed*, 1998.
- 55 Bas Jan Ader's artistic practice works with an embodied portrait of gestures and intentions, which are often linked to "simple" everyday actions that unfold in unexpected outcomes. For example, his fall series can be described simply as "the artist falls in different ways in different situations and circumstances". However, this series of work points to the subtleties of gesture, meaning. For more on *Bas Jan Ader*, please refer to the Bas Jan Ader section in *In the Middle of Things*.
- 56 Ingold, Tim. 'Art, Science and the Meaning of Research'. *Research in Arts and Education*, vol. 2018, no. 3, p. 7.

Ways of knowing: autoethnography

In her article "Working with Those Who Think Otherwise,"⁵⁷ Helen Verran elaborated on the use of the prefix "infra": "Infra as I use it implies working a concept when and where meanings are fluid and still in process of clotting into a routine. Meta and infra as used here are not complementary opposites; they are incommensurable."⁵⁸ This notion or idea of the *infra* as something that is *still in process of clotting into a routine* relates to the process in which the everyday is configured, which opens the chance of an infraordinary encounter.

Everyday life routines and repetitions from which meanings are built and learned leak forward in time, shift away from their meaning, and become part of our personal knowledge.

Something that refers explicitly to an object or a thing can take on another meaning by the act of repetition. For example, a rose is a type of flower, but in Gertrude Stein's 1913 work "Sacred Emily", a rose becomes a poem by the act of repetition:⁵⁹

"a rose is a rose is a rose"

Helen Verran's *infra* critique "aims at the kind of thought that grows out of a cultivated, embodied sensibility, one that relishes disconcertment. Such thought is

peculiar to embodied, embedded, particular here-and-nows;⁶⁰ “infra critique feels clunky, challenging, and unstable.”⁶¹

This set of qualitative characteristics (“clunky, challenging, and unstable”) allows the researcher to follow or pursue an experiential knowledge practice. Verran’s thoughts on infra critique offer insight into the practice of researching the infraordinary within an oscillating movement among social sciences. This movement, when researching the infraordinary, is not restricted to the methodology applied by natural and social sciences;⁶² it also applies to the field of artistic research, where observations of the phenomenon can be reflected on and applied to artistic practices.

To follow and convey experiential knowledge, I engaged with Autoethnographic methods and practice.⁶³ Autoethnography, both as a process and a product, allows the researcher to account for different ways of knowing and not to disregard knowledge that comes from experience due to the process of legitimisation of knowledge in the social sciences.⁶⁴ Autoethnography is “one of the approaches that acknowledges and accommodates subjectivity, emotionality, and the researcher’s influence on research, rather than hiding from these matters or assuming they don’t exist.”⁶⁵

Although this research does not follow a strict path and form of autoethnographic research, it does share a common ground with the area in the sense that knowledge and information are obtained from the analysis of a personal artistic practice and research.

Autoethnography offers the possibility to “produce aesthetic and evocative thick descriptions of personal and interpersonal experience.”⁶⁶ This research aims to offer the possibility to engage on a personal level with the experience of thinking and reflecting on the phenomenon of the infraordinary.

57 Verran, Helen, 2014.

58 *Ibid.*, p. 527.

59 As Stein wrote: “When I said, A rose is a rose is a rose is a rose. And then later made that into a ring I made poetry and what did I do I caressed completely caressed and addressed a noun” (Stein, Gertrude, *Lecture in America*, “Poetry and Grammar”, Random House, New York, 1935, p. 231). In relation to language, Stein remarked, “a noun is a name of anything by definition that is what it is and a name of anything is not interesting because once you know its name the enjoyment of naming it is over and therefore in writing prose names that is nouns are completely uninteresting.”

60 *Ibid.*, p. 536.

61 *Ibid.*, p. 530.

62 In natural sciences, this means the methods of observation and experimentation for the description, prediction and understanding of natural phenomena.

63 Chang, Heewon. *Autoethnography as method*. Vol. 1. Routledge, 2016.

64 As defined by Carolyn Ellis, Tony E. Adams and Arthur P. Bochner in *Autoethnography: An Overview*: “Autoethnography is an approach to research and writing that seeks to describe and systematically analyze personal experience in order to understand cultural experience. This approach challenges canonical ways of doing research and representing others and treats research as a political, socially-just and socially-conscious act. A researcher uses tenets of autobiography and ethnography to do and write autoethnography. Thus, as a method, autoethnography is both process and product.”

65 Ellis, Carolyn, et al. “Autoethnography: An Overview.” *Historical Social Research/ Historische Sozialforschung*, vol. 36, no. 4, p. 138, 2011, pp. 273–290. JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23032294>. Accessed 26 Apr. 2023 p. 274.

66 *Ibid.*

Part II: Research

As noted in Part I, researching the infraordinary feels like being in the middle of things at all times. There are hints of where I began my research on the infraordinary, but nothing is sure. All I know is that I am within this topic and that other people have been too.

Part II is an overview of research on the infraordinary, including Perec's elaborations on the phenomenon and its relationship with his writing practice; the approach of literary studies to the practice of Perec, and hence, the infraordinary; and the approach by artistic research to everyday life practices and texts on the infraordinary that are relevant for my research on the phenomenon.

Perec and the infraordinary

In 1973, Georges Perec published his text *Approaches to what?* in the fifth issue of the open tribune *Cause Commune*. In this text, Perec invites the reader to remember and question what has been labelled as ordinary and unremarkable in each person's everyday life; he invites us to *question the habitual*.⁶⁷

The question *Approaches to what?* expands the awareness of those things in everyday life that we have left forgotten, unseen and unquestioned. By inquiring about what seems unremarkable, one can find a new perspective about what our everyday life is built on. This forgetfulness is not intentional but is rather part of the dynamics of what builds our everyday, the strata of our day-to-day, why we do the things we do.

Unlike in *Approaches to what?* where Perec wrote more specifically about the infraordinary as a phenomenon that is latent through everyday life, his literary work does not elaborate or analyse the infraordinary but instead practices a wayfinding into the infraordinary, a look upon the notion of "background noise".⁶⁸

This can be seen in works such as *Things: A story of the Sixties*⁶⁹ (1968), *A man asleep*⁷⁰ (1967), *Species of Spaces and other pieces*⁷¹ (1974), *Life: A User's Manual*⁷² (1978), and *An Attempt at Exhausting a Place in Paris* (1982).

In *A man asleep*, Perec writes from the perspective of an omnipresent voice. This voice notices the moods,

thoughts, physical surroundings, and evidence of time that come to pass to the main character. This voice speaks and the reader – or viewer, in the case of the moving image version of this work – listens. This voice does not speak about anything in particular.

In the book version of the work, when time passes, the written voice leaves a trail of words that describe the things, objects, places, sounds, feelings, actions, and life unfolding.

The movie version replaces the words with images, compositions, and sounds. Where there was a page full of words, now there is an image with the representations of silence. In reality, there is no silence in the movie; there is always a sound, whether it is water, metal, breathing, a truck, or something else. When “nothing happens”, something is happening. When a man gets a bucket of water and looks out from the windows on his way from the sink to the hallway at min 2:33, we can hear the sound of church bells.

Nothing extraordinary happens in that scene, nothing meaningful; instead, we are presented with the intuitive gesture of the man looking out the window the moment the bells are heard.

Have the bells communicated the time to the man? Perhaps the man is thinking of going to church, perhaps he thinks he is late; perhaps it has nothing to do with the sound, and something passed the window, something that the viewer cannot see. Perhaps he just turned his head left because he was curious about

the view, a view he probably sees every day, but who doesn't turn their head when they pass a window? While “nothing” happens in *A man asleep*, a lot happens. All the background noise is there, not seen but sensed. Perhaps, as Virilio mentioned, what we sense is dwelling in “what we do when we do nothing, what we hear when we hear nothing, what happens when nothing happens.”⁷³

Although the literary work and film version of *A man asleep* offer different temporal experiences due to their mediums, each version questions the habitual through the main character's everyday life. In the book, we are offered the opportunity to dwell, in a slow-paced manner, on the protagonist's thoughts through words. In the film version, our senses are engaged through images and sound that represent a lived experience of everydayness.

67 Perec, Georges. 1973.

68 Virilio, Paul and Enrique Walker. 2001. p. 15.

69 Perec, Georges. *Les Choses*. Éditions Julliard, Paris, 1965.

70 This literary work was later adapted into the film *Un homme qui dort* (1974). The screenplay was written by George Perec and the film was directed by Bernard Queysanne. Although Perec is better known for his literary work, he also wrote and directed his film *Les lieux d'une fugue* in 1978, and collaborated on screenplays such as *Ahô... au coeur du monde primitif*, directed by Daniel Bertolino and François Floquet, 1975. He also adapted the novel *A Hell of a Woman* by Jim Thompson into the film *Série noire*, 1979, directed by Alain Corneau.

71 Perec, Georges. *Espèces d'espaces*. Éditions Galilée, Paris, 1974.

72 Perec, Georges. *La Vie mode d'emploi*. Hachette Littératures, Paris, 1978.

73 Virilio, Paul and Enrique Walker. 2001. p. 15.

Cause commune and the anthropology of contemporary man

Cause Commune was a publication co-created by Jean Duvignaud, Georges Perec, and Paul Virilio in 1972. The aim of this *tribune ouverte*⁷⁴ (open tribune⁷⁵) was to investigate and open up discussions around observations and new modes of critique about the “anthropology of the contemporary man”⁷⁶

“*Cause commune* attempted to decipher events. But instead of looking at the political scene, we looked at facts – facts of various kinds. We looked at films, at works of art, at consumer goods. In other words, we looked at the world through its new symptoms.”⁷⁷

By drawing on methodological tools from anthropology, like the observation of the ‘field’, Perec explored his everyday, suggesting that “what’s needed perhaps is *finally* to found our own anthropology, one that will speak about us”.⁷⁸ How is that anthropology founded? How do we know what is speaking to us? And through what medium(s) are these findings being shared?

It is relevant here that Perec’s anthropological focus and practice differs depending on where his methods of observation are performed. On one hand, Perec observed everyday life, analysed it, and conveyed an experience through his writing practice. On the other hand, he used autoethnography, a form of qualitative re-

search, as a starting point for these observations; that is, Perec’s own personal anthropology, one that uses his own experiences.

An example of Perec’s autoethnographical approach is his unfinished work *Lieux*,⁷⁹ in which he selected 12 places in Paris that held personal relevance for him, and which he would approach twice. The first visit was made as an observer, making lists of everything he would see in situ. The second time, which Perec was unable to complete before his death, was supposed to be done from memory, writing from a different place than the one he was writing about.⁸⁰ This methodology held these two anthropological approaches. The first is an in-situ observation, with Perec being the one in the ‘field’ observing and recording what he saw. The second approach is more personal, or inward, in that the selection of these 12 places was mediated by their personal significance. This latter method, based on the personal significance of places for Perec, is combined with the practice of writing from memory, his memory, of the location after having visited it.

In Georges Perec’s oeuvre, the visibility of what might be speaking to us finds different forms in his literary work and films. Perec focused on what is experienced in everyday life, following a methodology of observation that translates through literary devices,⁸¹ not only in his written work but also when translating a book to film, as is the case with *A man asleep*.

Perec's work allows the reader to experience an everydayness that may have been forgotten or has dissolved into the functionalism of objects.

74 *Cause commune*, May 1972, Issue 1, back cover.

75 The Cause Commune is often defined as a "magazine". However, these issues were defined as an open tribune due to the nature of the publication. Naming a publication as a tribune refers to voicing a matter in question; not storing words but putting them into action. The word "magazine" refers to a place of storage and gathering of items (in the case of a publication, the storage or gathering of articles, opinions, and ideas). More specifically to the written word, a magazine is a periodical journal containing miscellaneous writings. Meanwhile, a "tribune" refers to a different intention within the content of the publication. A tribune is defined as a "platform from which an assembly is addressed" and as "an unofficial defender of the rights of the individual" (see "Tribune", *Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary*). For more on Cause Commune, please refer to the *Cause Commune* section in *In the Middle of Things*.

76 *Cause Commune* (1972).

77 Virilio, Paul and Enrique Walker, 2001, p. 15.

78 Perec, Georges, 1973.

79 This project was not completed as intended but it had an outcome in the book *Tentative d'épuisement d'un lieu parisien* (1982).

80 "I have selected twelve places in Paris – streets, squares, and crossroads connected to important events or moments in my existence. Each month, I describe two of these places: on in situ (in a café or in the street itself), relating "what I can see" in the most neutral manner possible, listing the shops, architectural details, microevents (a fire engine going by, a lady tying up her dog before going into the charcuterie, a removal in progress, posters, people, etc.); the second I write anywhere (at home, in a café, in the office), describing the place from memory, evoking the memories that are connected to it, the people I knew there, and so on. Each text (which may come down to just a few lines or extend over five or six pages or more), once completed, is put away in an envelope that I seal with wax seal. After one year I will have described twelve places twice over, once in memory mode, once in situ in real descriptive mode. I shall begin over again in the same manner each year for twelve years." Perec, Georges. *Je suis né*, 1990, p. 58.

81 These devices will be looked at in the *Literary studies approach to the infraordinary* section.

The infraordinary and research fields

The concept of the infraordinary has been studied in a variety of research fields, such as literary and cultural studies, architectural and urban studies, and artistic research. All of these fields offer a perspective of practice and analysis to the work of George Perec and the infraordinary. However, these fields remain at a distance from an elaboration on the phenomenon itself and instead propose how the phenomenon is presented, or applied, in these specific areas.

For example, literary studies tackle the work of Perec, and the infraordinary, by analysing the literary devices in which everyday life is looked at, conveyed, and experienced from a linguistic point of view. This offers a glimpse into the ideas that the infraordinary points towards and brings forward possible modes of engagement and re-presentation of everyday life and the infraordinary via language.

Nevertheless, the phenomenon itself is not analysed through literary devices, nor is a perspective offered on how the phenomenon relates to everyday life on an experiential level.

In the fields of architecture⁸² and urban planning,⁸³ Perec's concepts are used as a starting point for a deeper analysis on the functionalism of structures and spaces. For example, in his doctoral thesis *Architectural*

Probes of the Infraordinary. Social Coexistence through Everyday Spaces,⁸⁴ Espen Lunde Nielsen “investigates the infraordinary as a condition and catalyst for social coexistence and interaction”⁸⁵. This approach of the infraordinary is worked from a sociological and architectural point of view in which the phenomenon unfolds as a lens on the everyday within an urban framework. This means that it is focused on the visibility and functionality of the phenomenon within the city and what its latency says about the phenomenon itself.

Nielsen’s work also shows how the infraordinary can be used as a research tool for behaviour and urban environments. Also, although it would seem that the infraordinary is being used on behalf of researching another topic, using the infraordinary as a tool is also research on the phenomenon itself. Within the field of artistic research and art practices, the methodologies with which the infraordinary is approached are in constant process of reconfiguration. When researching the infraordinary, the practice directs the focus of research, and the research then directs the possible angle of practice.

This dissertation employs a wayfinding methodology, similar to Perec’s method of observing and writing, which follows a structure influenced by an autoethnographic practice.

- 82 See, for example, Espen Lunde Nielsen’s study *Architectural Probes of the Infraordinary. Social Coexistence through Everyday Spaces* (doctoral thesis, Aarhus School of Architecture, Denmark, 2016).
- 83 These practices are related to artistic approaches used in the projects of groups such as Rimini Protokoll, which Roberto Cavallini examined in his article “Figurations of the Infra-ordinary: Play and Urban Imaginaries in Rimini Protokoll’s Documentary Theatre Practice.” *Lo Squaderno*, no. 27, March 2013, pp. 51-54.
- 84 Nielsen, Espen Lunde. *Architectural Probes of the Infraordinary. Social Coexistence through Everyday Spaces*. Doctoral thesis, Aarhus School of Architecture, Denmark, 2016.
- 85 *Ibid.*, p. 3.

Literary studies approach to the infraordinary

As a framework for the research and study of Perec's work in literary studies, this section focuses on Perec's "four types of enquiry"⁸⁶ through the work of Michael Sheringham in *Everyday Life. Theories and Practices from Surrealism to the Present*⁸⁷ and Alison James in *Constraining chance: Georges Perec and the Oulipo*.⁸⁸

Perec's "four types of enquiry"⁸⁹ are the sociological, autobiographical, ludic, and Romanesque.⁹⁰ Each type brings forward an observed element in everyday life, not as parts within the everyday, but as active fields that affect and modify each other through Perec's practice as a writer.

Sheringham's focus on the methods by which literature conveys the experience of everyday life through language is visible throughout his analysis of Perec's four types of enquiry. In the chapter entitled *Perec: Uncovering the Infra-Ordinary*, Sheringham identified where each of these enquiries activate as part of the literary structure in Perec's work. For example, in identifying (besides the sociological enquiry) the ludic and Romanesque in *Things: A story of the Sixties* and *A man asleep*, Sheringham points at the use of writing tools such as rhetoric, enunciation and rhythm (to name a few), through which Perec conveys the observation and experience of the everyday.

These tools, and the types of enquiry, are not only literary resources but also strategies that make something in the everyday visible: "Perec's aim is not to create an image but to devise a mode of description that makes a certain level of reality visible, a project that is in some respects phenomenological but whose tactic is rhetorical."⁹¹ Perec's work explores the use of language in relation to the *quotidien*⁹² as a playful movement between observation, experience, and writing practice. This methodology is visible throughout Perec's work when he engages with the everyday.

Sheringham pointed out that the presence of the infraordinary becomes more evident in Perec's works *Approaches to what?* and *An Attempt at Exhausting a Place in Paris* due to the playful nature of the methodologies employed. This means that the presence of the infraordinary is found through its practice and engagement with everyday life.

However, even when the presence of the infraordinary is acknowledged and identified by Sheringham's analysis, there is no in-depth reflection on the phenomenon itself. Rather than elaborating on the experience of the infraordinary, or what is referred to as lived experience, Sheringham focused on how literature conveys the experience of everyday life. In the case of George Perec, it means how these tools in Perec's modes of enquiry help lived experience come through in language.

In Sheringham's analysis, one can find the experience of language and the experience of everyday life through language. The experience and visibility of the infraor-

dinary, on the other hand, are not fully addressed. By knowing the words in Perec's text *Approaches to what?*, one can only assume that these modes of enquiry that Sheringham exposes refer to a methodology that investigates the presence of the infraordinary.

Sheringham made a case for Perec's literary strategies as a practice that "could explore the incommensurable gap between language and experience."⁹³ Perec's methodologies, both in the practice of writing and in his fieldwork on observation, close the gap between the lived experiences and the mediated experience through language. In this way it is unveiling (or, as Sheringham titled the chapter, "uncovering") the *quotidien*, consequently, the infraordinary.

Perec observed the everyday experience by writing how physical things, objects, and people appear and how they relate to each other in terms of what is not visible but is present. Perec's book entitled *Things: A Story of the Sixties* is an example of this. The story follows a young couple in the pursuit of material desires. Perec's writing focused on a thorough description of objects, places, and situations in which the young couple find themselves while looking for a higher socioeconomic lifestyle. In this work, Perec wrote about the main characters' desires without detailing the desire itself, but rather by walking around the actions they do and what those actions say about their desires.

Perec's focus on the relationships among objects, actions and people are his way of moving through the different layers of the everyday, which is composed not

only of the functionalism in things but of the questioning and observations of the systematic use, role, and dynamic of what surrounds us in the social sphere.

Alison James examined the literary devices⁹⁴ in relation to Perec's writing practice and his modes of questioning⁹⁵ with and through the Oulipo⁹⁶ group. As James wrote, the role of Perec in the group resonates even after his death, bringing forward in Oulipo's production a timeline in which works and practices are located as *Pre-Perecian*, *Perecian*, and *Post-Perecian*.⁹⁷ It is through Perec's diverse and ample scope of approaches through literary devices that everyday life experiences, observations, and movements that deal with social and autobiographical aspects are conveyed through language.

In her book *Constraining Chance: Georges Perec and the Oulipo*, Alison James presented a deeper analysis of the phenomenon of the infraordinary. Specifically, in Chapter 8, *Ordering the Infraordinary*, James thoroughly detailed the ambivalence of practice in Perec's work. His practice oscillates between open experimentation engaging with chance, which gave an opening to the infraordinary, and his relationship to a more structured play with rules while writing within the Oulipo group. In previous chapters of the book, James elaborated on the role of concepts such as chance, the event, and the relationship of these within everyday life. Furthermore, she investigated the portrayal of these concepts by literary authors⁹⁸ and writers in social sciences that have worked the subject of everyday life, such as Henri Lefebvre⁹⁹ and Michel de Certeau.¹⁰⁰

James offers an approach to the infraordinary from the literary studies perspective by reflecting on the relationship of the phenomenon with what is visible in Perec's writing methods, and the presence of chance in representation.¹⁰¹ Her focus is on Perec's standpoint on chance, his methods and the literary devices employed to approach it. While working from a more playful terrain, Perec allows the possibility of encounters. When working with Oulipian strategies, the playful terrain moves towards a game structure with rules and constrictions.

Perec's encounters are autobiographical and social, as one can observe in his work *An Attempt at Exhausting a Place in Paris*, in which Perec's relationship with the places influences what he engages with and what is visualised as a result. On this point, James points out the paradox within the infraordinary to notice the "background noise":

"On the one hand, background noise is precisely that which is insignificant, which disrupts the path of communication without itself conveying any information. On the other hand, Perec's ambition is to give things significance, to 'dig Out' precious material that is then rescued from the domain of the infraordinary (...) Once these 'common things' are hunted down or brought to the surface, however, they are by definition no longer 'infra' and will become simply ordinary, or perhaps even extraordinary."¹⁰²

Within James' approach, there is still a consideration on locating the infraordinary on physical terrain, to fol-

low the prefix *infra-* as something below, rooted in a locale in which it exists and finds a becoming through (in Perec's case) a writing practice. Thinking of the infraordinary phenomenon itself as locatable is similar to the act of defining; it "immobilises"¹⁰³ the process of the phenomenon itself. Viewing the infraordinary as defined and located, Verran's interpretation of the prefix *infra-* as something "still in the process of clotting into a routine"¹⁰⁴ allows the phenomenon to exist and respond to the particularities and oddities of everyday life.

Michael Sheringham's and Allison James' analysis on the work of Georges Perec offer a view from the literary studies perspective. Their work offers a bridge of understanding between the literary tools applied within the writing practice and the conveyance of the experience of everyday life, and possibly, the infraordinary through the written medium. At the same time, this focus on Perec's work – primarily on literary structures that approach how everyday life and lived experience can be experienced through language – creates a distance from the phenomenon of the infraordinary itself. This approach leaves the infraordinary as a functional tool for conveying experience, not as an experience in itself.

Concerning lived experience, the author David Bellos offered an incredible account of events and anecdotes about the life and work of Perec in his book *Georges Perec: A life in words*.

Bellos' biography extensively details Perec's life from his early age, the fate of his family resulting from the Holocaust, to his later years as an adult. In the case of

Perec, the biographical context is especially relevant given how his words are woven into his ‘everyday’ life. This becomes visible throughout Bello’s work on Perec by displaying the account of events between Perec’s personal life and the development of his work.

Through Bellos’ extensive research on the life of Perec, and the analysis made of his work by other authors, Perec’s writing anchors and solidifies from an account of the experience of the writer’s personal life to how his life bleeds into his work, shaping not only the content but also his methodologies:

“Perec and I were children of the war. Children do not take part in wars, but they do look – they are voyeurs, they are bystanders. (...) Therefore, we learnt how to look. This is certainly at the root of our interest in the infra-ordinary – those signs and symptoms that he and I learnt to interpret in order to survive. In my opinion this is a very important element of Perec’s work, and also of my own.”⁹¹

- 86 Sheringham, Michael. *Everyday Life. Theories and Practices from Surrealism to the Present*. Oxford University Press, New York, 2006, p. 248. What Sheringham mentioned as the “four types of enquiry” is referred in Perec’s statement of intent as “four modes of questioning”.
- 87 Ibid.
- 88 James, Alison. *Constraining chance: Georges Perec and the Oulipo*. Northwestern University Press, USA, 2009.
- 89 Sheringham, Michael, 2006.
- 90 In Perec’s Statement of Intent, this the Romanesque enquiry is referred as novelistic mode of questioning. Perec, Georges. *Thoughts of sorts*, trans. David Bellos, London: Notting Hill Editions, London, 2011, pp. 1–2.

- 91 Sheringham, Michael, 2016, p. 253.
- 92 When writing about the everyday, everyday life and quotidian, Sheringham makes the following distinction: “The phrase ‘everyday life’ will be used to designate the overall sector or framework with which the writers, artists and thinkers discussed in this book are concerned, while the terms ‘the everyday’ and ‘the quotidien’ will be used as synonyms for the dimension of lived experience that is involved in everyday life. Popularized by Henry Lefebvre, ‘everyday life’ tends to have distinct political and sociological connotations: more neutral and indeterminate, ‘the everyday’ has become increasingly prevalent and will generally be preferred here” (pp. 2–3).
- 93 Sheringham, Michael, 2006, p. 253.
- 94 James, Alison. *Constraining Chance: Georges Perec and the Oulipo*. Northwestern University Press, Illinois, 2009.
- 95 Perec referred to what Sheringham called “types of enquiry” as “modes of questioning” in his book *Thoughts of Sorts*, 2011 (Trans. By David Bellos).
- 96 The OuLiPo (Ouvroir de Littérature Potentielle – Workshop for Potential Literature) was founded in 1960 by a group of writers and mathematicians who investigated “the formal devices used by writers over the centuries” (Bellos, David. *Georges Perec. A life in words*, 1995, p. 349) Some of the initial members of the group include Raymond Queneau and François Le Lionnais (founders), novelists such as Georges Perec and Italo Calvino, and mathematicians Claude Berge and Jean Lescurer.
- 97 James, Alison, 2017, p. 158.
- 98 Proust, André Breton and James Joyce, among others.
- 99 Lefebvre, Henri. *Critique de la vie quotidienne*. L’Arche, Paris, 1947, 100 Certeau, Michel de. *L’invention du quotidien*, I. Arts de faire. Gallimard Folio, Paris, 1980.
- 100 Certeau, Michel de. *L’invention du quotidien*, I. *Arts de faire*. Gallimard Folio, Paris, 1980.
- 101 This can be found in Chapter 8 of her book *Constraining chance: Georges Perec and the Oulipo*, (2009).
- 102 James, Alison, 2009, p. 201.
- 103 “... Like all definitions, it tends to immobilise what it is trying to define, presenting it as timeless and unchangeable. And as definitions frequently do, it takes one aspect or one part as the whole” (Lefebvre, Henri, 1961, p. 43).
- 104 Verran, Helen, 2014, p. 527.
- 105 Virilio, Paul, 2001, p. 18.

Artistic research approach to the infraordinary

Artistic research existed long before it was integrated into an academic framework. The work by artists has always involved a process of observation, interpretation, representation and understanding of the world. This process can be observed through different mediums,¹⁰⁶ disciplines, and throughout different times in the history of what is ultimately labelled as art.

The field of artistic research within the academic framework has had a relatively short history since the early 1990s.¹⁰⁷ Since its inclusion in the academic field, artistic research has created its own place by setting a mode of practice, methodologies, and experimentation.¹⁰⁸

As with any academic field within what is defined as “higher education”,¹⁰⁹ artistic research has a set of considerations and requirements for the researcher and the work produced within this framework. As Juha Varto wrote in *Artistic Research. What is it? Who does it? Why?*,¹¹⁰ artistic research is academic research.¹¹¹ This means that the practice of artistic research within the academic framework attaches itself to a set of requirements or standards such as “to produce information, develop skills, and add understanding about the world and the human being as part of it.”¹¹²

In this section, the focus remains on the intersecting place between research and artistic practice and the

possibilities that the field of artistic research holds for producing encounters within an embodied practice (referring to an artistic practice).

Within artistic research, one can explore multiple methodologies and try singular modes of approach, even when these diverge from the traditional academic research methods. This divergence is not intended to disregard such practices but to open up other methods of research and encounter.

Some areas of study on the infraordinary focus on the functionalism and methodology of the phenomenon in relation to that specific field.

This is seen in the literary studies section, where the focus is set upon the role of language and written presentation of the phenomenon. In this applied focus on the infraordinary, the phenomenon is set with a functional role, one in which the experience of the phenomenon works only in relation to the focus of study.

Artistic research brings forward the possibility of research within the phenomenon itself, allowing the infraordinary to remain the subject.

If artistic research is to exist in academic settings, the practice, structure and academic requirements should

be considered. However, this consideration of standards should not be confined in a way that prevents the experimentation that is intrinsic and fundamental to art practice (and its research).¹¹³

Artistic practice can be a mode of research that is attached or conjoined with institutional structures, which impose a demand on the practice itself. It is a constant play of experimentality and academicism, but should pertain to the field of play and not of the game. With this differentiation between game and play, I refer to the idea that Allan Kaprow shares in his book *Essays on the Blurring of Art and Life*.¹¹⁴

“Play, of course, is at the heart of experimentation. Elsewhere, I’ve pointed out the crucial difference in the English language between playing and gaming. Gaming involves winning or losing a desired goal. Playing is open-ended and, potentially, everybody ‘wins’. Playing has no stated purpose other than more playing. It is usually not serious in content or attitude, whereas gaming, which can also involve playing if it is subordinated to winning, is at heart competitive.”¹¹⁵

This stand of “not serious in content or attitude” might seem as though it does not fit with what belongs to academic research practices. However, this attitude is found at the heart of experimentation, at the heart of possible methodologies that could bring forward an outcome other than the one related to traditional methodological practices.

The work of Georges Perec, specifically the phenomenon of the infraordinary, offers an experimental field of practice in the everyday that is suited to artistic research. A field that engages with practices such as literature, urban studies, and film through a playful attitude, offering new encounters with things that otherwise appear unremarkable in the sphere of the everyday, is commonly labelled as ordinary.

Georges Perec’s work has been studied in different disciplines. It has influenced not only experimental writing, but also the field of arts through various mediums. For example, researcher Alasdair Pettinger and photographer, writer, and researcher Joanne Lee,¹¹⁶ both directly approached the concepts and methodologies that Perec used in his modes of questioning.

Alasdair Pettinger has examined the presence and notion of sound in the work of Perec. He elaborates on the relationship between sound and space, everyday soundscapes,¹¹⁷ and how these are “visible” in the writing of Perec.¹¹⁸

Pettinger’s text also studied what he calls “infra-ordinary soundscapes” and how these have been looked at and worked upon by sound artists.¹¹⁹ This notion of infra-ordinary soundscapes reflects not only Perec acknowledging the sounds of the places he wrote from, but also as in *An Attempt at Exhausting a Place in Paris*,¹²⁰ where he writes about the city traffic and car horns. These infra-ordinary soundscapes also reference the notion of “background noise”, which Perec speaks of in *Approaches to what?*

“There is always background noise, there is always a symptom, a sign, a scent. So, we were interested precisely in those things which are the opposite of the extraordinary yet which are not the ordinary either – things which are ‘infra.’”¹²¹

Banal, quotidian, obvious, common, ordinary, infraordinary, background noise, and the habitual. All these words refer to a quality we give to things in the everyday. However, these qualities are not innate to things. All these words refer to adjectives that are not innate in everyday things, but which we have qualified as such.

When Pettinger’s text and work questions that qualification, we are reminded of what we have “placed”¹²² in the “background”.

Concerning Pettinger’s artistic practice, the notion of infraordinary soundscapes connects with his field recordings, which focus on the representation of everyday life. In his archive,¹²³ one can listen to sounds related to places,¹²⁴ objects,¹²⁵ and situations.¹²⁶ These sounds relate to how Pettinger described Perec’s phenomenological approach to space as something “combined with a recognition of the emotional power of particular places.”¹²⁷ This idea is visible both in Pettinger’s field recordings and Perec’s methodology of selecting places that can be seen in *An Attempt at Exhausting a Place in Paris*. In parallel, Pettinger’s and Perec’s work experiences in specific locations influenced the action of stopping, dwelling, observing, and writing (in the case of Perec) and recording (for Pettinger). In both cases, the action is to document everyday life through their re-

spective mediums, not with the goal of “portraying” but of re-presenting an everydayness.

Furthermore, the experience of seeing, of what is seen, is affected and again influenced by memory and experience. As Allison James wrote: “In *Tentative deputation*¹²⁸ perception is in fact continuous with reflection and judgment (...) In investigating the everyday, Perec is not seeking to eliminate his own subjectivity in order to give an objective, neutral account of reality (...) Instead, he investigates his own mechanisms of perception, knowledge, and representation.”¹²⁹ This thought again makes visible the weight and extension of the autobiographical mode of enquiry.¹³⁰

Joanne Lee’s artistic practise and research continues this investigation of the mechanisms of perception in everyday life. Her research is developed through a series of black and white photographs documenting her 12-minute commute from her Sheffield home to her university work.

In Lee’s article *Force yourself to see more flatly: A photographic investigation of the Infra-ordinary*¹³¹ she elaborates on her artistic research, which takes as a point of departure Perec’s proposition to force oneself to *see more flatly*.¹³² Lee takes this into practice by using an “essayistic approach involving photography”.¹³³ Lee names this a *Perecquian practice as a method of artistic research*,¹³⁴ rendering the artistic practice as the research methodology.

The process is both part of the research outcome and the transformative action of doing.

Lee's photographic series entitled *The Loxley Road Sequence* contains a process in itself; she writes that there are layers of relationships between her and the space, between her and the photographs when first reviewed, and between her and the photographs after some time has passed and the photographs are seen again. This passing time is not a time of rest but a distance between her relationship with the place and the medium that passes through a process of defamiliarisation.¹³⁵

In *The Loxley Road Sequence* one can see different sections of the road that have been selected by Lee, as well as specific elements found in the pavement like trash, such as the plastic lid of a soda cup, graffiti that reads "FEDUP", and visual markers such as traffic lines, missing corners of concrete and paws in what seems to be dried cement. The framing of the photographs varies from frontal shots to steep angles and close-ups. It is clear that we are looking at the intentional view of the artist/researcher, in this case, to the selection of Lee's eye to her surroundings with which she has an everyday experience.

It is not specified how the selection of what is seen in the photos is made. Were those elements always present in Lee's awareness while walking every day? Or did some of them become visible to her in the moment while holding the camera? All we know is that something happened and a photo was snapped. Then, the

image is left to rest and reencountered after a period of time. It is here where the defamiliarisation process that Lee mentioned happens. The relationship among Lee, the road, the photographs and the image of the road is always mediated by a period of time in which she has to re-encounter the experience and the observation is made of a new place, a new encounter. It is in the new encounter where the observation of details begins to emerge. Perhaps that which initially caught the eye while taking the photograph is not the focus of what is in the image when re-viewing it. In this defamiliarisation process, new encounters emerge, with details perhaps, or with elements that surrounded the primary focus at the time.

When looking solely at the photographs of the Loxley Road, the viewer is free to interpret the intention of the pictures beyond the recognition of a city landscape. It is when reading the reflections, analysis, and words of Lee that the purpose shapes. Similarly to how an exhibition text guides the spectator through the exhibited work, Lee's reflections, analysis, and words in the chapter *Force yourself to see more flatly: A photographic investigation of the Infra-ordinary* guide us through the process of the research that happens among her (the researcher), the photographs (a medium of re-encounter), and the text.

This artistic research practice, Lee argued, is "about keeping things strange and generating further possibility, rather than delivering conclusive findings, as might be the case in other disciplines."¹³⁶ The *strangeness* to which Lee refers may then be part of the methodol-

ogy, which is open to exploration and relates to Pécoc's mode of ludic enquiry.

This mode of enquiry can be seen in how the research follows a practice without the researcher needing to know what is happening or will happen at the end, without the need for certainty within the process. The playfulness can be seen in the attitude toward the outcome; that is, in the flexibility the researcher/artist is willing to have regarding the outcome. It does not mean that the outcome is left without relevance or care; rather, it reminds us that the process is part of the outcome just as much as the outcome is part of the process. There is no linearity in the research methodology, but a constant oscillation in which all parts affect each other.

In the same vein as Joanne Lee, Richard Wentworth's photographic work in *Making do and getting by*¹³⁷ explores the urban environment through photography. The book contains a series of photographs that portray encounters that Wentworth had while strolling through different cities in different countries.¹³⁸ Although there is no preset condition about what the eye is going to focus on, or a constriction in terms of what the Oulipo group would set for themselves in matters of the method of writing, the photographs selected for the book show a certain patterns of focus: photos of morphed shadows of certain objects such as loose cables hanging from ledge to ledge, which shadow shows as wobbly lines,¹³⁹ peculiarities found on the street, such as a tomato on the ground near the tire of a car, as if they were waiting to act upon each

other;¹⁴⁰ objects having a different function than the one they are intended to have, like a soda bottle that holds the window open;¹⁴¹ or objects that, by their position and location, relate to qualities of something sculptural, such as a mat or coat over a pole, being held only at one point and leaving the rest of the fabric to fall and be shaped by gravity.¹⁴²

It is relevant here to think about how Pécoc's modes of enquiry are present in Richard Wentworth's practice. On one hand, it is interesting to think about these modes of enquiry in terms of images and not language. On the other hand, these modes of enquiry focus more specifically on the process by which the artist, writer or researcher approaches, in this case, everyday life. In the case of Richard Wentworth, similarly to Joanne Lee, there is a ludic engagement with the surroundings that comes with the sauntering of the streets. It is not a pinpointed pursuit, but one that walks blindly until it is not; until something, decided by each artist, arrives. That personal choice, selection, and decision is where the autobiographical enquiry comes forward, in that our personal histories shape what or where we are moved towards.

Where do the practices of both Lee and Wentworth diverge? In the case of Lee there is an intention of pursuit. This pursuit, along with the autobiographical, familiar routines shape or transform an element, in this case movement, of her daily life. This conscious pursuit is research in practice, an awareness of the information that the artistic practice will bring by experience.

In the case of Wentworth, one could argue that his pursuit is not intentional, but unconscious, following a trace of visual compositions through the shape of objects, their placement, the play in which the shadows seem to engage with the position of the sun, or lamp light.¹⁴³ However, it might be that the process is moving in different directions. While the research and artistic practice of Lee has a proposition of practice, a project to follow, in the case of Wentworth there is the practice that is preceding the research.

In other words, in Joanne Lee's case, there is a proposed research and then a practice that follows that research. In the case of Richard Wentworth, there is a proposed practice and then research that follows the practice.

The practice of artistic research presents an opportunity for the practitioner¹⁴⁴ to turn the methodology¹⁴⁵ and the process¹⁴⁶ into a part of the outcome as an established result and not as something that is usually taken as "unfinished". In this case, the outcome is the process, meaning, the process *is* the research.

Adding to this point of focus on artistic processes and research, Mireille Ribière elaborated in her article *Georges Perec's Enduring Presence in the Visual Arts*¹⁴⁷ how the work, practice and methodology of Perec has influenced not only the ample field of literary practice, but also the art field within visual and performative arts.

Rivière identified *three distinct points of view* in which the presence of Perec and his body of work is visible in

the case study of artists such as Anne Deguelle, Sophie Calle, Suboh Gupta, among others.¹⁴⁸ These three approaches have their base in:

The *reuse, recreation, or transformation* of Perec's work. The literary work as a *tutelary* figure. This idea refers to taking Perec's methods and referencing by practice or re-doing the practice.

Plagiarism by anticipation,¹⁴⁹ meaning the posture of the Oulipo group in which they considered literary works done in the past as part of an Oulipean practice, and subsequently refer to them in the present as part of the Oulipo.

These three ways of doing this point more specifically to the modes of engagement of artists and researchers with the work of Perec. In the first instance through the direct use of Perec's works and words; in the second, through the methodology and engagement of Perec with the process of observation and configuration of the everyday. As an example of this second point one can see the work of Joanne Lee, inquiring about the everyday through the medium of photography. Finally, in the third point of view of *plagiarism by anticipation*, in which a familiarity of style and methodology is identified and appropriate by the Oulipo group.

The studies, analyses, and approaches to George Perec's practice, methodology, and modes of engagement with everyday life provide a playful terrain, a ground for possibilities of observation and modes of visibility for the topic chosen to be searched and re-searched. What is the point of departure? From where does one begin to

walk toward the subject of research? What approach will the artist or researcher choose to engage with the research subject?

A key difference between the research found in literary studies and the one seen in artistic research is the activation in practice of Perec's methods. While literary studies have focused on the linguistic strategies that can convey an everyday experience through language, artistic research finds a direct experience in everyday life in which, through different methodologies and media, the visibility of the phenomenon is created. Artistic research offers a space of practice for Perec's methods.

- 106 Painting, sculpture, installation, conceptual art, performance, net art, video, etc. There is always a study, a search, within each medium. The subjects of study may differ depending on the methods and tools used in each discipline, but the search is always there within a process of trial and error. Searching and researching always imply an intention of exploration.
- 107 Spronck, Veerle. *Art and Academia: A Study of the Practice of Third Cycle Artistic Research*. MSc Thesis, Cultures of Arts, Science and Technology, Maastricht University, Netherlands, 2016.
- 108 Hannula, Mika, Juha Suoranta, and Tere Vadén. *Artistic Research Methodology: Narrative, Power and the Public*. Peter Lang ed. New York, 2014.
- 109 An education that leads to an academic degree.
- 110 Varto, Juha. p. 10. 2018.
- 111 "Esa Kirkkopelto stated this clearly in his inauguration speech at the Theatre Academy of the University of the Arts Helsinki." Varto, Juha. 2018, p. 146.
- 112 Varto, Juha. 2018, p. 10.
- 113 Henke, Silvia, Diester Mersch, Thomas Strässle, Jörg Wiesel, and Nicolaj van der Meulen. *Manifesto of Artistic Research. A Defense against its Advocates*. Mixed with a Declination of the Collage by Sabine Hertig, Diaphanes ed. (2019), 2020.
- 114 Kaprow, Allan. 2003.
- 115 Ibid., p. 250.
- 116 Charles Forsdick, Andrea Leak, and Richard Phillips. *Georges Perec's Geographies*. 2019. *Material, Performative and Textual Spaces*, UCL Press.
- 117 This topic is present in Alasdair Pettinger's field recordings, in the work of Felicity Ford with the Knitsonik project, and in Marc Weidenbaum's work *Disquiet Junto*.
- 118 Pettinger, Alasdair. *Perecquian soundscapes*. *Georges Perec's Geographies Material, Performative and Textual Spaces*. UCL Press, 2019. pp. 127–139.
- 119 Des Coulam, Mark Peter Wright, Felicity Ford, and Marc Weidenbaum.
- 120 "The urgent sounds of a car horn are audible." Perec, Georges. *An Attempt at Exhausting a Place in Paris*. Trans. Marc Lowenthal. Wakefield Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 2019. p. 19.
- 121 Virilio, Paul. 2001.
- 122 "Places" (in quotations) since there is no physical "placing", but a metaphorical one related to attention and awareness.
- 123 Available at his website <https://www.bulldozia.com/about/sound-art/>
- 124 Such as different rooms in a library, or a work entitled *Walking Along 125th St.*
- 125 Such as doors and vending machines.
- 126 In a series of 18 tracks entitled "Minutes", he documented different scenarios such as "A dog and some fish", "Hong Kong tram", and "At the airport".
- 127 Pettinger, Alasdair. "Perecquian soundscapes". *Georges Perec's Geographies Material, Performative and Textual Spaces*. UCL Press, 2019. p. 130.
- 128 *An Attempt at Exhausting a Place in Paris*.
- 129 James, Alison. *Constraining chance: Georges Perec and the Oulipo*. Northwestern University Press, 2009. p. 204.
- 130 These modes of enquiry are seen in the Literary section as part of Perec's analysis and methodology.
- 131 Lee, Joanne. 'Force yourself to see more flatly': A photographic investigation of the Infraordinary'. *Georges Perec's Geographies Material, Performative and Textual Spaces*. UCL Press, 2019.
- 132 Perec, Georges. 1974. p. 51.
- 133 Lee, Joanne. 2019. p. 218.
- 134 Ibid., p. 219.
- 135 Ibid., p. 232.

I36 p. 233

I37 Wentworth, Richard. *Making do and getting by*. Koenig Books, London, 2015.

I38 Cyprus, France, the UK, Turkey, Spain, Cuba, Italy, USA, Portugal, etc.

I39 Wentworth, Richard, 2015, p. 40.

I40 Ibid., p. 114.

I41 Ibid., p. 174.

I42 Ibid., p. 142/164 and p. 181.

I43 Examples of this can be found in Richard Wentworth's book "*Making do and getting by*" (p. 110 and p. 107).

I44 Artist, researcher, writer, thinker, etc.

I45 Meaning any decided followed mode of doing.

I46 Meaning the continuous action of doing. That moment (chunk of time) where the doing begins to happen until it is decided there is no going further.

I47 Bibière, Mireille. *Georges Perec's Enduring Presence in the Visual Arts*. Edinburgh University Press, 2017.

I48 Other artists included in the article: Daniel de Paula, Christl Lidl, Ignasi Aballí, Christian Boltanski, Joachim Schmid.

I49 Oulipo member Harri Mathews defined plagiarism by anticipation as follows: "Without a time machine at its disposal, the Oulipo has been unable to rescue from the limbo of the past those writers who, lamentably unaware of the group's existence, could not know that they were creating paleo-Oulipian texts without acknowledgement. They have been placed in the special category of anticipatory plagiarist" (Mathews and Brotchie 1998, p. 207). The topic was also addressed by David Bellos: "In working their way through various sourcebooks for historically attested formal rules, Oulipians frequently found that their ideas had been foreshadowed by writers of past ages, and for such happy encounters they coined the term 'anticipatory plagiarism'."

Everyday and the infraordinary

Researching the phenomenon of the infraordinary means engaging with studies and research done on the concept of everyday life. Everyday life has an ample scope of research within the field of social sciences through sociology,¹⁵⁰ cultural studies,¹⁵¹ literary studies¹⁵² and philosophy¹⁵³ (to name a few); as well as being researched and practised in the fields of art¹⁵⁴ and artistic research.¹⁵⁵ Due to the close engagement of these phenomena with experiential knowledge,¹⁵⁶ a wide range of concepts and ideas developed from the research of the everyday within these fields relate to the phenomenon of the infraordinary. These concepts and elements range from the physical aspects of the space and place in which everyday life unfolds¹⁵⁷ to more abstract or intangible concepts.¹⁵⁸

However, such intersecting concepts differ when they are viewed under the everyday life scope or the lens of the infraordinary phenomena. For example, when

thinking of a concept like "gesture", this word might take on a more functional role when it is analysed from an everyday life point of view; that is, what a gesture is in terms of communication, and what are the possible meanings, purposes and interpretations of a gesture. This analysis of a gesture has a straightforward aim; there is an intentionality of definition and clarity of the meaning. When researching the concept, idea,

or notion of gesture through the lens of infraordinary phenomena, the intentionality of definition is not the aim. The aim of researching within the scope of the infraordinary is to engage with an experiential knowledge methodology.

That is, employing the methods of observation, analysis and (experimental) writing to engage, from an autoethnography standpoint, with the concept of gesture and – as in the case of the exhibition *There was no thought, but a thrive for the visibility of something yet to be named* – to elaborate through my artistic practice the findings.

The methodology employed in this research does not intend to separate the everyday and the infraordinary phenomena; rather, it aims for an awareness on the possibility that each research brings forward: not a dichotomy but the visibility of their interconnectedness and relationship dynamics. The infraordinary happens within our construction of everyday life, but it is not constrained between the boundaries of everyday life. The phenomena of the infraordinary detaches from any standard temporal constriction and creates its own space.

The research conducted in *In the Middle of Things* aims for a research of the infraordinary within the phenomenon.

I reflect on my own experience and process of research through the abovementioned tools¹⁵⁹ to salvage from my experience of *knowing-in-being* the hints and pieces of encountering the phenomenon in everyday life,

which also includes the experience of connecting my own research with previous studies on the phenomenon.

In his book *Life: A User's Manual*¹⁶⁰ (1978) Perec brought forward the element of the jigsaw puzzle to illustrate the relationship between the parts, the whole, the maker, and the player. In the preamble of the book, Perec wrote:

“... one can make a deduction which is quite certainly the ultimate truth of jigsaw puzzles: despite appearances, puzzling is not a solitary game:¹⁶¹ every move the puzzler makes, the puzzle-maker has made before; every piece the puzzler picks up, and picks up again, and studies and strokes, every combination he tries, and tries a second time, every blunder and every insight, each hope and each discouragement have all been designed, calculated, and decided by the other.”¹⁶²

The same could be said about writing, ideas, reading, and conducting research. None of these are a solitary endeavour, and not only because of the conditions one might encounter when writing (physically speaking). Even though one may in fact be writing in an empty room, all the previous experience before writing, when investigating, when living, “the rest, all the rest, where is it? How should we take account of, question, describe what happens every day and what recurs everyday: the banal, the quotidian, the obvious, the common, the ordinary, the infra- ordinary, the background noise, the habitual?”¹⁶³ We take account of it by bringing it forward, by creating awareness, by making it visible.

This research, *In the Middle of Things: On Researching the Infraordinary*, is my piece of the puzzle. It is my way of making the infraordinary visible, and hopefully, present and available for others to make their own piece, whatever shape that piece might be.

- 150 With authors such as Henry Lefebvre and his work on *The Production of Space* (1974), Michel de Certeau with *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1980), Luce Giard in *Culture in the Plural* (1998), and Joe Moran with *Reading the Everyday* (2005).
- 151 Rita Felski's article *The Invention of Everyday Life* (1999), Ben Highmore in *Everyday Life and Cultural Theory* (2011), etc.
- 152 Michael Sheringham, Alison James, Claude Burgelin and Joseph Mai, Alice Kaplan, and Kristin Ross, and others.
- 153 Agnes Heller, Stanley Cavell, Bruce Bégout, and others.
- 154 With artists such as Allan Kaprow, Sophie Calle, Francis Alys, Marcel Duchamp, Martha Rosler, Annette Messager, Gabirel Orozco, Tracey Emin, who have made the everyday either their focus or as part of their topic of enquiry.
- 155 For example, Oona Tikkaaja with her dissertation *Reality Tinkering. An Artistic Approach to the Abundance of the Familiar*; Annette Arlander in *Performing Landscape – Notes on Site-specific Work and Artistic Research*; Estelle Barrett in the article *Experiential learning in practice as research: context, method, knowledge*; and Liu Yuedi and Curtis L. Carter with the book *Aesthetics of Everyday Life: East and West*.
- 156 Experiential knowledge is approached as *extended epistemology* by Reason, Peter, and John Heron. *A layperson's guide to co-operative inquiry*. Retrieved January 3 (1999): 2005
- 157 That is to say the city, streets, open fields and physical environments where everyday life might happen.
- 158 Such as the notion of gesture, visibility of the phenomena, experience, and becoming of what is, or could be, everyday life.
- 159 See Part I: On methodology.
- 160 Perec, Georges. *La Vie mode d'emploi*. Hachette Littératures, Paris, 1978. Experiential knowledge is understood as knowledge and information obtained "through direct face-to-face encounter" (p. 4).

159 See Part I: On methodology.

160 Perec, Georges. *La Vie mode d'emploi*. Hachette Littératures, Paris, 1978.

161 I would change the word game for playing. As Kaprow would define when referring to the notion and differences between game and play. In one (game) there are winners and losers. While in play there is a "carefree" attitude. For more on Kaprow, please refer to the chapter *Event and Allan Kaprow* in the document *In the Middle of Things*.

162 Perec, Georges. *Life: A User's Manual*. Translated from the French by David Bellos. Verba Mundi ed. *Preamble*. 2009.

163 Perec, Georges. Approaches to what? *Cause Commune*, no. 5, Denoël-Gonthier ed. Paris, 1973.

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A conclusion

Welcome to *A conclusion*.

This section contains a reflection on the process of working on this research, an outlook of the infraordinary and some of the central concepts approached in the other sections of this book.

As with anything that is researched, the infraordinary does not begin only when it is visible, nor end when its presence is no longer discernible.

The infraordinary remains latent, waiting for another moment of encounter.

A conclusion is not a conclusion to the research question but a conclusion to the process of researching within the framework of this book.

What am I to believe? I'm a balcony person.
 When everything is ordinary until it's not.
 I'm a balcony person.¹

Working on the research of the infraordinary has been an expansive process. I have been going in all directions, searching, moving, writing, thinking, exploring, reflecting, analysing, playing, losing, revolting, chasing, looking, waiting, dwelling, remembering, forgetting; all, to, for and about the phenomenon of the infraordinary.

The research within this book has been conducted in the context of my doctoral studies. This point is important for me because that has shaped not only the content of this research but also my relationship with writing, researching, and how I thought and expressed my research topic.

However, my relationship with the phenomenon of the infraordinary itself remained the same.

Writing and researching in the context of this book entered a relationship with no prior agreement. I began writing and progressively found myself trying to navigate unknown waters with a shy knowledge of the tools that would help me go through the experience without feeling like I was in the middle of a cartoon, running around trying to fix the holes in a boat and running out of fingers and toes to plug them.

The development of this research began with the section *In the Middle of Things*; then moved to *On researching the infraordinary*, and ended with the general in-

structions on how to read and this section *A conclusion*. From there, it has been a *shaken not stirred* type of situation going back and forth adjusting and changing while the research developed.

The experience of writing and researching became something different at every stage. When writing *In the Middle of Things*, the writing and the research were in their initial encounters. I was frolicking through the writing, purposefully walking toward the idea, thoughts, and experiences related to the infraordinary. I was encountering and discovering, and it was a somewhat unobstructed movement. At that moment, research and writing were finding each other. They supported each other's discoveries by the research, letting the writing flow and the writing inviting the research to become more present. Writing and research were in the first steps of their relationship, where everything is new, and the things that do not flow or are somewhat difficult are still welcomed in acceptance. That could be a relevant keyword in this whole process: acceptance.

The second section to be written, *On Researching the Infraordinary*, was initially intended to be an introductory framework for *In the Middle of Things*. However, as I slowly began building the framework, this "introduction" became another piece and approach to the infraordinary; this time, not only by elaborating on the methods and methodologies employed in the practice of researching the infraordinary in the first section, but also, an elaboration from an academic perspective that related the phenomenon with other areas of study and previous research on the infraordinary.

After leaving *In the Middle of Things* and arriving to *On Researching the Infraordinary*, writing and research needed to change. Research had started a new job that required different responsibilities than the ones it previously had, and the writing began to wonder how to continue with research while still maintaining the same sense of movement.

The writing struggled, and every task became accompanied by resistance, which was more of a misunderstanding and fear-related feeling than an actual opposition to following the research's needs.

Nevertheless, despite the doubt and resistance, writing and research walked through together and built *On Researching the Infraordinary*. Slowly putting together and learning that research's new role brought forward things that were not visible before; new thoughts, new ideas, and new perspectives, which were only put forward when the research had challenged the writing. Researching the infraordinary is a challenging endeavor. The challenge relied on how to facilitate or mediate – as an artist and a researcher – everyday life, daily and quotidian experiences of an open phenomenon. This openness is an opportunity to explore the nuances of the relationship in our daily encounters with things, as it is also a vast space where, when attempting to form something, one can become overwhelmed by the broadness of possibilities within the phenomenon. However, as I mentioned before, even if my relationship with writing and research changed at different stages of the process, my relationship with the infraordinary never did, and that was something I always came back

to as a reminder of why I decided to take on this research, of why I chose to write about it, of why the infraordinary.

With that in mind, I began to reflect, not only on the process of research and writing, but on the research of the phenomenon itself.

I began to wander and rewind to how the process took place. My reflective processes always seem to take the hand of Joe Brainard and Georges Perec and to enunciate “I remember”.²

I remember my first attempt to write this research about the infraordinary. I remember starting with a section called *Home or its concept*. In that text, I remember writing about my relationship with the word *home*, the meaning of the word for me and the process and relationship among home, space, place and experience. I remember writing about my personal history with places one could easily refer to as home (such as the place one grew up in) and writing about my struggle with calling them home.

Even when the section *Home or its Concept* was not included or did not take a role within this dissertation, it certainly sparked a scavenging motion in which the focus was the infraordinary.

Over the years, I have noticed things happening that I did not know where they belonged. They were something and, at the same time, nothing of “real importance” in the broad sense of the word. However, these

experiences and observations are essential for my research, artistic practice, and everyday life. They bring forward an awareness and an opportunity to reflect and analyse happenings in everyday life and question what they might be speaking of or for. These everyday happenings can be subtle gestures in objects and situations; for example, an object that is at a different location than one is used to seeing it³; encounters with what we commonly refer to as coincidences but which, even if they are, raise a question, a wondering that may redirect the thinking in a particular direction;⁴ or perhaps, situations that, despite being ordinary or “simple”, feel as if they were a grand event;⁵ by recurrences that accumulate over time and which, in themselves, have no significance

During this dissertation process, I have encountered people who asked me the dreaded question: What is your research about? (This was sometimes asked in an apologetic tone since people who have been, or are, involved in this process are aware that this question might bring some baggage to the process). And, after sharing what the research is about – the infraordinary – people often asked for an example of it. Initially, I found it challenging to pinpoint a specific example since there was a lot to unfold within the experience of the phenomenon. However, over the years, I found my way through it, and what I shared sparked in some people a memory, and they wondered whether that experience was *infraordinary*. The infraordinary idea resonated with one particular person, and, for the following weeks, that person shared different experiences, wondering as well if they were infraordinary.

The infraordinary can be many things: an experience, an event, an impression, a rescue, an awareness. Rescue in the sense of recovery; the phenomenon of the infraordinary can remind us how something used to feel. For example, we tend to delete physical spaces and replace them with experiences. When we dwell in a space we live in, it becomes something other than the space we saw and occupied for the first time.

Spaces become places, and places tend to become what we make of them: homes, extensions of our routines, habits, needs, and desires.

Researching the infraordinary was a retrieval motion of memories of events, happenings, occurrences, concepts, ideas, names, places, and things that had to be mapped to navigate them to approach the phenomenon.

Researching often means acknowledging feeling lost, but there is a lot to discover in that lostness. Sometimes, this is something useful; at other times, the research goes elsewhere than intended.

Nevertheless, there is always a going; there is always movement.

Because of these thoughts of movement and navigating the feeling of being lost with the aim of an encounter, the wayfinding practice of the Marshallese navigators resonated with my research methods for the infraordinary. The fact that navigators rely on the experiential knowledge of the waves, the currents, and the obser-

vation of how these waves hit the vessel to guide their journey from island to island resembled how I moved towards the infraordinary.

While the movement towards the infraordinary happened through a wayfinding process, building the navigational tools for this search required flexibility and the possibility of change. In a way, mapping my way to the infraordinary resembled the map-building qualities described by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari in *A Thousand Plateaus* concerning the rhizome: “the rhizome pertains to a map that must be produced, constructed, a map that is always detachable, connectable, reversible, modifiable, and has multiple entryways and exits and its own lines of flight.”⁷

The infraordinary behaves, moves, builds, remains, and morphs within each experience. Because the infraordinary is related to everyday happenings, its focus and connectivity take on a different tracing depending on the experience for each subject and context. The encounters with it come as hidden things that require the possibility to detach, connect, reverse or modify, and require different entryways while searching, re-searching and writing. Of course, having all these possibilities of encounter presented a challenge when writing and researching the infraordinary, as mentioned at the beginning of this section.

The intention of this research, as mentioned in the first pages of the document *In the Middle of Things*, was to approach the phenomenon by taking up ideas, thoughts, concepts, and practices that encircle the in-

fraordinary and focusing on the space generated by this encirclement.

This encirclement was shaped into the two above-mentioned sections, *In the Middle of Things* and *On Researching the Infraordinary*. Among these two, there is a mapping that focuses on the phenomenon as the subject of research, and as a research methodology. Having the infraordinary as a methodology activated a foray of explorations within the research question. It pursued the infraordinary up to the point where I found that the infraordinary is, in fact, a phenomenon, something that I was not aware of before conducting this research.

As such, the infraordinary, being a phenomenon, required the observation and research of experiences, which Michael Oakeshott explained as follows: “Experience is a single whole, within which modifications may be distinguished, but which admits of no final or absolute division: and that experience is everywhere, not merely inseparable from thought, but is itself a form of thought.”⁸

Furthermore, this idea of experience as a “form of thought” is an entryway that comes as an extension to pursue from this dissertation. “Form of thought” also refers to the visibility of the phenomenon: how it is encountered and observed and what connections are found in those experiences. There is a search for the infraordinary every day, and a re-search among the foraging of the findings in everyday life. This exploration also extended to the phenomenon’s presence in artistic and research practice.

Something important when beginning the process was to be aware of what the question “what is the infraordinary?” meant, and to identify where the importance of the question was to be found. The significance of it was not in the answer; rather, the intention was to navigate the different paths that asking the question led. For example, in *In the Middle of Things* the research question led to trying to identify the presence of a similar methodology of exploration in everyday life within the artistic practice in the beginning of the twentieth century, such as the Dadaists, Surrealists, Lettrist International, Situationist International, and Fluxus movements.

At other times, the question led to identifying what surrounded the infraordinary and what these things revealed about the phenomenon. Identifying the notion of gesture connected the infraordinary with something inconcrete in objects; gesture talks of what is not visible but present as a quality for the infraordinary. For example, in *In the Middle of Things* one can find an image of a toothpaste tube⁹ that, by the overflowing of paste at every use has a condensed “paste-head” that evidences someone’s habits and practices when brushing their teeth. The toothpaste can be just toothpaste – something otherwise uninteresting – until a gesture begins dwelling within the object to bring the visibility of the subject to the surface.

What makes the infraordinary relevant is how it relates to different aspects of everyday life. It is not a phenomenon with isolated occurrences but one that connects to a stratum in our every day. For instance, the phenomenon can act as a reencounter of our personal

experience with an object, a place, or an action. It allows us to remember how our relationship with these things was before their categorisation, perhaps related to functionality.

Perec invites us to question, and to ask, and not to disregard what we have deemed ordinary and without importance. This dissertation aimed to observe and ask about everyday experiences and to wonder while pursuing the infraordinary as a phenomenon.

Researching the infraordinary has been expansive; the more the phenomenon is investigated the more one can learn about its connectivity with different areas of study. For example, Perec’s work contains thoughts related to sociology, anthropology, human geography, urbanism, architecture, linguistics, and philosophy, to name the most visible strands of reflection and observations. When I began my wayfinding towards the infraordinary, there was only the word, which for me, connected with a concept. Along with the research came the finding that the infraordinary is not a concept, meaning there is no immediate object to attach to the thought or the word, but rather a practice of observation of events, happenings and an unfolding that has a reach over different areas of thought and study of everyday life.

Because of this, the field of artistic research was a suitable way to approach a phenomenon of this kind. Artistic research made it possible to discover new methodologies that better suited the topic of research. In the case of this research, artistic research allowed the

methodology and the infraordinary woven to allow a coherent process within the research practice.

This research is a juncture at which searches, researches, ideas, thoughts, concepts, and experiences related to the infraordinary walk form a line, or an entryway, to approach the infraordinary. This line moves as a current that streams from different directions; it gathers, merges, and transforms along with the continuous experience in everyday life. The search forms the research, and the research transforms the search. One moves along, amassing and forming the findings and ideas. The stream of research will always be in movement, continuing without ending.

I will always be in the middle of things, where everything is ordinary until it is not.

- 1 The original lyrics read: "What am I to believe? I'm the balcony man. When everything is ordinary until it's not. I'm the balcony man." By Nick Cave and Warren Ellis. *Balcony Man*. Carnage 2021.
- 2 In 1975, Joe Brainard wrote the book *I Remember*, in which he listed what he remembered regarding events in his life, things happening, objects, people and everyday life instances. Three years later, George Perec took on this practice and published his book *Je me souviens* (I Remember).
- 3 As exemplified by Richard Wentworth on page 75 of his book *Making Do and Getting By*, where one can see a mug holding a window open.
- 4 It would be bold to assume that everyone has encountered a dead animal in their way, but many have. I took photos of all the dead animals I encountered for four years. I began adding all the images together, and from there, specific questions started to arise: on what surfaces did I encounter more? In which countries do I have the most findings? What animal was the most common? Which one was rare to find? Singularities tend to fade unless they belong to a big event (although even events are not made of a singular aspect but a combination of elements). When singularities accumulate, some things become more visible, and observations emerge by the habit of recurrence.
- 5 The other day I was holding a mug. It was early in the morning and my apartment was quiet. I took the mug with my left hand and placed my thumb through the handle and wrapped the rest of the fingers around the body of the mug. As I poured coffee, I felt a vibration on my thumb and heard a subtle "clack". Everything was minimal, the sound, the vibration, and yet, present. I knew at that moment that the mug had cracked, but it was so subtle that I had to check. Indeed, there was a crack running from the top part of the handle to the bottom part. It wasn't a grand event, nor did it spill any of the liquid in the mug, it just slowly filtered it. That event made me think of the importance of events, on how something can break without flying into a million pieces. I thought of how different the end of the movie *Zabriskie Point* by Michelangelo Antonioni would be if instead of the big explosion portrayed at the end, where objects burst into pieces, there had been a subtle but significant fracture. From all the things breaking in my life, that mug fracturing so subtly but significantly is one of the things that meant the most.
- 6 Over the years, I have encountered stranded red balloons in different places. Without searching for them, they appear randomly. I have wondered if this is one of those situations where one sees what one is aware of. However, I cannot remember seeing other

coloured balloons as randomly as those. Yes, there are the usual balloons on the ceilings of places, but those balloons are always the shiny kind. The ones I am referring to are the standard stringless oval-shaped red balloons.

- 7 Deleuze, Gilles and Felix Guattari. *Mille plateaux* (A Thousand Plateaus. Translated by Brian Massumi). University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1980, p. 1.
- 8 Oakeshott, Michael. *Experience and its Modes*. Cambridge University Press, 2015, p. 10.
- 9 Image 3 in *In the Middle of Things*.

Artistic components

*There was no thought,
but a thrive for the visibility of
something yet to be named*

—
HAM gallery
Helsinki, Finland
2018

andracoyotziborja.com/therewasnothought

What happens when nothing happens

—
Huuto gallery
Helsinki, Finland
2019

andracoyotziborja.com/what-happens-when-nothing-happens

In the Middle of Things

—
Present
within this book.

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I cannot possibly cover, in short, the amount of gratitude I have towards so many people (dead and alive). And the many things I have already anthropomorphized through my life. It is also a task which I take the same way as walking in the winter streets covered in ice, trying that my step doesn't slip, just as I hope my memory won't. And, for all those who know me and have witnessed me forget a name, a face and even a whole experience as if it was taken easily with the slightest breeze in the change of a season, it is no surprise then if I unwillingly miss the opportunity to name someone who, by no means concerning their importance, have forgotten to name here.

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Lauren Red. The one and only **LAUREN REID**. I remember we began talking about our experiences, trying to find the motivation for working on each of our manuscripts. That's how it began. Where are we? We are sending videos of seals snoring, imagining what seals do on holidays while we meet every week to work together. Thank you for all your time, all your work and feedback, all your advice, your presence, and your kindness. Thank you (seals lining on a straight line playing the trumpet while they roll a red carpet for you).

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What is the infraordinary? This research proposes the question not as an interrogative subject, but rather to raise the possibility and purposeful search, and re-search, of the phenomenon. It delves into the processes through which the infraordinary becomes visible and inquires about the dynamics present in this process.

Researching the infraordinary phenomenon brings forward the opportunity to observe and dwell on different facets of everyday life and to re-consider our relationship with our daily lives. What do we encounter, and what do the things we find say about our everyday lives, our contexts, the place we live, the supermarkets, the social dynamics, and the politics of it?

To inquire about the infraordinary is not an action delimited by the pursuit of an answer but an opportunity to engage with what surrounds us. A chance to take a moment, to look around and discover all that is already there speaking to us.



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