



Just Be As Though You Weren't There At All

– how to perform or not to perform yourself at home, in the
forest or while crossing the lobby of Väre building at Aalto
University

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Abstract

In this thesis I study the elements of performance and performativity in my own artistic work. I explore how spaces effect my behaviour and what kind of performativity or performance like actions they evoke. I focus on three different spaces, that are Väre building lobby in Aalto university Otaniemi, Letonniemi nature reserve in Oulu and my back yard, also in Oulu Finland. My work consists of a written part and an artistic implementation. The artistic part was a performative installation that I implemented in the V1 gallery of the Väre building in Aalto University in April 2022. Installation contained video and sound material that I had produced during my explorations of the spaces, and it also acted as an individual performative experiment. I used the gallery space as an artistic studio during the time of the opening. In this text, I contemplate the observations and insights that emerged during the process. I view them against the theories especially from area of performance studies, sociology, and existential semiotics. I do not come up with any specific conclusions but instead try find different approaches to the topic. The main theme in the reflections of the text is related to Jean Baudrillard's ideas about simulation and the influence of the media on the perception and understanding of one's own environment.

Keywords performativity, performance, simulation, performance art, installation art, contemporary art, existential semiotics

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Tiivistelmä

Tässä opinnäytetyössäni tutkin performatiivisuuden ja performatiivisuuden elementtejä omassa taiteellisessa työssäni. Tutkin, miten tilat vaikuttavat käyttäytymiseeni ja millaista performatiivisuutta tai esityksenkaltaista toimintaa ne herättävät. Keskityn kolmeen eri tilaan, jotka ovat Vären -rakennuksen aula Aalto-yliopiston Otaniemessä, Letonniemen luonnonsuojelualue Oulussa ja kotini takapiha, myös Oulussa. Työni koostuu kirjallisesta osasta ja taiteellisesta toteutuksesta. Taiteellinen osa oli performatiivinen installaatio, jonka toteutin Aalto-yliopiston Väre-rakennuksen V1-galleriassa huhtikuussa 2022. Installaatio sisälsi mainituissa tiloissa toteuttamieni taiteellisten kokeiluiden aikana tuottamaani video- ja äänimateriaalia ja se toimi myös itsenäisenä performatiivisena kokeiluna. Käytin galleriatilaa työhuoneena installaation aukiolon ajan. Tässä tekstissä pohdin prosessin aikana esiin tulleita havaintoja ja oivalluksia. Tutkailen niitä erityisesti performanssitutkimuksen, sosiologian ja eksistentiaalisen semiotiikan teorioita vasten. En tee varsinaisia pitkälle vietyjä johtopäätöksiä, vaan yritän löytää erilaisia lähestymistapoja aiheeseen. Pääteema tekstin pohdinnoissa liittyy Jean Baudrillardin ajatuksiin simulaatiosta ja median vaikutuksesta tapaan havainnoida ja ymmärtää omaa ympäristöä.

Avainsanat performatiivisuus, esitys, simulaatio, performanssitaide, installaatiotaide, nykyaide, eksistentiaalisemiotiikka

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1 Semi-fictive preface

“Oo vaan ku et olisikaan.” trans. “Just be as though you weren’t (there) at all.”

This is a phrase I herd from the fellow worker in a cigarette booth of a sausage factory that I was working in twenty years ago. This person had been working in the factory for twenty years and this line was an answer or advice pointed to the younger summer worker who was suffering the unbearable boredom and mental fatigue caused by the hideously monotonous job in the grey gloomy atmosphere. The phrase itself is a very commonly used in Finland and I had of course heard it multiple times before. But before that situation I’ve never really stopped to think what it actually means and suggests. This phrase and the idea behind it have bothered me since. It is used to act as a simple joke like line thrown to ease the mood momentarily. I believe that people don’t usually think about its significance so deeply but they just utter it out if it feels to fit the situation. For me it started to feel that behind the seemingly harmless statement, there was some real knowledge brought by the experience.

In a way I feel that the phrase contained an ontological approach to the process of being a person who works in this kind of situation. There was a clear demand for accepting the circumstances as they were, suggesting the total surrendering to the situation. It also hints that the only way to be able to survive the work, is the idea of “not being”. As it would say that the time of working should not be a time of existing in its full meaning. That the way to survive the work is not to exist while performing it. It does not say that try to imagine yourself in some place other, or any kind of self-manipulating techniques at all. No, it just brutally states that there is an existing option of not being. What makes me curious about this is the manner of not being. Since it is obvious that the individual does not (yet) possess the power to temporarily stop oneself of existing physically in the space, it must be the act of something in the area of symbolic, conceptual, spiritual, and or cognitive dimension.

Is this also a question of the being or existing as a performance? If you make a hypothesis that the act of being, as it is the factual physical existence in the space, and a cognition of acknowledging your presence as an individual subject, is also an act of performing your being to yourself and to the others. If it would be so, could it be possible to intentionally switch or change the target or the recipient of your performing act, between yourself and some other entity? For example, in this sausage factory case, can you stop performing the act of being to yourself and precent it fully to the actions of the work and the people and the institution surrounding the work? Or on the other hand, is it possible to stop precepting your

own performance of being and so for not to be aware of your own presence and existence?

I have always felt that I'm not actually living this life as I do. I have a feeling of being a pretender, an impostor. I pretend that I'm doing all these things and pretend the desires, wills, pursuits, interests. When I'm talking with other persons about whatever subject, I can see myself from the outside and the image makes me sick. Its an image of fool, a spineless creature wearing a chameleon like exoskeleton. Even getting up from the bed at morning feels in a way fake. Like I wasn't able to do it in a way that it naturally should happen. As though I'm merely posing, doing it in superficial pretentious form, at the wrong time and for the wrong reasons. Pretty much everything in it feels wrong, and when I stand beside my bed, it feels like it isn't me in there. like the actual person is still sleeping, and only the simulation of the person I pretend to be is present. Then I proceed to perform my mundane every morning things, with the slight taste of doubt, repulsion in my mouth. I make the coffee and pick up the mug. There's always something wrong with the MUG!!!! There's probably little less than 30 mugs in our cupboard and there all horrible. They're all full of some disgusting marks, signs, symbols, colours, forms, and whatnot stains on them that jump on my face and rub ram their hideous significance to the precepting organs of it. You just cannot simply pick one and pretend that you are only pouring the coffee and enjoying its taste and affects, while under this kind of attack; No way!!!!

2 Introduction

The subject of my thesis is basically a combination of two different ideas that have been interesting me for some time. The other was the idea of exploring different approaches of self-portrait. The other was to study the effect of different spaces to my behaviour. When diving deeper into these subjects and doing some artistic experiments with them I started to notice that they both contain similar elements that seemed to be actual point of interest to me.

In the beginning my objection for the thesis was to create a self-portrait as cultural product. The idea of a self-portrait and portraits in general had bothered me for years and I felt that I have to do something with it. As I started to work with the self-portrait, I realized that what I was really interested in, was the question of what am I actually doing while creating a portrait that consists myself in it. What am I trying to show and to whom? Am I creating a representation of something that I am as a person or am I just imitating an act of creating a portrait? I started to feel that for me there does not exist the thing called self-portrait, there can only be some actions that in a way simulate the concept of self-portrait. What I mean with this is that I felt that the objective of my work was not to express something via self-portrait but to express the act of making it. I felt that I was producing some kind of performances, or at least material that could be seen to have performative elements in it. I understood that what I'm really interested about is the elements of performativity and performance in my work. Since I have background in performing arts it is natural for me that the pieces, I produce have performance like dimension in them.

At first, I felt that I wanted to avoid the performativity and performance as a subject. It felt too obvious and something that I have already gone through enough many times. But then I realized that I couldn't hide from it because it seemed to be something that I'm constantly addressing in my work. And after I started to give more attention to it, I found realizations and dimensions that I haven't ever thought before. I open these ideas and contemplations about the concepts and how they are present in my work in chapter three. I look my observations and musing against the ideas and writings by such authors as Pilvi Porkola, Richard Schechner, and Erwin Goffman. Porkola is a performance artist, author and art researcher who has made artistic research in the area of performance. I have used her doctoral dissertation *Esitys tutkimuksena* (Performance as research) (Porkola 2014) as a material to reflect my thoughts about the dimension and possibilities of performance. Richard Schechner is a theater director, performance theorist and university professor, whose book

Performance studies (Schenker 2002) works for me as a material to contemplate with the basic concepts of performance and performativity. The book *Performing yourself in everyday life* Sociologist and an author Erwin Goffman offers

In chapter 3 I address the topic how working with performativity and self-portrait led me to think about the question of what actually happens while working with yourself as an object. I wanted to question my objectives, the reasons of using myself as a material or in a way medium. Things I started to think was that am I trying to express or reveal something from myself or trying to find something from myself? And if I'm performing, to whom I make these performances to? In order to grasp these questions I had to try to define what the "self" means to me in this context. What is the "the self" as an artistic medium and is it present in my work?

For me the sound is a very important and natural element as the artistic medium. Sound acts as an expressive and signifying element in the pieces that I have crafted. Many times, I feel that the sound is the actual subject matter of my work. Even in the video pieces, the sound feels in a way as the actual core of the work. Especially in the works that construct from combinations of images, objects and abstract sounds, I feel the sound is an element that ties it all together and creates the actual significance. I have hard time to pinpoint the quality of this significance in textual manner, but I create an attempt of that in the chapter 4. I reflect my thoughts with writings of such persons as artist, writer and researcher Salome Voegelin and Eero Tarasti, who is a musicologist, semiotician, pianist and author. Tarasti's ideas about Existential semiotics, which is the concept he has developed, works for me mostly as an inspirational material that I read and interpret in an intuitional manner.

One big question that connects to the idea of performativity and performance is my tendency question the objections and purposes of my actions in general. Especially all relating to my making of art. When exploring things with the idea of self-portrait, I started to question whether I'm actually producing or just imitating the act of producing art; in a way simulating. The idea of simulation is something that is present at the moment in pretty much everything that I'm doing. I feel that it is not very clear to me what I actually think about it. I keep questioning is that really something that I'm interested about or is it just a symptom of some other thing affecting to me. But since it keeps bothering me and I feel that it affects all my work and thinking at the moment in great manner, I see I have to take it into consideration. Sociologist and philosopher Jean Baudrillard's ideas about simulation has been something that have affected my thinking and doing quite a lot. In chapter 5 I try to verbalize my thoughts and experiences regarding the concept of simulation by comparing them to the writings of Baudrillard.

Since I also feel that I have hard time concretizing my ideas and staying on topic I made this semi-fictional preface to open my thinking. I feel that especially with this simulation topic, I am more able to bring my musings and observations in to understandable form with the essay like text, where I give myself a freedom to include intuitive, and even fictional material to it. This chapter also acts as textual example of the topic that I'm trying to bring to light in here. The thoughts and ideas I present in the sausage factory example are not exactly just my thoughts transformed into written form. I think the text itself is in a way a kind of simulation. It is an outcome or evidence of the performance that I have done; the performance of writing and thinking. I can't one hundred percent sure say that I agree with everything I write in that text. To be precise I actually felt at the moment of writing the text that I do not have pretty much anything to say about the topic. So there for I created the thoughts and ideas; I performed to myself the act of expressing my experiences and contemplations. This observation is perhaps something that I could call as a core of some kind or the reflective surface that goes through and effects all my work and this thesis.

The other starting point of my thesis, as I mentioned in the beginning, was the effect of space to my behaviour. I feel that many spaces constructed by human carry within them a certain assumption of in which manner an individual is to act and behave in them. By being aware of these assumed codes implemented in these spaces I feel that I'm in an interaction between myself and a space. I also observe the spaces as they were a sort of performances themselves. This point of view comes simply from my own experience of seeing the elements of performativity in the objects made by human and in the living organisms.

There were three different spaces that had got my interest: the lobby of Väre building in Aalto university, Letonniemi nature reserve in Oulu, near my home and backyard of my home. They all have very different kind of affect to me, but they all appear to as spaces that arouse performance like behaviour while being in them. I chose to use the word space instead of place, since I felt that space for me sounds more three dimensional and tangible. I wanted to explore these spaces by doing some artistic experiments in them. And since the other point of interest to me was the self-portrait aspect, it felt as an organic choice to combine these two topics. The main method of my artistic experiments and explorations has been filming the spaces and myself in them. I have also recorded the soundscapes of the spaces and some sounds that I have produced in them, such as my own voice. I go through the idea of exploring the space by performing in the chapter 6 and dive deeper into the experiments and musings, I had done in the spaces.

In chapter 7 make a report of the artistic implementation my thesis. I had the V1-gallery room at the Väre building reserved for me at the start of April. The idea was not to produce an exhibition in a manner of bringing individual pieces of

artworks in the gallery, but to construct a performative installation. I use the concept performative installation because I feel that pretty much all the content I produced and installed and produced in the gallery space adopted some performative elements in them. Also my idea was to use the space as my studio for the time the installation was open. So the content of the installation was not only the artistic material I produced in there but also the performance of me working in there.

To end the thesis in chapter 8 I contemplate the observations and realizations that have emerged while the process. I try to come up with some conclusions and tie together ideas that have travelled through the whole journey.

3 performing myself and with myself

In this chapter, I try to grasp the basic idea about what the idea of performing means to me and how it is presented in my work. I use the word “performing” when I refer to the behaviour and actions that attempt to express something to the real or imagined audience, try to impress, or has some sort of representational quality in it. I also try to define what I understand as performance and how it differs from something that could be called as performative behaviour or performativity. After defining my approaches and views about these terms I go through the ideas about how and why I perform myself in my work.

3.1 Performance or performativity

Both concepts performance and performativity are derived from the verb “to perform”. To perform itself means quite a range of different things. By Richard Schechner “to perform” can be seen to relate for example such things as being, doing, showing doing and explaining “showing doing”. He depicts the difference between being and doing. Being been seen as philosophical category referring to something that is real. Doing and showing doing on the other hand are actions and so for different from being. (Schechner 2002)

For me the interesting question in my work is the idea of the line between being and doing. What all the things can be seen as actions, and what are just things that are? And is the action quality of things dependent of the context, site, and situation? Can the “being” become and act; can it be doing or even showing doing in some circumstances, without any extra activities or elements attached to it? Can the “showing of being” become the doing? For example, in the situation where I placed the camera to shoot the video image of a Väre lobby and then walked in the middle of it and just stood there.



Even though I didn't do anything special but just stood there in ostensibly neutral manner, was I still "doing" something? Of course, I could say that standing itself is a physical act and so for it is doing. But was the event that I captured on the film the act of standing or the act of being, or both? This may sound like a ridiculous and irrelevant hair-splitting, but for me this is an essential question to be asked. It frames the actual content of my work by defining what is "performed" and how. And when I'm talking about performing, am I talking about performance or performativity.

Erwin Goffman defines the performance simply as "all the activity of a given participant on a given occasion which serves to influence in any way any of the other participants." (Goffman 1959, 15-16) He uses the concept "front" to describe the sort of equipment a person uses while performing and intentionally attempting to give a desired impression of oneself in a certain situation. Via this front an individual attempts to represent the attributes and qualities from oneself. (Goffman 1959) For me it seems that to Goffman the performance and the act of performing relates highly to the act of attempting to affect to the other persons in the space. But are these examples of Goffman performances or are they something that could be called for example just performative behaviour? I tend to understand this kind of actions as performative behaviour. I would not use the word performance when referring to this kind of behaviour.

Richard Schechner offers a one approach to the term performance by defining it as the "Ritualized behaviour conditioned and/or permeated by play." (Schechner, 2002, 52) According to Shchencher, ritual is seen as a concrete physical action that embodies the idea, value or ideology and that via the ritual something is actually done or achieved in real. The play instead gives the performance more freedom to explore taboos and something that is not seen as real or wanted. (Schechner, 2002) I feel that this concretizes the things I feel I'm doing in my work. I observe some human behaviour, for example the way people and myself act in space such as nature reserve. (I handle this more in the chapter 6.2.) I usually tend to see ritualized performativity in those actions. Then I try to re-enact those assumed

ritualized actions and, in a way, play with them by trying different approaches and intuitive implementations.

By my contemplations with these authors I have come to a conclusion about how I define and use these terms in my work and in this text. I use the term “performative behaviour” or “performativity” when I’m talking about for example the situation where a certain space effects my behaviour and makes me to alter my appearance. I think this behaviour can be either conscious or un-conscious. The main point is that the person adjusts its actions in the manner that it can be seen as performing to the real or imaginative audience. And performing in this case means to me actions that’s objective is to give certain impression or affect somehow to the audience. And with the concept “performance” I refer to the pre-meditated, deliberately crafted actions, that the performer itself calls as performances. I try to stay consistent with these terms, but in some cases, there can appear some contradictions.

3.2 Performing myself

Since I’m using myself and my own body in my work, I feel it is important to dig down to the idea about what it means and how it effects the content. I feel there is a great distinction between showing videos and images presenting yourself or some other person. Even though in a cognitive level I wish that my body would work as a mere signifier of a generic human being in my works, I know that I can’t avoid the fact that I’m at the same time creating all sorts of representations. All the attributes such as age, size, clothing, manner of moving etc. they all hold within them a heavy burden of signification. And I feel that the fact that it is the image of myself produced by myself suggests that my purpose is to present to the viewers something of me as a person. Especially if the viewer knows that the person in the images and videos is the same person who filmed them. At least for me it instantly gives the impression that the piece attempts to represent and express the artists persona in some ways. Especially the Goffman’s ideas make me to question the objectives of my work. I start to question what are they about; some kind of representations, comments, manifests, imitations or just plain attempts to impress? Am I using some sort of front in my work, and if I do, how it would be manifested? And most of all, if there is somekind of front presented in my works, is it an expression of myself or something else? For me it does not feel relevant to dive in to contemplations about what all sorts of representations I produce in the images I produce. I’m more interested in the actual mechanics about what is happening in the event of performing.

Roland Barthes writes in his book *Barthes on Barthes* that "you are the only person who can never see yourself but only as an image." (Barthes 1982, 35) He

talks how when looking yourself through the mirror or by the picture you're always seeing just the representation made by the camera without the actual communication with the other person. He also writes above one of the pictures on the book, that he never saw himself as looking like this. (Barthes 1982, 35) How I understand it is that Barthes is attempting to see the idea of an individual person in a way actualizing by the interaction with the other persons, and how the image can never capture this "actualness" of the individual. But at the same time, he suggests that there is some individual qualities and attributes within his self that can only be observed by another individual. This makes me think what the act of performing yourself actually means for me and my work. How does the "self" is present in for example video piece that I have crafted? Or is it present? If the self only actualises in the interaction with the other beings, is it present when I film myself doing something? Or is it just a representative body?

Deborah Lupton writes about how the modern "self" is seen as highly autonomous and individual, in constant contradiction between communicating with the others and maintaining its individuality. According to Lupton the depiction between the self as inside and others as outside is very distinctive for our modern relation to embodiment. (Lupton 1998, 95) I feel that this idea of individuality is something I wish to grasp in my work. Or at least that is something that bothers me somehow. The friction between the idea of making a representation of generic idea of human being doing something and the representation of an individual. It feels like it is almost impossible to hide from this question of individuality and especially the expression of feelings.

Lupton claims, that in the past before the body relation produced by enlightenment, the concept of "feelings" has been quite different and the distinction between actions and feelings has not been so strict. Feelings and emotions in general has been seen much more as physical bodily things not something concerning ones individual inside "self". Lupton also notes that seventeenth century Christian development in the western countries highlighted the regulation of the self, bodily actions and expression of emotions. In the cultural level people started to value themselves and make distinctions between the quality of the self-regulation and the manner of controlling oneself. (Lupton 1998, 67)

I find this self-control aspect to be the very core of my explorations. For me there is a certain contradiction in this. Richard Schenker mentions how self-awareness is seen to correlate with the amount performativity in human behaviour. (Schechner 2002) It feels for me that by this the performance becomes in a way a double performance. I am not then performing an expression of feelings but instead I perform simulated feelings in order to hide the "real" feelings. For example, when entering the Väre lobby from the main door (and this applies to may other similar big building) my first reaction would be to stop and have a proper look at it. I would want to observe the things going on in the space, listen

to the sound scape and let myself be affected by the details and events going on. But usually I don't do that. I hide this reaction and all the possible motions arising from the stimuli I get from the space and on the opposite, I just casually walk through the space by trying maintain as neutral appearance as possible. So, by being very aware of my appearance and the things I express with my actions I end expressing much less. But at the same time, I could say that I'm much more "performing" than in the case that I would freely let myself express all the motions that entering and observing the space arouses in me. I could say that I'm putting up something similar that could be called as Goffmans idea of front, in order to hide the expression of myself. In this case performing is not expressing or at least it could be called as an attempt to express my "self" as little as possible.

What is a very interesting aspect for me is the influence of television, movies, social media and other medias to the manner I percept the presence of myself in the spaces. It feels that I do not compare my actions and ways of being to the behaviour of people that I've seen in "real" life. But instead, my observations merge between the the real life experiences and the things I've seen in movies, television, social media, and whatnot medias. I find my perspective fairly similar to the Baudrillard example of the hyperreal state caused by the endless consumption of media material and constant remote communication. Baudrillard talks about the "satellitization of the real" or the "hyperrealism of simulation" Baudrillard compares the perspective of a person living in a hyperreal state as a perspective of an astronaut in the space capsule. According to Baudrillard this kind of person sees oneself controlling a machine in an isolated sovereignty, from infinite distance of one's original universe. (Baudrillard 2011) I feel that I experience this same sort of distance mentioned by Baudrillard. This distance blurs my perception of what is real and what is not. I think its not so much about understanding what is imaginary but instead what is not. Meaning that I have hard time depicting things especially in my own behaviour that would not be affected by some media material. I also feel that I tend to see this same effect in the actions and behaviour in other people too. It feels like the consumption of media material has created this distance that blurs my understanding of the difference between real and imaginary. And this blurring causes the effect that I start to see performative behaviour in pretty much everywhere.

In order to give a bit more concrete example about this experience, I use the observation of Dan Graham. Graham states in his text Video in relation to architecture, how children adopt issues, problems, and goals from tv-shows and start to simulate the same kind of behaviour, and in a way become the actors in the movie that is their life. (Hall and Fifter 1990, 169) I can relate to this observation as I many times feel that the whole life has become a certain kind of performance, the performance that I put out to the presumed fictional audience. This effects to many dimensions of my personal life, but especially to my perceptions of making art. I start to doubt whether I'm focusing more on outcome

or the way I perform the act of working. I feel that contemplating this question acts as a big objective in my work at the moment. I feel that I don't express or explore things via performance but I explore the act of performing in itself. I try to see what really happens while performing and especially why.

4 Sound as an act of performance

Sound plays a big role in my work. For example in many of my video pieces the sound is the part that actually creates the idea of the work. The video material by itself feels for me in a way distant compared to the sound, not like the expressive material by itself but just a mere material a “stuff”. But when I attach the sound to it, I feel it comes alive in a way. The sound makes the piece expressive. I believe it is because to me the sound acts as a communicational element with a video. It can act as comment, question, reaction, it enables a dialogue. The sounds that I produce many times feels more whole and self-sufficient than the videos by themselves. This may have something to do with the fact that I don’t see myself as a photographer or a visual artist in general, and I do have more experience in working with sonic material and audio equipment. But I also think that it may be because sound itself is a different kind of element especially for me. The sound is not a physical object. One cannot touch it in a sense that you could hold it in the hand. Sound is an event. Something that happens inside and to the material. It is a movement. Image exists even it would be sealed in the dark room where there is no way of perceiving it visually. But still it exists and when it is taken back to light its attributes had stayed the same and depending on the light projected on it, it looks the same as before. But sound is not material, it is an event, that must be produced every time, again and again. One cannot just observe the recording for example. It has to be transformed into an action taking place in the material, in the space. Sound is evidence of something happening. Or at least it signifies that some kind of physical action is taking place.

I feel that sound is also an element that gives the imaginary dimension to the act of observing the piece. As Salome Voegelin states in his book *Listening to noise and silence* that that to hear is more as to discover as to receive. That sound never actually tells us the truth about the objects and phenomena heard but as we listen, we construct and fantasise the source of the sound. Voegelin says that “It is perception as interpretation that knows that to hear the work/ the sound is to invent it in listening to the sensory material rather than to recognize its contemporary and historical context. Such listening will produce the artistic context of the work/the sound in its innovative perception rather than through the expectation of an a priori reality.” (Voegelin 2010, 4)

As I think about this idea now it seems almost as a self-evident fact, but when I read it first time it really made me think about the sound and listening from a new perspective. I think this imaginary dimension is something that makes the sound and especially abstract sound so interesting to me. As when I look at the video for example, I see things that are present in there. I have the information about the attributes of the content. If there is a person standing on the wooden floor, I can

clearly see it. Of course, there is room for imagination in the visual content too. I can imagine where is this person coming from, what are the persons thought etc. But in the case of the sound, I have to imagine what it actually is.

Sound also gives the piece a certain kind of communicative dimension. As Voegelin puts it "Sound narrates, outlines and fills, but it is always ephemeral and doubtful. Between my heard and the sonic object/phenomenon I will never know its truth but can only invent it, producing a knowing for me.

This knowing is the experience of sound as temporal relationship. This 'relationship' is not between things but is the thing, is sound itself." (Voegelin 2010, 5) I like this idea of temporal relationship. I feel it relates to the way I understand the performative nature of sound. Since it is something that happens, it makes the person hearing it a part of this happening, an event. And the person hearing it has to have some kind of relation to it by the reactions and emotion the sound arouses. If the sound stops or starts, or some other change appears, there must a reason for this. And at least for me this makes me to imagine what are the events and reasons for these changes. And by this I can't just note that something is happening, but I have to interpret and imagine what is happening.

J.L. Austin uses the term "performatives" to depict certain utterances of spoken language (such as "I do" in the moment of getting married), as a performative act that lead to consequences. (J L Austin 1962) I know this may sound a bit farfetched, but I feel that sound acts in my works in a similar mechanics. Could it be possible for abstract sound to act as a similar thing as performative, as an act that leads to something? Of course, one can point out a signal sounds such as fire alarm or car horn, but what if I look this from the perspective of sounds that do not contain any predefined signification. For example, if I show you the image of a staircase as something to be observed as an artistic object or otherwise pragmatically self-contained agent, and after let's say 10 seconds of observation I add a steady hiss sound to the space, where the image is observed. I claim that the sound has an effect to the way the image is perceived and especially how the content of it is interpret. After hearing the sound the image can not be perceived any more as an individual piece, but instead it is partly defined by the communication it has with the sound. So even in the case that the sound may be fully abstract, could it be defined in this situation as a performative, as an act that holds with in it an enacting signification?

Idea about existential signs developed by Eero Tarasti in his book Existential Semiotics (Tarasti 2000) could be something that would be possible to apply here. According to Tarasti, existential sign can be understood as a sign that is detached from subjects existence. Tarasti writes how existential signs "detach them-selves from the world of Dasein and float in a gravity-less, transcendental space, only so as to become reconnected with it. It is precisely in such a process of de-parting and returning that signs come into continuous motion; they are no longer fixed,

ready-made objects, but are free to take shape in many completely new ways" (Tarasti 2000, 19) In a way I see that abstract sounds and noises hold within them somethings that can be seen as such existential signs Tarasti states. How I understand it is that when a subject interprets these signs it must enter the transcendence and when coming back from there this experience has affected the subject and the subject may adopt new meanings and significations to objects and signs.

I see a resemblance to this theory in Voegelin's idea about the noise. He states that the noise holds within the phenomenological and semiotic aspects. "Noise cannot speak, but knows there is a fragile relationship between its experience and the system of communication and longs to practise that relationship... it practises a signifying practice that finds no signification but continually builds a bridge between the structure for the articulation of meaning and the process of its experience, on which eventually and tentatively such a meaning might be formulated in its own formlessness." (Voegelin 2010, 75) I feel that the sound could be seen as a sign that does not have a fixed significance yet, but as it affects the person listening to it. It creates a change in the way the person perceives for example the image. The signification in a way "becomes". The sound in this very moment becomes a sign that at first floats to transcendence, but then returns with a meaning by which has made it a signifier. And this way I feel that sound connected to the image, in a way performs the image. Without the sound the image would be just an object, but with the sound it becomes a performance. Or to be precise, the connection and interaction between the sound and an image becomes a performance.

5 Replicating icons

Sometimes, I catch myself from thinking whether the pieces of (especially video) art that I've made actually refer to something real. I start to question my objectives regarding the question that what am I trying to produce. For example, I would presume that if I produce an image of myself, it will contain a representation of different cultural, political, gender and what not issues. But what if it doesn't? What if it is in fact just an acted-out performance of the representation, not the actual representation itself? After reading Jean Baudrillard's ideas about simulation and the simulacrum, I started to realize the depth and the meaning of this issue in my work and especially the way I understand the idea of performativity in it. As I understand it, by Baudrillard the simulacrum means something that copies or works as a model of the real without the actual reference to the real. (Baudrillard 1988)

What especially felt interesting to me was an example of an image of god. Baudrillard states that any image of god does not refer to anything real and is so for a simulation of itself. (Baudrillard 1988, 169) I get this doubt very often when visiting a gallery and especially when seeing a performing art piece such as theatre and dance pieces. I doubt whether the piece actually addresses or refers to some "real" phenomena or is it just imitating other pieces. More roughly speaking; is it art or a simulation of art? As an example of this I could mention my experiences in the field of performing arts and especially text based traditional western theatre. In the theatre practises you can often hear discussions about whether some scene "works" or not. Hard work is done to make a scene "work". This has led me to think what it actually means. What the scene does when it "works". Of course, I can relate to the feeling that you can get when you realise that know something is "working". and what I mean with this is the situations when you probably see something interesting in the work and something that you hope you could see there. But as according to my personal experience, many times when the scene finally starts to "work" it means that it has started to resemble the generic theatre scene. When the rhythm, reactions, dynamics, manners of expressing and all these important characters important to theatre scene It has started to look like they usually do in something that you could call a basic drama theatre. That's when it is seen to be working. If I may use the Baudrillard's god analogue mentioned before, I could claim that this kind of art making is like copying a picture of god. The image of Saint Mary works when it resembles the image of Saint Mary

For me this has been an observation causing huge anxiety. I have started to doubt whether I'm doing the exact same thing. What if I'm just imitating some pieces of art that in my mind represent the idea of art? Am I just replicating icons so to

speak? Well, since it's probably impossible to know for sure, I just assume that that might be the case to a certain extent. This then leads me to the question that if the material that I'm producing is at least partly just some kind of simulacrum, what should I do with it? And should I produce it at all?

Pilvi Porkola writes how she started to feel that in the abundance of modern image culture there must be a certain reason to make images. She thought that the significance of images inevitably drowns into the constant stream of other images. (Porkola 2014) I can relate to this thought since I many times feel that the content and all the aesthetic attributes that my works contain have been seen by the viewers thousands of times. So, the actual content of the image doesn't pretty much mean anything. It feels that the work I have done only acts as evidence of the act of producing it. Then the act of producing and displaying itself is the actual content, the signifier. The work itself stands on nothing without the analysis of the purpose and the function of the procedure where it was produced. In a way when showing the image or the video, I do not show the actual material, but a mere gesture of producing and displaying it. I feel that this gesture for me is a performative action; a performance itself.

6 Exploring the space by performing

When entering or arriving in a certain space and especially space that is constructed by human, I get very self-aware of my own presence in it. I start to monitor my behaviour and how the space effects to it. By this event of monitoring and being aware of my own manner of presence my being in the space becomes a sort of performance. The situation holds within it the same attributes as the performer such as actor on the stage holds while performing; the monitoring ones presence in the space, monitoring the effects of ones actions in the space, monitoring the effects of the space in ones behaviour, acknowledging ones intentions and manners while acting in the space. By these processes the situation becomes totally performative.

I feel that Many times spaces are deliberately designed to evoke certain kind of behaviour, actions, and manner of being present. In some cases, I personally find this kind of propositions coming from the space intimidating and causing anxiety. I may feel contradiction with the way I see myself as a person and the attributes that the space expects from a person being in it.

Next I will introduce you three cases where I have explored the space and its effects on me by performing in it. The spaces are lobby of Väre building in Aalto University, Letonniemi nature reserve in Oulu, and the backyard of my home, also in Oulu.

6.1 Väre lobby

One of my friend stated how she felt that the Väre building and especially the lobby of it was designed to be perfect for strutting a cross it in a cool manner, rather than serving the actual objections the building was built in the first place. This made me think about the space and become very acknowledged about it from the first time I entered the lobby. First impression when entering the space is that it has a greater meaning than just being a hall, an entering space for the premisses. It carries the sort of temple like attribute in it, a suggestion that this certain space is dedicated to some important, sacred actions or rituals. It also contains a connotation to other contemporary art school buildings that are made in the old factory buildings that have huge halls in the middle of them. These big halls have had a pragmatic purpose of being places for big machines, construction lines, workers etc. they have not been wide open spaces just for aesthetic reasons.

When entering the lobby of Väre my first impression is that the space is being made to be looked at by a visitor, not a student. It wants to create an impression, it wants to impress, it wants to take control and make you feel small. One can only conquer the hall by forcing thru it with strong, nearly arrogant manner. If you stop at the doorway and start looking around wondering, where should I go and what to do, you have already lost the game. In order to take control of the space you must play the part that the space suggests to you, you must commit to the ritual it invites you in, you must perform. By entering the space, you are (whether you want or not) instantly part of the performance, the space creates the set and the stage where you are a performer of its ever continuing event. Even when you are alone in the lobby, you do not act alone; your counter actor is the space itself and it reacts to everything you do or don't do.

By standing in the middle of the space you are at the same time the performer and the audience. Your clothes, posture, facial expression, gestures, age, gender, status, things you carry along, people that enter the room all become symbolic objects and highly meaningful signifiers. The effect is similar to what happens in the theatre; things and objects that are placed in the stage immediately stop being a practical representation of them self and turn in to the symbolic network of meanings. To me it feels that to exist in the Väre lobby is to perform, only thing you can decide is how do you perform.

Alan Bryman writes about the phenomena that he has named as a "disneyization" meaning the process seen in a America and all over the world where principles of Disneyland start to become more and more dominating features in different areas of society. (Bryman, 2004) When looking at the idea of the architecture of Väre building in Otaniemi I can easily see that one important character of it has been the transparency. Premises meant for students' individual work are mainly rooms and spaces with glass walls predisposing them for a constant observation and monitoring. Motive behind this idea is probably to enable visual observation of the work for visitor groups and special guests in order to establish and strengthen the Aalto brand. By this I feel there is a certain element of performativity attached to the work of students and the staff. Bryman mentions as the one dimensions of disneyization the "'performative labour – the growing tendency for frontline service work to be viewed as a performance" (Bryman, 2004, 9) I see here an analogy to the current trend of designing art schools and public buildings in general.

Ane Hjort Guttu writes in her text "The end Of Art Education as We Know It" about the change in the art school system in Nordic countries and especially the ideological shift that is seen in the architecture of new art school buildings. Guttu draws the similarity between these buildings of all having the same kind of spacy halls, courtyards and project spaces. These buildings are turning in to stages, where the idea of innovative art school is presented to the outsiders, rather than

the places that would serve the learning and development of the students. She sees this as a result of economical thinking that aims to minimize the risk of spaces to be unused. Buildings are not made to serve the students and their endeavours but in order to be lucrative business for constructors and owners. As Guttu states about the essence of spaces that: "As much as they offer flexibility, they also incite the students to take on a new role, one where they learn the fine art of navigating between work and leisure, socialising and study, constant availability and ceaseless performativity." (Guttu, 2020) Guttu cites a student in a Bergen art school, who depicts the behaviour that this kind of space arouses in an interesting manner: "When I'm at my workplace at school, I start to behave the way I think an art student would behave. If I'm doing carpentry, for example, then I think 'now it looks like I'm working'. I pace back and forth because I think it looks good, like I'm being productive and know what I'm about." (Guttu, 2020)

I feel that I can sense this tendency in the Väre lobby. Maybe I'm not the most objective evaluator because I have already read multiple articles, heard many discussions about this topic before and especially because I have now studied almost two years in the building. But still the building and especially the lobby gives me feeling that it's aim is to work as a representation of an idea. What I mean that it is not a space that tries to fulfil the idea of an innovative art school but represents it. And in this case with an idea, I don't mean something that is seen to be good, and has an example in reality, but something that is produced, that is imaginary.

This leads my thoughts again back to the idea of simulation and simulacra. I know this may sound a bit exaggeration and maybe it is, but in order to clarify my thoughts about this topic I need to write it out. It feels that when being in Väre building I act out or perform the simulation of the idea of an innovative art school. It feels like I'm performing this act mostly to myself. It's not only when I'm working in the building but also and maybe even more in the moments when I'm just passing through the lobby or spending time in there. It feels that I'm not just walking or sitting on the couch, but I'm trying to do it in a way the student of an innovative art school would do it. So in a way I'm performing. I'm crafting a performance that's objective is to simulate the idea, an abstract idea. And I feel that I'm not just trying to simulate the manner in which to do these things but I'm also simulating the purposes. I'm walking through the lobby from certain point, by certain route to get the coffee because it makes me feel that by this action, I'm representing the idea better. I'm performing the performance of an art student to myself.

In order to show my musings in a some what more practical light, I'm going to share you this text that I wrote while exploring the space.

Well here I'm sitting in the corner of the Väre lobby. Drinking the cappuccino that I bought from the private cafe situated in the space. I'm sitting in this weird chair that is the property of the cafe. Its kind of cosy, offering a very laid-back posture, but in no ways, it is optimal for working on a computer. When I entered the space and decided to go and by a coffee, I started to observe the space and wonder what would be the "right" place for me to do my work on my laptop. Should I sit on the couch at the side of the hall, or should take a chair at the cafe area?

I order the cafe and really go at the dilemma. As I mentioned I choose the funny looking cosy chair and sit down to observe the space. I'm very aware of my actions, I instantly start to evaluate what kind of image I give from myself by these decisions. Do I choose this chair because it actually makes me want sit on it, or do I choose it because I believe that it would be somehow correct thing to do? Well now I'm choosing this chair because the act of choosing the chair became a content of this text. But let's leave that behind and carry on.

I observe the space and try to come up with some interesting notions of it. Of course, by doing this I get nothing out of it; you don't get interesting notions by trying to get them. By trying you stop the actual observation and just wait and push yourself to craft some ideas. I scribble some observations down because I can't just give up instantly and because by the experience I know that if I force myself to start and muscle through the sticky part, something interesting might actually happen. But now nothing happens. My idea for the day and for this session in the corner of the lobby was to write notes and formulate some kind of monologue; text about the space as performance. I see that nothing really comes out. There is lots of space, very few people walking cross the space now and then. I have pretty much nothing to say about them. They just seem to keep their cool and pass the floor in ostensibly laconic fashion.

I try to imagine myself in the middle of the floor, standing, feeling unsecure and bit embarrassed. I'm used to being embarrassed. It has been a big part of my profession actually, and it is not a problem for me. But now it feels somehow as a disgusting idea to go to the middle of the floor and just be there. But at the same time, I feel that it is what I need to do at the moment. Of course, I have to document my standing and being somehow. So, I decide to film it.

I realize now that the standing itself is not what embarrasses me. It's the act of filming it. I don't know what is the most embarrassing part of it. Shouldn't it be a normal everyday thing to see students doing some experiments in the school premises? Maybe its that. It's too normal, it's a cliché. Maybe it looks like I'm not actually doing this in order to produce some material, maybe it looks like I'm just performing, pretending to work. Maybe I am just pretending. How do I know? Is this an artistic exploration or a performance? Who knows, and do I need to know it? Isn't the school the place where to try things without knowing what you're doing? Isn't that the basic idea of the art school in general? For some reason it

doesn't feel like it. My observations and experiences about this space are that it lacks something essential. It lacks the insecurity. It seems to me that the building and people in it perform their things, doings, and beings in a surprisingly confident manner. It seems that they always know what they're doing, where they are doing and what for. It confuses me. Even though I'm pretty sure that it is not always real. Many of these people don't know what they are doing and why, but they just pretend. They are performing. The building too; it is not that confident in its every corner. It seems to be guiding you and presenting itself as a self-assure whole, as an entity that has all its stairways, doors, and halls in its right places. But it doesn't. It's just appearance. Or at least I assume so. How do I know? Maybe I'm the only actor in this performance. Maybe I have understood everything totally wrong.

I've stopped the filming now. I look through the material. It seems irrelevant to me. I don't see anything in there. Just some image of an insecure person standing in a hall. That is all I can think about at the moment. I feel I have failed to meet the expectations of the space. The Väre lobby is laughing at me. I'm exposed. The god of this temple is not smiling to me. It's turning its face away from me since I have proven to be a heathen. Ok. Well that was quite dramatic, but I believe it underlines my point.

As mentioned in the text above, I ended up filming myself in different places of the lobby and also doing a sort of observations through the camera. These observations were sessions where I just filmed the space and its details from different perspectives and searched for whatever interesting things might appear. Most of the material I ended up producing felt quite irrelevant and useless, but I also understood something about the event of producing itself. Like the text above states I felt that the space was not encouraging me to do something that I'm not sure of. I felt that my actions of doing my experiments became a sort of performances where I try to handle this issue. The issue, the main contradiction was the balancing between the expression of confidence and insecurity. I think it is visible in a way I position myself in the space and the way I approach the objects that I filmed. I tend to keep certain distance and act as I was a visitor or tourist, who has to question his actions. Like I'm wondering all the time that "can I do this or not". I'm not sure how the possible viewers would see these materials, but for me the actual visual content was not as interesting as the performative event of they were evidence of. What also seemed interesting to myself was that I felt the urge to cover my face in some of the images. I had this strip of transparent plastic and tied it over my head, to cover my face. I think this affected quite a lot to the content of the images, because after that they were not so much concentrating on me as a person. Or at least it felt like that to me. Covering the face emphasized more the actual event; the act of placing human body into the space. On the other hand, I started to feel that I were also subconsciously imitating some art works that have contained similar aesthetics. This made me to wonder whether I'm

actually experimenting with any real phenomena here at all or am I just simulating the act of experimenting by trying to imitate the products of some other artists. Am I for example trying to reproduce some interesting aspects that I have seen in the works of Elina Brotherus? (example below)



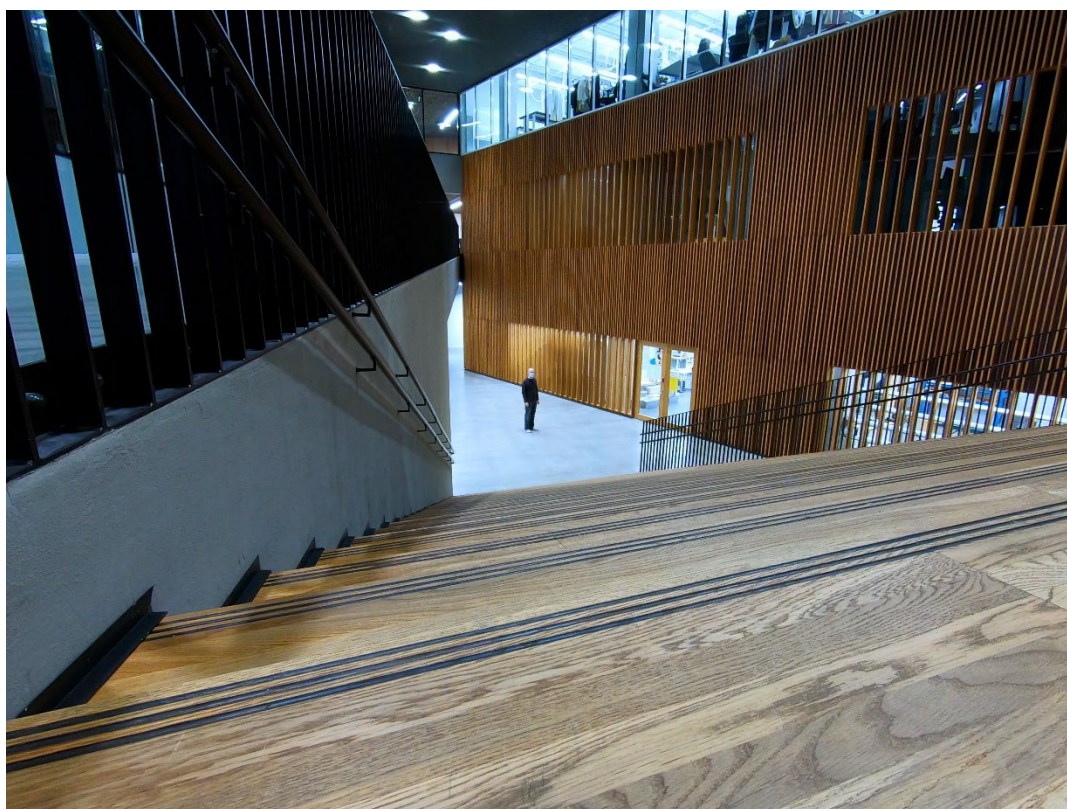
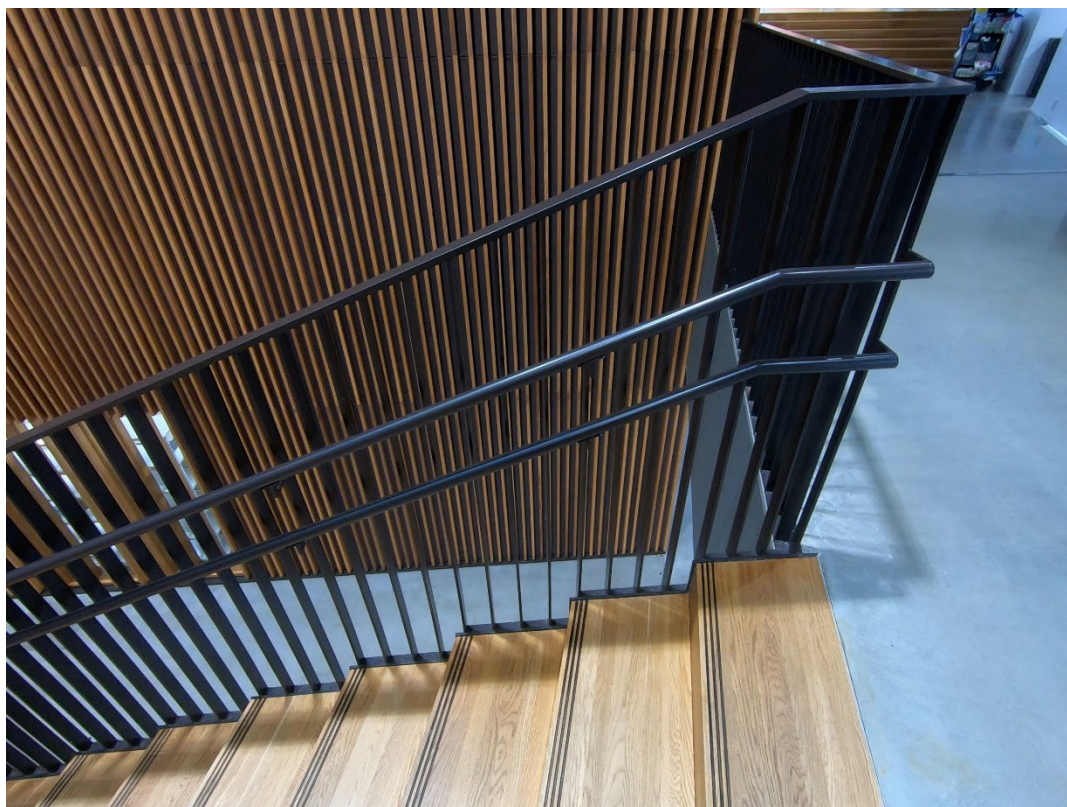
Elina Brotherus: Taiteilija lamppuna (2019)

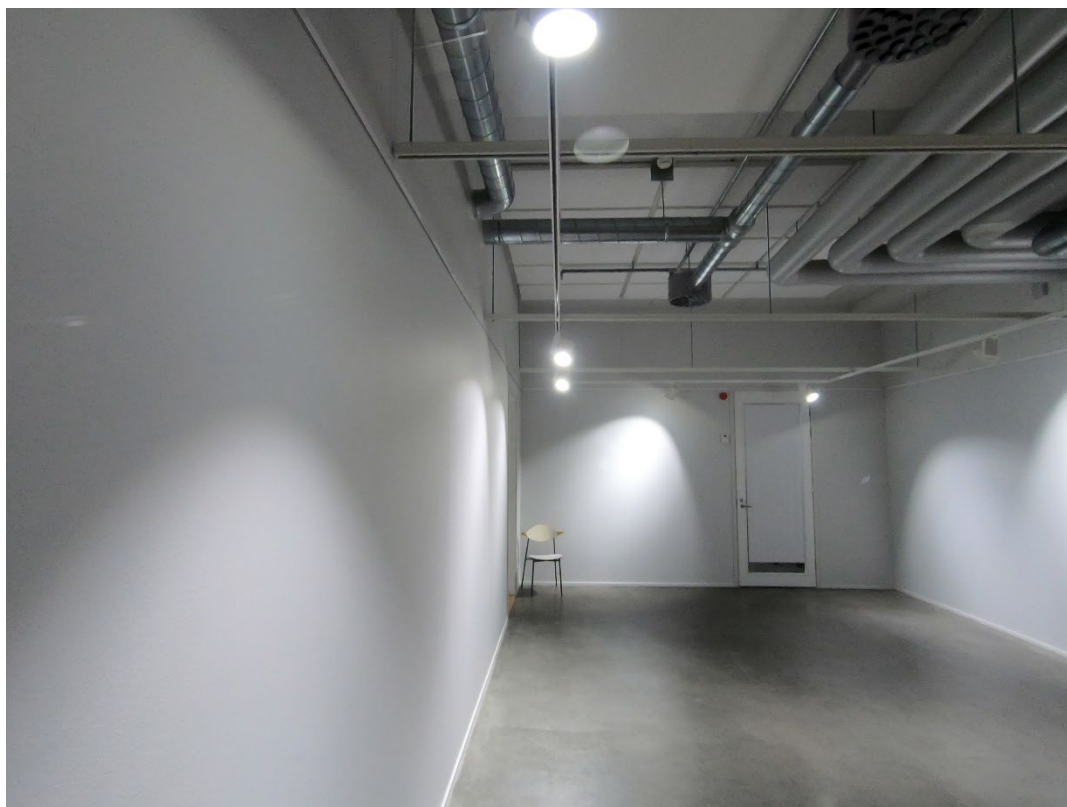


My work

And I don't think that imitating would always be a bad thing as it can produce interesting interaction between the ways of approaching different subjects. But in this case the possibility of sheer imitation felt like an act of avoiding the actual objective of my work. Was it something like that or not, I don't know.

Below there are few images from the video material that I produced while these experiments.





6.2 Letonniemi



.....Walking in the woods is a performance or at least it holds within it the potentiality of becoming a performance. Every act is being procedured in the manner that they may be performed to someone. The being and acting is (or becomes) a simulation of being; the performance of being aware of the fact that I'm performing....

Letonniemi nature reserve is a place that I also use as a place for my experiences in this thesis. Letonniemi is a proximately 1,5 square kilometre sized nature reserve in the small cape area at the seacoast of Oulu. The area is turned in to the nature reserve after being a pasture for decades as being the fertile field land appearing from the sea as a consequence of the land rising. There are marked trails that you must follow when moving in the area and it is not recommended to go walking around outside the trails.

Even though Letonniemi is a nature reserve and a part of natura-2000 program as place to reserve natural inhabitant of birds and other animals it is also very popular recreational destination. In a very few occasions you can walk there without coming across with other people. And here comes the interesting part of people's behaviour in this forest. When coming across to people in the trails of Letonniemi, almost everyone greets you with a subtle smile on their faces. But if

you come across to these same people on the walkway 200 meters away from the forest, they don't even look at you.

I find this small detail a very interesting thing to observe as a part of performing oneself in this kind of environment. I can feel the urge to greet other people in the forest even though I don't know why. I guess there might be some kind of mutual feeling of finding similarity by being the kind of persons who want to come in this kind of place. In a similar way that motorcyclist greet each other when encountering in the freeway. And this arouses the acclaim that there are certain qualities and attributes that this kind of people hold within them and that they come into this place with a certain probably similar intention. The greeting in a way is a signal to the other as "I know what you mean", or as "you're enjoying this too aren't you".

It almost feels that it is a mandatory task to behave like this when encountering other people in the trails and that it would be against some kind of code to for example walk there with your headphones on staring on the ground in a self-contained manner. Of course not, this place is reserved for people who appreciate the nature and express to other individuals how much they enjoy experiencing it. It feels for me that these performative actions of greeting one another in a forest might also have some kind of ceremonial dimension in them. Erwin Goffman talks about the idealisation of values carried out by performances. That some performances become ceremonies when they act as means to highlight and rejuvenate the official moral values of the society. (Goffman 1959, 44-45) I think that going into nature reserve definitely has a ceremony kind of element in it. It feels like a ceremony where you highlight the virtue of enjoying the nature and being aware of its importance.

Hanna Weselius writes in her column for Suomen Kuvalehti about her experience when walking in the Uutela forest in eastern Helsinki. She talks about how there has been a process of reserving the forest but how the actual outcome of this process is that the forest is being turned in to scenery. "Futile" and "dangerous" trees are being removed and the undergrowth is cleaned from the forest bed. (Weselius 2021) In a way this idea of a scenery sounds to me that the forest is turned in to a sign of a forest. It has to be turned in to form where people recognize it as the similar kind of atmosphere that they have in their heads. In the woods you have the trees that look like generic normal trees. The forest is shaped in the form that we humans want it to look like. If the undergrowth takes over too much or some anomalies appear we don't see it as a place that means "the forest" to us. It stops being a clear scenery because it starts to have the life and a character of its own that interferes our own performance acted in front of it.

Heidegger wrote in his writings about *Gelassenheit*, that in his opinion people were already during the fifties more familiar to media imagery brought to their

homes than to their neighbourhood and its elements. (Heidegger, 1959) This assumed phenomena feels very familiar to me. And I feel that of course this kind of effect is much stronger nowadays when the amount of imagery and different media platforms has multiplied since the days of Heidegger. The actual attributes and phenomena occurring in the nature reserve just about hundred meters away from my living room feel in a way far more distant to me than the lives and neighbourhoods of a fictive movies and documents. And it's not only as the information I conceive from these areas and places but the way this contradiction makes me to observe and experience the environment. I have seen countless nature documents consisting staggering beautiful imagery shoot from multiple different perspectives and distances and get to know the processes and mechanics affecting the lives of organisms in these environments. The images are being presented to me in order to create an experience, a carefully designed aesthetic affect. This endless "consuming" of this imagery has started to affect the way I observe the nature and especially the way I perceive the idea of nature.

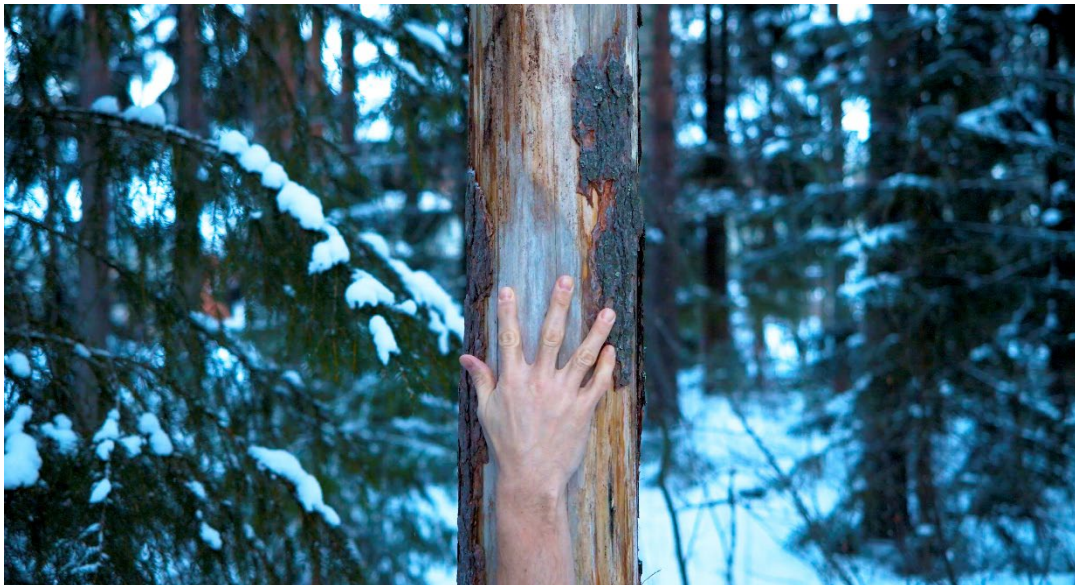
So if I may exaggerate a bit I could say that my visit to the forest is not anymore a visit to a certain forest, (in this case the Letonniemi reserve), but instead the visit to the idea of forest. And in this action of mine the Letonniemi only works as a representation of which against I can project my own ideas. In a way this is just one version of the Baudrillard's idea of simulacrum. (Baudrillard 1988) I do not see the forest as a real forest. And I don't even see it as a representative of the idea of the real forest. But I see it as a thing that simulates the idea of the forest that the nature documentaries have taught to me. So I enter the actual real forest in order to live true the emotions and sensations I experienced while watching the nature documentary. I walk the path observing the forest opening in both sides. It's like a visit to the Vatican. There you force yourself through the art objects and overcrowded spaces in a hurry, pretending to be watching and experiencing them, while in fact you are just experiencing the pre-meditated idea of visiting it.

Jean Baudrillard writes interestingly about the Disneyland being the place that's intention while pretending to be the imaginary place is to hide the fact that the whole American society around it has become an imaginary place. According to Baudrillard, Disneyland tries to enforce the idea that it is the imaginary and the world outside of it is real. (Baudrillard, 1988) I think for me this works a bit similar way as the idea of the nature reserve in my case. but only in reverse kind of manner. The nature reserve acts as place that represents something as "real" nature because it is ostensibly not manipulated by human. But still it is full of paths and trails and it has been formed by people long time before it was declared as a nature reserve. There is no actual difference in realness between the area of nature reserve and the area outside of it. The difference is only in legislative, imaginary and aesthetic level. But I (and I assume I'm not the only one) proceed the nature reserve as it would be a space representing the idea of "real nature". And so for it works as a space to perform the ceremonial performances that

highlight the virtuous act of being aware and appreciating the value of “real nature”.

So by this way the forest for becomes a mere set for performance and; a kind of entity that in our reality does only exists as a tool for our performative pursuits. The forest of course does not care about our performative tendencies, all of this happens in my premeditated perception. In my work I feel that this kind of connection to the forest is visible. I feel that in my work the urge to perceive the woods as a performative environment comes through in the manner of creating portrait like images and situations.

Below there a few images from the material I have filmed in Letonniemi.







6.3 Backyard

I live in a terrace house apartment with my partner and a four year old child in Rajakylä Oulu. The house and its yard consists a some what generic middle class atmosphere with a late 90's aesthetics. We have a backyard equipped with a covered wooden terrace and a small lawn area. Backyard is separated from the outside world with the typical white wooden fence that is in a desperate need of painting. Behind the fence there is a ten meter wide meadow strip that is pierced with a small trail, and behind that a ditch and a forest that is about to turn into a residential area in few years.

I start this chapter by writing about Pieter Hugos installation in Kiasma as a part of the ARS 11 exhibition. This exhibition affected me a lot by that time and I can clearly notice that it had left a certain mark in me that keeps on driving me with my perceptions on art making. Thing that caught my eye in this installation, was the simple way of using video portrait. One piece of the exhibition was the installation that consisted of the pile of old tv's that played video portraits of persons burning the electronic waste and colleting the metals to be sold. In front there was a person standing still and behind a person this apocalyptic procedure was taking place. (example below)



David Akore, Agbogbloshie Market, Accra, Ghana, 2010, Image by Pieter Hugo

The imagery and its installation created incredibly strong atmosphere of presence and at the same time feeling of alienation and otherness. It was like persons from the end of the line, where we dump our leftovers were saying to us “hi there, how is it with you guys” It was like the image of two floor people. we as persons who dump the shit in the floor below, not knowing and caring what happens to it, and the actual persons in the basement, taking care of it. I see these portraits as a sort of performances directed and organised by the Hugo, where the subject of the portrait acts as a performer. The background and the environment acts as a set of this performance and creates a meaning and describes the dimensions of the supposed person in presented in the portrait. In this particular image the performer is named David Akore. I do not have any information about his background or other facts about him as a person. And I’m not starting to go through what I think that this image tells about the subject of the image but instead focus on the idea behind the image.

In these portraits the subjects are shown as a part of the environment they are working in. This place and the work implemented by these persons is the actual reason and the cause of producing these images. By placing the person at the centre of the image as a main character of the performance Hugo as how I see it, wants to emphasize the fact that there are actual living individuals working in these circumstances. Circumstances that are caused by the western countries

ways of getting rid of their waste at the cheapest manner possible. The decision to place the person on the front posing to camera instead of just filming the actual work being made makes it more personal and intense. The character of the individual comes forth and arouses a suggestion of communication. It seems as the subjects of the portrait are making a statement or stating a question to the person viewing the image. The set acts as a concept and defines the quality of the statement or the question being made. But what do for example the David Akore in this image expresses to me? What is his intention? To me it looks like he simply states that this is my work. There is certain sense of pride in his posture under the obvious physical fatigue caused by the gruelling labour. This is the performance of showing the connections between the individual and the environment. Person and the environment are connected. The performance depicted in the image could not be whole without the other. The space and the person are dependent of each other by both being active actors in the phenomena presented.

There are multiple aspects in this body of work that raise the subjection of the possible ethical problems. At first as mentioned before, Hugo presents these images, videos and the installation as his work. The ideological attributes of the work are formed by him and the whole representation is structured by his vision. By this way we don't know whether the actual people presented in these portraits would have wanted to have themselves and their work to be presented in this manner.

As the aesthetics of these images and especially video portraits effected highly to my own artistic thinking and ways of seeing things. I have had strong urge to use somewhat similar elements in some of my works and at least explore the same kind of aesthetics. In the videos I have shoot in the backyard of my home I have attempted to create a kind of visible representations of the links between different meanings, and signifying elements. I wanted to expose something from the unnatural superficial nature of the relationship between myself and my backyard. It may seem like a bad humour, coarse and even offending suggestion to somehow relate or attempt to make an analogue between these portraits from totally different kind of worlds with such a heavy burdens of power structures, and appropriation.

But still and mainly because of that I want to dig in to the subject and observe the actual phenomena presented in appearing in the way these portraits carried out by the performances are set. What signifiers, meanings and connections are implemented in this particular aesthetic form of expressing by portraiture. (still from two of the videos I shoot at my backyard)



When crafting these portraits, I didn't have a very specific idea about what I wanted to express or say with them. I think I only had in mind somehow the preliminary topic of my thesis and a wish to somehow explore the same kind of aesthetic that Pieter uses. If I look at these images and ask what the backyard as a space suggested to me, what kind of performativity it arouses, I still get quite

confused. And that confusion probably is the reason why I'm interested about the backyard as a space in the first place.

Maybe it's the fence that causes the most confusion. What is the actual purpose of it anyway? Is it trying to keep someone out from "our" yard or is it trying to keep us inside? To be honest I probably should have included the lawnmower to the image because using it ones in a while is a pretty much only thing that I do on the area that is covered with grass. During the winter the whole backyard is covered with so thick layer of snow that you can't do anything in there. At the summertime there are so many mosquitos flying around that spending time there more than half a minute is unbearable. At the spring the tics wake up, and you must wear rubber boots to avoid getting bitten by them and still you sometimes get one or two. Pretty much only time that you can spend time on the backyard lawn is the late fall, when nothing is alive, but there is not yet snow in there. Sometimes I go and stand in the middle of the backyard, look at the woods scene behind it and wonder what should I do. I wonder whether I would go further if there would be no fence? Is there something special that I should while spending time at this side of it?

I feel it is obvious that the own backyard is a kind of luxury thing that one can possess. When I think about it I get these advertisement-like visions of happy people doing barbecue and children playing around. Parties and relaxing on a sun lounger. I feel that my backyard suggests that kind of performative actions to me. It wants me to fulfil the dream embedded in the idea of the backyard. I could say that the biggest reason to have a backyard is to have and possess the idea of "my own backyard". I have it now and it mostly just gives me an anxiety because of the fact that I barely ever use it.

I think that what I wanted to show in these images was something that again was related to the idea of simulation. All the things I could imagine that I "should" be doing in my backyard were things that are created by media or cultural presumptions. I have no actual idea of what to do in the backyard, that would have emerged by me myself getting to know the space and using it to something that I find useful or that produces pleasure. No, I only see it as a representation of the idea of "my backyard" and that makes it almost disgusting space for me.

At this image below I wanted also to grasp the idea of a self-portrait. Since I happen to have a national costume of the area where I was born, I felt that it could somehow be significant element to include to the image. In the video I wear the part of the costume and eat a tangerine. I thought that this video piece could be labelled playfully as "southern Ostrobothnia male in his natural habitat"



That sentence of course is a total joke.

The costume for me doesn't have any connotations to the area where I was born or the cultural heritage of it. It was made by my mother who is a folk culture and especially folk costume enthusiast. As an important curiosity I should mention that this particular costume is a "checked version" which means that it is been constructed by according to the original 18th century models. So it should look pretty much the same as the costumes that people actually wore few hundred years ago. The idea of the national folk costume in Finland is created in the late nineteenth century. During and after that period of time they were pretty much "designed", meaning that they only contain hints and influences from something that could be seen as "original" folk costume. But what this all means to me then?

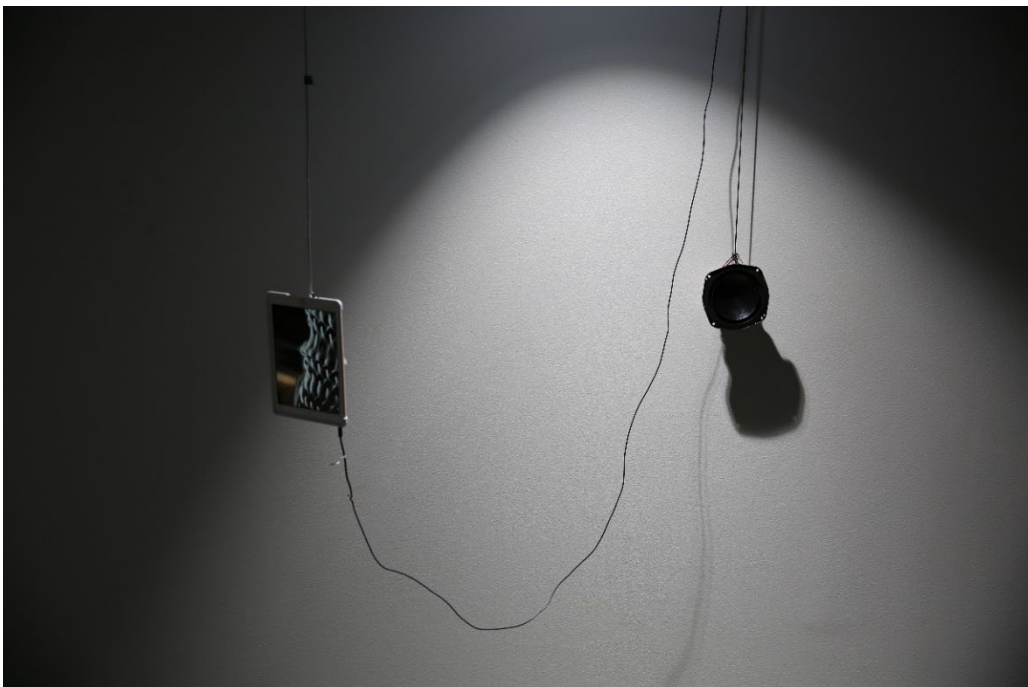
These costumes where not wore by pretty much anyone in my youth and childhood. I only saw them when my mother made me to try them on. And to mention also the fact that my mother does not have southern Ostrobothnian roots but instead her family is from eastern part of Finland and from Carelia. So what I mean by all this that the whole set in a way presents the idea of a simulation to me. I'm standing in my backyard, wearing a costume that presents the cultural heritage of the area where I was born. But do these things mean something to me? Am I familiar to these things and are they somehow affecting my daily life and perceptions of the world somehow? I don't think so. The one object or could you say element in this image that actually affects my life quite a lot is the tangerine. I eat them almost daily bases. And every time I eat them I get anxious because of the fact that I don't really know where they have been grown and in what kind of conditions the workers are who pick them. But regardless of this contradiction and anxiety I still by and eat them, because their cheap and I like them a lot.

When looking at this video and this still image, I sense a lot of certain kind of arrogance and even hostile manner. Partly because that I haven't had the courage to show this anywhere. I was about to put it on display in my thesis installation, but I felt that it was somehow too arrogant in a wrong kind of way. I felt it shows some kind of cultural contents that should not be shown. Basically, it's just a person eating a tangerine. But of course, it is not just that. I think that the backyard provokes me somehow. It makes me to highlight the contradiction I attach to it. It wants me to exaggerate the alienated artificiality of my relation to the actual physical surroundings of my life.

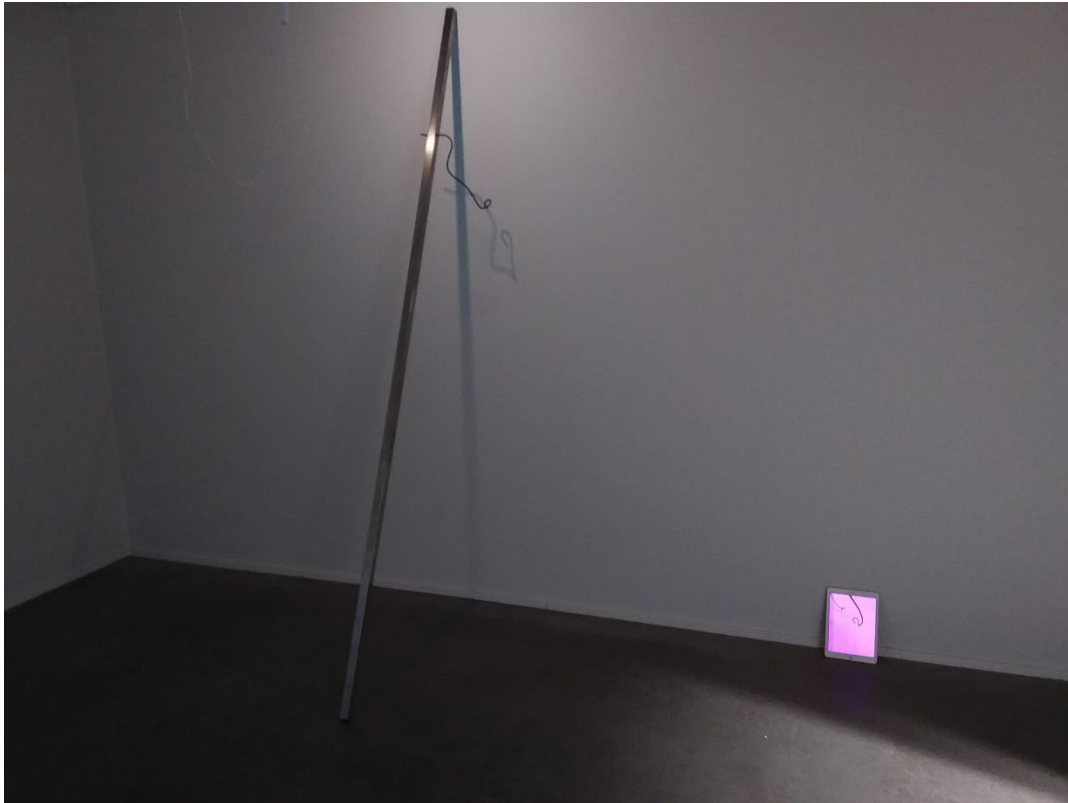
7 The artistic implementation of the work

The artistic part of my thesis was a performative installation that took place at the V1 – Gallery at Väre building Aalto University. The idea of the installation was to use the gallery space as my studio for the whole exhibition time. At first I spent two days experimenting and installing the kind of “first set” for the opening day and after that I just continued experimenting and varying the constellation of the installation. The reason I called it performative was that I felt that my presence and working in the space was a sort of performance itself. I wanted to explore how the working in a transparent place, under constant observation of by passers and gallery visitors affect my work and the outcome of it.

I started to work in the space with the material that I had produced during the process, such as sounds, videos, images, and other audio-visual things. I also had all sorts of physical material, and devices with me that I had chosen and picked up by intuitive decisions. During the first two days of installation, it came clear that I had become a bit exhausted and bored of the whole concept and ideas that I had entered the space with. Instead of installing the videos and sounds I started to use the equipment and objects I had brought to the space and the ones I found from there. Soon I had made few totally new pieces that were sort of documentations of the act of installing them. I placed a led lamp on the wall and filmed it with a pad and placed the pad next to lamp. I attached a bass speaker on the wall and started to poke it with the microphone that was connected to the speaker with the zoom interface and then filmed the act and recorded the sound of it. Then I hanged the pad from the ceiling and connected it to the speaker. (image below)



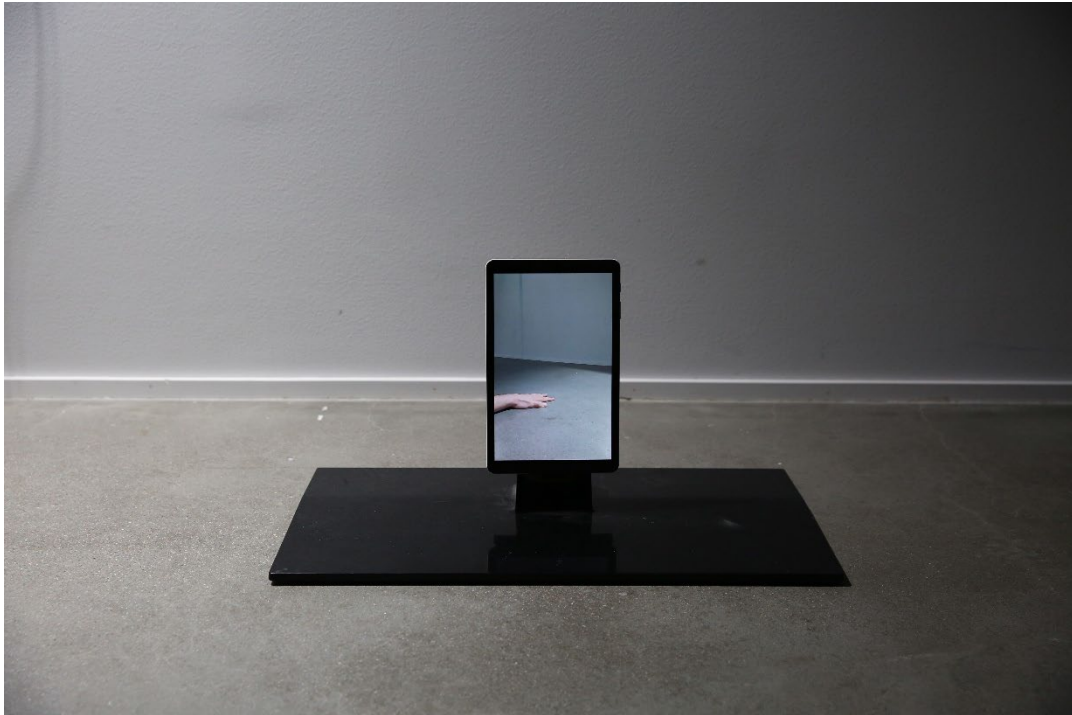
I made a sculpture like structure from the steel rod and the thick iron wire, projected light to it and took a picture of it and placed the pad next to it portraying the image. (image below)



So in a way the things in the gallery presented the actions performed with themselves. These pieces became the ones I enjoyed the most myself. I believe it was because the presence of the actual space was visible in the them. They were events that had taken place in that particular space. The sounds were sounds that had echoed between these walls. For me there was something special in this information. It seemed that many of the viewers didn't realize the difference between the material that was produced in the gallery space and the material that was from somewhere else. But when I was discussing with some people how they were looking at the pieces and I told them where and how the pieces were made they usually seemed to have a totally new perspective to them. The fact that they were being made in the actual space seemed to be quite interesting to the viewers also, not just for me.

One of my favourite pieces was a simple video work that I made with the iPad and a stand that was made for television. I had two black plastic stands that I had removed from television displays because I had placed them in an upright position. I felt that these stands were somehow interesting, but I didn't have any

particular function for them in mind. Then I tried to install a bad on the stand and see what it looked like. The bad was filming at the same time and I realized that it looked quite interesting when the pad was portraying a live framed image of a wall ahead of it. I started to move the combination around and look for interesting looking views. Then as I found a nice looking angle I tried to place my hand on the image and filmed it. That looked somehow interesting to me and I installed this video as a part of the installation for some time. (image below)



For me this was fascinating in a way that it gave another kind of dimension to the space. It showed a different reality that was at the same time present but not visible. I felt that the performance of the hand on the floor was present in the room even though it had happened earlier, and so for going on at the moment. It became as an comment addressed to the space.

I managed to use some material that I had produced while experimenting the spaces, but I had to find some kind of new approach to them. When displaying the video of myself in the backyard with the globe I felt the same kind of anxiety towards my face as when doing experiments in the Väre lobby. Then I tried to cover it with something. I placed an ipod on top of with, and let the ipod to show the image from its camera. The result was a close up of pixels and a digital glitch caused by the ipods difficulties to handle the information of the closeup image. (image below)



The way I see this now is that the image displayed by the ipad in a way reduces my face to its origins. The ipad shows what the image is constructed from, individual rpg pixels. At the same way I could think that it represents the idea how my face is basically just a construction of single cells. For me this addresses the question of performativity of this image in an interesting way. The ipod in a way performs the performed. It questions what is performed and what is not.

By the time of opening the exhibition I was quite satisfied by the outcome, and it felt in a way wrong to start changing things. For a while I had to struggle with this feeling, but then I made some minor adjustments to one of the pieces and then I kind of got going. Pretty soon I felt really natural by just keeping the doors open and working with the material; installing something, making experiments and dismantling them. Only thing that I was struggling at first was the situations when some one was entering the gallery. I realized that people usually assumed that the exhibition is not yet open because I was working in there. And when I told them that your welcome and that me working in there is part of the installation, it didn't actually help the situation very much. It felt awkward for both and the visitors usually just left almost immediately. I realized that I didn't quite knew how to behave when people entered the room. If gave too much attention to the visitors they seemed to felt somehow pressed or anxious and where unable to focus on the installation, but when I gave little or none attention they just glanced the room quickly from the door and left.

So I needed to find a proper way to "perform" my performing in the space in a way it made it easier for viewers to observe the piece at the same time in a way

my presence didn't become irrelevant. By few days I learned a quite good way to handle this problem. I instantly gave the information to the possible viewer stopping at the door, but after that I didn't wait anything from them and let them explore the space as they wish. I also learned to act in the space in a way that I could react in the impulses coming from the viewers. I feel that I adopted a "front", that carried out the expectations of the situation. Meaning that I discarded my intuitive natural reactions and emotions caused by the visitor and instead performed a performance that I assumed would affect the viewer in desired manner. I don't know if I have much else to say about this at the moment. Only thing that it leaves me to wonder is whether this performance of mine was meaningful to the viewers in any ways. I asked it for some people who stayed to have a chat with me, but I didn't get any answer that would give me a satisfying answer. They mostly just commented about whether my presence was bothering or interfering their experience or not.

8 Conclusions

In a way I feel that the most significant part of this work has been the experimentations and musing in the area of different dimension of performativity, performance and performing. And especially the different ways something can be seen and examined as a performance.

What I have wanted (as I have realized now) to explore is the how the piece could combine performative elements as stated above and a performativity that is produced by the piece itself. And I do not mean the robots, machines or other apparatus that are run by some sort of artificial intelligence and could be so for seen as a self-performing entity. What I mean is a piece that is a performance created by me, that at the same time has a performative nature of its own an element of me performing by it.

When exploring the Väre lobby and the building itself, my goal was to study the ways I behave in the space. More and more it seemed obvious that simple act of standing in some part of the space was the most interesting way of being in it. If I performed some physical actions or tried to act by the stimuli coming from the space I mostly just felt the urge to stand still and be. It felt that any other action just took me away from the space, by diminishing the presence.

Exception for this was when I started to film the space by observing it through the camera. I felt that it started to show me all sorts of things and details from it. Of course I couldn't help being very aware of the fact that I'm being observed by the other people in the space while doing it and I soon started to feel that my actions the act of filming and exploring the space were highly performative and I could pretty much call them as performances. I see in here the same kind of elements as I mentioned before with the abstract expressionist or action painting kind of art. The images and the movement in the video are my reactions, my expressions, gestures, interactions with the space, and by that they hold within them the elements of performance.

I feel that the idea of seeing things, such as spaces and objects as a performances, acts for me basically as a view point where to approach the material. It's probably irrelevant whether the viewer of the piece actually sees it as a performance or not. It only matters to me at the moment I'm crafting the piece. It effects to my decisions and techniques and the criteria I evaluate the work I produce. If I feel or decide that I'm now making a performance, I do handle the material differently, compared to the situation where I would think that I'm making for example a sculpture. And by this I refer especially to the situations where the result, the actual piece would consist sculpture like elements and it would be obvious that many viewers probably see it as a sculpture. As an example I could use this piece

of my thesis exhibition; the one crafted from steel rod, iron wire, radio and a discant-speaker.



In the piece (picture above) the stereo was playing a radio frequency that was mostly white noise, with just some minor signals coming from some channel. The content of the signal was not audible, but you could hear very small changes in the noise, and you could see the bar presenting the amplitude moving a bit on the stereo display. The stereo was connected to the small discant-speaker element with a long wire. The speaker was placed on a sculpture-like structure assembled from the steel rod and a thick iron wire. At the top there was a lamp projecting dissolved light from above and creating a shadow on the wall.

I think that this piece would most easily be observed as a sound sculpture or something similar. But I, at least at the moment of assembling it, thought it as a performative piece. For me the contact between different elements and especially the contact that I feel I have in way created there, arouses the performativity in them. The piece is acting as a vehicle, or an extension of my performance. The performance that I have started continues in it. Or maybe it's not that simple and focused on me as a performer. Maybe it is more as a tool, tool to craft a performance that could not be made by human body. And maybe for me there is some kind of evidence of life embedded in the connections between different elements. Not just evidence in documented way but in a manner that is happening and coming true in the present moment. Connections in the piece are containing a condition for life and they are coming alive when observed.

At the end I would like to ask myself what have I found or realized by my experiments in the spaces and the installation that I crafted, or performed. What do I think that a viewers of the installation have got from it? I have an obsession to believe that the things I produce could actually provide an interesting and meaningful perspective to our society and way of life. Because of this I need to go estimate do I really feel that they have significance of some kind or not. Especially because I all together feel that most of my doings are mere simulations of other simulations and that this text itself might be just an imitation of the idea of ma thesis. Therefore, I must end this with an answer to these questions.

At this point I can't see that I would have managed to come up with any original observations or realizations about the spaces I have explored. I think that all my musings in the end come back to this feeling of distance; some kind of experience of simulation, inability to grasp the difference between real and imaginary, performing and not performing. What I then hope of course is that my work has some how managed to portray this matter in a way that has meaning of some sort. What meaning then? What is the signifier and what is signified?

As Pilvi Porkola states that to her "making of art is a way to create reality" (Porkola 2014, 26) (self translated) If I look at the work I have done against this simple statement, it makes want to ask, what kind of reality is created and how. Or is there a reality created? If my works are in my own mind a mere simulations that have lost their connections to reality, how could they create reality? How could an art in this kind of assumed hyperreal society create anything but a one more piece to an endless line of simulations; one more signifier that has lost its signified. I would be willing to use here some ideas of Eero Tarasti and his existential semiotics. As I mentioned earlier in the text when addressing my views about the sound, I find some similarities in the things that Tarasti writes and my own ways of understanding signs and significations in art. I admit that I might have totally misunderstood Tarastis thoughts, and I use his text here only as material that has made me to think and perhaps find new perspectives.

So what I will use in this situation is the idea of different kind of signs that Tarasti claims that he has been able to distinguish. One of them he calls as "pre-signs, signs in the process of forming and shaping themselves" (Tarasti 2000, 19) In a relation to the statement of Porkola before, this made me to think could it be that the signified in this kind of art is yet to be found, or created. That if I would state that producing art that does not seem to have connection to the present reality, I (or some other artist) produce signifiers that yet not have the signified but instead asks us to invent one. To put it simple, the artwork in a way provides a signifier to the viewer and states: "I built you a sign, now you built me a meaning".

Porkola also states that she understands art-making is related to being aware of the world and ways of watching art tell something about cultural ways of

watching in general. (Porkola 2014, 24, 26) If I these thoughts and make a combination of them that suits my own experience, I could think that the core of my concept of art is to “try to be aware of ways of perceiving the world”. So for I could define my works during this process as sort of suggestions. They suggest a certain kind of way to perceive the world. And in this case the suggestions contain ideas about perceiving things as performative behaviour or as performances. Even though I admit that I don’t fully understand the total meaning of this but I still want to make one reference to the ideas of Tarasti. One of Tarasti’s new signs that he has distinguished. This is something that he calls as “as-if-signs-.... these are signs that should be read as if they were true.” (Tarasti 2000, 19) This sentence itself feeds my imagination and makes me to state that things that I have produced are suggestions that acclaim to perceived as performances or performative behaviour. They signify this acclaim as if it was true. The signified then waits to be found, realized, crafted, forgotten, or lost.

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