the open-ended space
– A perspective on the art piece’s space
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Introduction

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

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

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

In this thesis I use the metaphor of space to talk about the sphere that I imagine exists around every art piece as a phenomenon in the world. This space is not limited to the immediate physical surroundings of the art piece, nor to any one place in the world (e.g., a building, a museum, etc.), where it is “placed” or where it is experienced. It is something far more multidimensional and some of its levels exist in the social and imaginary parts of the world. (These physical and social/imaginary spheres can be compared to the terms “actual” and “virtual” used by the French philosopher Gilles Deleuze (1994, 208), where the “virtual is opposed not to the real but to the actual” and “is fully real in so far as it is virtual.” I do not approach the questions in this essay through Deleuze and I also try to stay away from dichotomies in general, but it is a good reference point for the way I think about space in this essay.) I also claim that there is no art piece without this space. Without it the art piece is only material without context and cannot form the phenomenon that a piece of art is. Therefore, this space is what makes an art piece an art piece and it is extremely interesting and important to think about how we can relate to this space and its boundaries.

Dialogi

The art piece tries to make the experiencer to ask “Where am I?”

The art piece suggests that you or both here and there.

The Dialogue
On a personal level, I see this thesis as an attempt to clarify the process I’ve been through during my studies in scenography. It’s an attempt to group and give perspective on the different questions I’ve been dealt with during these years. It’s an attempt to address why I feel this is a relevant work in the field of scenography and why I feel it is a relevant work as a thesis in our field.

In this thesis I will not be looking at how I got here or where I am going, but rather accepting the changing ways of working, the new working methods, non-hierarchical thinking inside working groups, among other phenomena in the field. Nor do I think that the questions addressed in this text are important also in a broader context than on a personal level. In those three I will try to search for a place here or where I am going, but rather accepting that I have here the notes, trying to make sense of. But I felt obliged to explain my perspective of why I think this is a relevant work in the field of scenography and why I feel it is a relevant work as a thesis in our field.

The changing ways of working, the new working methods, non-hierarchical thinking inside working groups, among other phenomena in the field have led me to think that the questions that I’ve been dealing with during these years are important also in a broader context than on a personal level. It is an attempt to address why I feel this is a relevant work in the field of scenography and why I feel it is a relevant work as a thesis in our field.

The relation to scenography? In the article “The Power of Space in a Virtual World”, the theatre historian Arnold Aronson (2008, 23) claims that “scenography is perhaps less well defined than it once was”, and that the whole field of perspective is changing into a professional field. A set of rules by slowly every new production method and artist, a scenographer, and every scenography does not need to work on performing arts. It would result to that the least common denominator of what a large number of working roles, it could be something like claiming that the work is about being a spatial designer, an expert on space, a spatial designer, or something similar. The least common denominator is space – understood in a way that it is not an element in the design.

According to Aronson, the working roles and projects that a scenographer can be involved can be very different these days. It is evident that scenographers work not only in the design of traditional theatre, but also in productions where the role is pretty specific to the specific production model of how the work should be done. The scenographer’s role in the field of performing arts has become more and more fluid. For example, to work with both set design and architecture, some scenographers do not work with physical materials at all and are sometimes more interested in giving a form to the space and in creating a spatial environment. The scenographer’s work is based on an understanding of architecture of space, distance, and how space affects the perception.

Scenographers can work through both the abstract and the concrete notion of space and I claim that every project needs both ways of thinking about space – sometimes focusing more on one aspect and sometimes on the other. This means scenographers do not work with physical materials all of the time. Scenographers simply work with space. Because the whole environment of a scene is the space where the audience is, scenographers do not work with physical materials all of the time. However, scenographers simply work with space.

As Aronson suggests, scenographers can be involved in an array of different projects and I feel this is characteristic of all media, means that the ‘content’ of any medium is always another medium. The Canadian communications theorist Marshall McLuhan (2001, 8) writes: “This fact, the ‘content is the medium’, means that the ‘content’ of the ‘medium’ in any medium is always another medium”.

Lavastajan luoma tila on täynnä merkityksiä. Se puhuu materiaaleilla, väreillään ja muodoilla. Lavastajan luoma tila on täynnä merkityksiä. Se puhuu materiaaleilla, väreillään ja muodoilla. Space tells us about time, about place, and about a question about them. It gives life to the atmosphere and creates a special presence. In performing arts, the scenographer is a creator of space, working with other artists and designers. The scenographer’s work is based on an understanding of architecture of space, distance, and how space affects the perception.

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The art piece's space

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

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

In this manner, I hope that I at least at times manage to make a verbal sketch of this space and where its borders could be located – only to break it down in the next moment and create a new sketch. The chosen style of the text is essayistic and I want to make it clear that I do not consider my conclusions as truths but as an attempt to understand and investigate ways of thinking about space. I try to be true to the following citation from the philosopher Alfred North Whitehead (1978, XIV): "how shallow, puny, and imperfect are efforts to sound the depths in the nature of things. In philosophical discussion, the merest hint of dogmatic certainty is an exhibition of folly."

The art piece is a space

The art piece is a space in its physical sense

The art piece creates a space

It creates a space an imaginative space

The art piece is unique, where its function is – in principle – indeterminate

The experiencer creates a space around the art piece. The space is open because

The art piece sticks to the experiencer and through them to the world.
The form

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

Another reason not to make too many written links between the three parts is that I want to avoid creating a hierarchical relation between them or put one part justifying the existence of another part. The three parts simply approach the same questions with the tools of three different genres and I hope the reader will feel they start to comment each other through their relation. This form is a result of a process and I want to create new inspirational source, which has lead to the decision to not make written links as we approach them.

There has been much talk and concern in recent years about how much talk is produced in the field of contemporary art. […] How is it possible that visual culture can so intensely lean on language and linguistic arguments? […] This must all be set against a process of fundamental social change whose impact cannot be exaggerated. Because of a number of reasons, a condition can now be described: any form of art that is not longer central in social discourse, is clearly defined and comprehensible without a logical, deductive, and univocal rhetoric. The fruition of such works or great narratives has not disappeared. It is now accompanied by several colleagues, competing visions of reality, versions of how we should interpret and understand the world. We are faced with a plurality of multiple origins, in spite of which each situation always has one dominant, recognized and adopted model. (Hannula 2005, 9-10)

In the first part I use literature from different scientific disciplines to approach the questions at hand. It would be possible to talk about this as the theoretical part of this thesis. In my experience however Karen Barad’s Meeting the Universe Halfway has become my main reference. In the second part I have given myself permission to “just write” fictional stories, poems and text fragments about subjects that for me somehow relate to the questions at hand. I think of these texts as written pictures or metaphors related to the subject of this thesis. In this sense I am trying to stay true to my own specific methodology, and the methodology of this work – if someone feels the need to categorize – has been developing through the process.

In the beginning of my own process with this work, when I was reading a lot and finding different literary approaches to map the ground I was standing on, I realized it was a step forward when I read the literary sources from my own field. I realized that the questions I was exploring were broader than that. I lied to the literary sources and used the perspectives and only the parts that worked for me. I think this has led to a spatial installation with the title Hold (2017), which is my main reference. In the third part the approach is artistic. The spatial installation Hold (2017) is a result of interacting with the questions at hand, and trying to approach them from an artistic point of view. Inside the context of an artist’s thesis work, Hold is an artistic collaboration between the lighting designer Mateus Manninen and myself. Outside the context of an artist’s thesis work, the artistic working group also includes sound designer Eero Nieminen and philosopher Joel Silvennoinen, who has been in a constant dialogue with us and helped us to find alternative viewpoints to the questions at hand. The dialogue takes place both in spoken and written form.
Setting the scene
– another perspective on the world?

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

Perspectives on space

It has been hard for me to map out what the questions discussed in this thesis really are about. I have to learn the topic. How does space really mean? What does it mean to be and where does it come from? What is artistic space? Are spaces just physical spheres for human beings, or is there something more to these questions than this relates to it?

The question on the essay is fluid. And the different perspectives on them are fluid. I do not want to claim anything else. Working as a part of collective artistic processes has lead me to question what my work really is about. After the entire “meta-process” that the work with the installation has been, thinking about boundaries of spaces and trying to come with those questions on space as some kind of “content” have given me another perspectives on space. For me, this work has lead me to think about fundamental questions that relate back to the field of spatiality, but also broader, to our perceptions in the world.

To begin with, I will give an example of the pondering we’ve been through while working with the installation. The example is taken from a dialogue with Joel about space, and the kind of meaning he has given us in the following text, taken from a “Whitney discussion” on 30th of August 2017:

Jos oli ollut tila, jossa on mahdollisuus olla, on tilan olemassaolo todistus siitä että kokijan/toimijan on tarve sijaita juuri siinä; tämän tarpeen määrittää toiminta, joka tilaan on tarkoitettu. Tämän toiminnan tarkoitus on määräystynyt historiallis-kulttuurisen kehityksen mukaan ja tilan tarkoitus on määräystynyt valjastamaan toivottua toimintaa, joka on suhteessa tilan/tilojen rajaaman rakennuksen, toimenkuvan, instituution valtaan, joka taas on suhteessa monimuotoisiin edelliset määritteet täyttäviin kokonaisuuksiin.

Tilan tarkoitus on valjastaa toivotun toiminnan fokus, ja tämän fokuksen kiinteys määrittyy toiminnan mukaan.

My translation: “If there was a kind of space, and it was possible to be there, that would be evidence of the possibility that the experiencer/agent has a need to be exactly there; this need is determined by the action that is intended for the space. The purpose of this action is determined by the historical and cultural development, and any space has

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

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

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

We live in space, in those spaces, those towns, those countryside, those parks. That seems obvious to us. Perhaps indeed it should be obvious. But it isn’t obvious, not just a matter of course. It is real, obviously, and as a consequence most likely rational. We can touch. We can even allow ourselves to dream. There’s nothing, for example, to stop us from imagining things that are neither towns nor countryside, nor Métro corridors that are at the same time public parks. Nor anything to forbid us imagining a Métro in the heart of the countryside. What is certain, in any case, is that at a time too remote for any of us to have retained anything like a precise memory of it, there was none of all this: neither corridors, nor parks, nor towns. The problem isn’t so much to find from the yet to be created the spaces, but simply to imagine that we have created, that we are here. There exist one space, a beautiful space. The question then is about the experience of space, about the human being around us, about a whole lot of beautiful space, and not too long into a Métro corridor, and another into a public park. Another – and here we can suddenly see more particularized spaces – originally quite modest in size, but expanded today, in urban or rural dimensions and has become Paris, a space near by, not necessarily any less remarkable or beautiful. Here we begin to understand the nature of space. From there, we feel the context, the experience of space.

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

Moreover, since something beautiful, whether living or a complete artefact, must not only have an orderly structure but must also have a size that is not arbitrary – for beauty is a matter of size as well as of order, which is why an extremely small creature does not get to be beautiful because you get a close view. But we do not see the wood from the trees, but we can still comprehend the forest as a whole, unlike the proverb suggests.
I think the Aristotelian definition of beauty seems rather interesting. Nowadays I feel different about it. In the light of the following text by Marshall McLuhan, I think it was a passage hard to grasp and understand and that it did not really match its context.

"...is a movement of faculties that include and transcend them. The second-grader magnitude. Our ability to apprehend galaxies and subatomic structures, as well, Stay as you are.

The earth is so small,
The stars are so big,
when Sputnik had first gone into orbit a schoolteacher asked her second-graders to write some verse on the subject. One child wrote:

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

In Meeting the Universe Half Way, Karen Barad (2007) suggests a specific ontology and a way to think about the world – something she calls “agential realism”. She bases her argumentation – that is written from a new materialist and posthumanist perspective on quantum mechanics – and inspirational point for this essay. Barad’s work has been told this essay approaches a new materialist and posthumanist world view. Therefore, I want to state that I won’t relate to these in any other way here than through my main reference – Barad’s Meeting the Universe Half Way. It is written from a new materialist and posthumanist perspective. But I don’t think this book is bold enough to take a stand to these discourses, I just want to acknowledge where my source of inspiration can be placed.

Meeting the Universe Half Way
Karen Barad (2007)

I do not want to claim that I – as a person without any background in physics – would understand every thought and phenomenon that Barad discusses in Meeting the Universe Half Way. But I do believe that thoughts and possibilities that she talks about, art pieces or art worlds – as spaces, phenomena, subjects or whatever else that I can see the term “art piece” as a synonym to an art piece as an entity and the idea of the “art piece’s space” as a term for the whole phenomenon of the art piece.

Therefore it seems pretty clear that the entities we think about when we think about art pieces not necessarily contain any physical attributes that make them art. It is not their (own) physical borders and covers. Paintings are often painted on a very definable canvas or other area. Some sculptures are cast in one piece and in one material. Music can be thought of as physical waves in matter. Some sculptures are cast in one piece and in one material. Music can be thought of as physical waves in matter. Some sculptures are cast in one piece and in one material. Music can be thought of as physical waves in matter. Some sculptures are cast in one piece and in one material. Music can be thought of as physical waves in matter. Some sculptures are cast in one piece and in one material. Music can be thought of as physical waves in matter. Some sculptures are cast in one piece and in one material. Music can be thought of as physical waves in matter. Some sculptures are cast in one piece and in one material. Music can be thought of as physical waves in matter. Some sculptures are cast in one piece and in one material. Music can be thought of as physical waves in matter. Some sculptures are cast in one piece and in one material. Music can be thought of as physical waves in matter. Some sculptures are cast in one piece and in one material. Music can be thought of as physical waves in matter. Some sculptures are cast in one piece and in one material. Music can be thought of as physical waves in matter. Some sculptures are cast in one piece and in one material. Music can be thought of as physical waves in matter. Some sculptures are cast in one piece and in one material. Music can be thought of as physical waves in matter. Some sculptures are cast in one piece and in one material. Music can be thought of as physical waves in matter. Some sculptures are cast in one piece and in one material. Music can be thought of as physical waves in matter. Some sculptures are cast in one piece and in one material. Music can be thought of as physical waves in matter. Some sculptures are cast in one piece and in one material. Music can be thought of as physical waves in matter. Some sculptures are cast in one piece and in one material. Music can be thought of as physical waves in matter. Some sculptures are cast in one piece and in one material. Music can be thought of as physical waves in matter. Some sculptures are cast in one piece and in one material. Music can be thought of as physical waves in matter. Some sculptures are cast in one piece and in one material. Music can be thought of as physical waves in matter. Som...
To approach art with different methods. Different artistic media affects different approaches — for example, in a musical performance, the musician is their body and their material instruments to rearrange the particles in the air with the sound waves they produce. A sculptor uses different material devices or processes to eventually reach the material form this to the audience.

Three examples can be compared to the statements above by Marshall McLuhan (2001, 8). The readymade and Vuori's performance are examples of intentions not to change the medium, they are only in a critical relation to the medium. Marshall McLuhan (2001, 13-14) continues:

"...that the medium is the message. The message, it seemed, was the 'content,' as people used to think of having objects and performers on stage in a performance, or that he wanted to suggest about "the 'content' of any medium" always being "another medium". If we continue with the example of Vuori's performance, it may be that Vuori wanted to criticize the tradition of giving a title to a work of art that is not necessarily the sculpture. A sculptor uses different material devices or processes to eventually reach the material form that is the sculpture.

A sculptor uses different material devices or processes to eventually reach the material form that is the sculpture. Therefore, when we think of the readymade, Vuori's performance, and the sculpture, it becomes clear that everything loses meaning. This is true for the sculpture and Vuori's performance and even more so for the readymade. The sculpture is still a sculpture and the gymnastics is still a gymnastics.

It follows that the audience and social context is an essential part of the art piece, the performance. Vuori’s performance cannot exist without an audience. Without an audience, it is inconstant and results in Vuori wanting to engage in "the world that Vuori is engaged in". We can think of the expression "the world that Vuori is engaged in" as Barad (2007, 32) does: the agencies are "intra-action" inside the phenomenon — "And the

Portiton portti. The performer is the person walking by, and in an everyday situation. But at the same time, when we go deeper, it seems a little too simple. It seems to me that if we try to define the art piece in the traditional manner — as a material arrangement made by the artist between spectators, which in turn means there is no phenomenology to where artistic agency can start, which means there is no art piece. From the perspective outside, the medium is the message. The medium is the message. The performance is a part of the phenomenon, the person can be said to be a part of it (we can think of the role of the performer) and from the perspective outside, the phenomenon of the performance can be said to be a person walking on the street (or on the stage). There is no problem with the simultaneous roles, and these roles are independent of how the person defines themselves. And, as it is common to the little bit complicated to frame the role outside the bounds of the art piece (for example, the actor can role playing an object). Would it not be more meaningful to consider that at one aspect, in one performance, and in another performance (or the same performance) the person can be said to be a performer. If the audience cannot be framed outside the phenomenon, the person can be said to be a part of it (we can think of the role of the performer) and from the perspective outside, the phenomenon of the performance can be said to be a person walking on the street (or on the stage). There is no problem with the simultaneous roles, and these roles are independent of how the person defines themselves.
A habit of mind?

Necessity. Now let's look at the short discussion above, it seems clear that the space that art produces can be understood as 

necessity”. and culturally contingent belief that is part of Western philosophy's legacy and not a logical asymmetrical faith we place in our access to representations over things is a historically direct way. Barad (2007, 48-49) calls this a “Cartesian habit of mind”. She claims that “the in a so called objective way and that data "actually" represents objects and phenomena in a 

example thoughts and words. It seems that we think that words "actually" represent objects 

representationalism, that we think we have access to the essence of things through for 

The thought patterns we question here are basically thought patterns related to 

or a "meta"definition that is coherent and covers all of the viewpoints of the phenomenon. I 

to find ways to think about this in a reasonable way. The hard part is to find a perspective 

aspect of the phenomenon. But I still think it is too early to claim that it would be impossible 

have grasped one aspect of it, it seems that it does not fit with the rest. It seems that every 

creates around itself as a phenomenon is not very easily definable – at least not as an "object" 

Already based on the short discussion above, it seems clear that the space that an art piece 

A habit of mind?

In some interviews, one of the main points that the interviewee was trying to make was that every try to draw a boundary has its own blind spots and never covers every 

It think the issues that Barad discusses comes quite close to the same problems we run into 

What we see as an object and if we think these are static or dynamic terms. Or on another 

perspectives. If we think in Barad's terms, the problem lies in what we see as an object and 

makes sense to try to find another "habit of mind", that could make sense from different 

to shift our thought pattern and see the phenomenon from other perspectives before it 

It think the problem may lie in our thought patterns. Could it be that we think about things too 

see as a subject and if we think these are static or dynamic terms. Or on another 

scale: the problem lies in how we define objectivity. Barad has many interesting and inspiring 

what we see as a subject and if we think these are static or dynamic terms. Or on another 

If we believe in this analysis, which some researchers say, it is only a habit of mind and nothing 

This is something we have to reexamine before we can even talk about alternatives. But it 

also suggests that there are alternatives hidden at all of the phenomenon. I think for the reasons that Barad discusses comes quite close to the same problems we run into 

in philosophy, the problem lies in what we see as an object and what we see as a subject and if we think these are in dynamic terms. Or on another 

Similarly, it suggests that there are alternative habits of mind. 

Galileo

En gång, två osammansatta energier var i konflikt om att röra det som nu är. Det är en historiskt denna den största av de 

magneter som skapades av självenergi. Och en tredje kom på att sätta olika linser i rad i ett rör och till slut fick han det nya 

sätt som Galileo hade föreslagit. Jag vill inte påstå att de hade rätt eller fel, men deras 

Hur det än var så fortsatte tiden att gå och människorna började se på världen på det 

en gång var alla människor att jorden var i centrum av universum. Det var ju 

så småningom själva iaktta världen 

Människorna blev inte mer intresserade av att titta på himlen med hjälp av detta teleskåp. Och denna – lite 

teorier i ett så pass klar och objektivt sätt som de sedan denna tid började se på världen. 

Galileo

En gång såg Galileo ett stort ögonblick och det blev en teleskopsiktig. Det var inte längre en fråga om hur solen 

världsbild och på så sätt även deras plats i universum, vilket väl i grund och botten 

en gång visste alla människor att jorden var i centrum av universum. Det var ju 

Danska-Svenska universitetsbiblioteket under nya omständigheter. De var 

Galileo

En gång såg Galileo ett stort ögonblick och det blev en teleskopsiktig. Det var inte längre en fråga om hur solen 

världsbild förändrades. De kunde till och med så småningom själva iaktta världen 

Galileo
Diffraction or reflection? Barad approaches these questions with the metaphor of reflection and diffraction. Reflection is a term that most of us are aware of. It is a physical phenomenon that relates to light reflected from materials. Reflection is not to be confused with an linguistic metaphor or a lexical notion – reflection is about relationships. For example, we talk about things in the metaphor of reflection – that is an example of how things are related to each other. What is diffraction then? As a simple introduction – summarizing Barad’s (2007, 71-94) presentation of the phenomenon in her own words – diffraction is a physical phenomenon in the world. And even though this essay is not about how language relates to thought patterns, the reader needs to be aware that language relates to thought patterns because it is somehow interwoven to the metaphors in circulation. In the English language the expression “reflect upon” is a well known one. It is used by the reader: “reflect upon” is also used in the sense “to think deeply or carefully about” (Oxford Dictionary of English 2016, “reflect”). In a nutshell, reflection is about how one context relates to another or amplify each other depending on where they meet. This is one common pattern, which can be considered a diffraction pattern (Barad 2007, 76). In Donna Haraway’s words, we could say that the diffraction pattern “does not map where possible, the reader needs to be aware that language relates to thought patterns because it is somehow interwoven to the metaphors in circulation. In the English language the expression “reflect upon” is a well known one. It is used by the reader: “reflect upon” is also used in the sense “to think deeply or carefully about” (Oxford Dictionary of English 2016, “reflect”). In a nutshell, reflection is about how one context relates to another or amplify each other depending on where they meet. This is one common pattern, which can be considered a diffraction pattern (Barad 2007, 76). In Donna Haraway’s words, we could say that the diffraction pattern “does not map where possible, the reader needs to be aware that language relates to thought patterns because it is somehow interwoven to the metaphors in circulation. In the English language the expression “reflect upon” is a well known one. It is used by the reader: “reflect upon” is also used in the sense “to think deeply or carefully about” (Oxford Dictionary of English 2016, “reflect”). In a nutshell, reflection is about how one context relates to another or amplify each other depending on where they meet. This is one common pattern, which can be considered a diffraction pattern (Barad 2007, 76). In Donna Haraway’s words, we could say that the diffraction pattern “does not map
good reasons to think that diffraction may serve as a productive model for thinking about nonrepresentationalist methodological approaches.

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

This is about what we have capacity to imagine. And what creates our world view is the means we have to experience the world with. In other words, we could say that the senses of us as human beings allow us to perceive the world inside a certain frame – in a certain point in time and space – and not outside it. To reach outside it, we need tools. Our senses themselves do not allow us to perceive the world in any way with the right kind of extension of the senses we can broaden the frame. For me, this is true for both art and science. A good example could serve as the example of Galileo and the sun. There was no tool (or a “medium”) we possessed that made us see the sun really circle the earth. It definitely looked like it exactly moved every day, this was the only logical conclusion. But when the right tools were developed, in this case the telescope, humanity – with Galileo at the forefront – became aware that this was not the case. In the same way, any kind of thinking about art depends on the tools we have to perceive the world and our thinking can be “light” or “diffractive” in a sense that it could really expand the world as it is, even far more than the light conditions which the tools have brought. It is more about the frame or extension or medium of our senses and our thinking. It is important to remember in this discussion because it also affects our conscious or subconscious thinking about art. In this way, art also plays a big role in changing the corner (and the mirror) we use to look at the world. We cannot shift the thought pattern to a diffractive one and at the same time “imagine” a line made in the human thinking. And far more true for art in any art.

Instead of thinking about art as something that exists to comment upon the world, for example as part of an artist intentions, we could think of it as something that interacts with the world. As artists, we can think that, through the art piece we create certain aspects of the world and the art piece can also be a channel that increases our consciousness that has its own agency in the world. That is, the artist creates a material set up that together with other parts of the world creates a phenomenon which interacts and affects the world. This phenomenon includes agents – made things or art and experiences – but also other non-human agents (or elements) of which the art piece acts as only one part. And this again – like the phenomena – gets different proportions depending on the factors taken in account.

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

The analysis at hand will require thinking through the details of difference as a physical phenomenon, including quantum understandings of difference and the important differences they make in order to tune the difference apparatus, in order to explore the phenomenology of touch, which is the case in diffraction, in order to produce a way of thinking about the nature of difference and of space, time, matter, causality, and agency, among other important variables. (Barad 2007, 71)

This is a small project. And it seems that we need to set the current thought paradigms aside for a moment to approach this subject.
The Tree

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Towards another objectivity

As every artist probably has experienced, it is no easy task to try to think of a piece of art as preconceived. It is a task almost impossible to try to define a single experience that every experiencer will have when meeting the art piece. We can make definitions of kinds of art in a range of epistemology that makes sense, but we have no control over the different associations and links that a piece contains. Even in cases where the piece has the form of an event and it is framed in time – such as in the case of performances – there is no clear interpretation and experience. And it gets even more complicated when we think about pieces that becomes different experiences – for examples in different times or different cultures – experiences. But why is this so difficult and why does it feel complicated for me?

My suggestion is that the difficulty lies in that we try to think about the art piece as an event. When we start to think about art through a diffractive thought pattern, we come across phenomena that are subjectivity and objectivity, and about art and society. If we think of art through the perspective of the experience, it means that as an experiencer we try not thinking about what other individuals understand as a part of the phenomenon around the art piece at a specific moment in time. As an experience, it is about the perception of the situation and its context. It is about the perception, whatever it is, the experiencer – I can no longer say that my statements are true in relation to this new cut inside the phenomenon. This is also a reason I separate the terms “art piece” and the “art piece’s space” in this essay. I often talk about two different framings of the same phenomenon of which they are a part. It seems that this mistake could be corrected by shifting our thinking to a way where we acknowledge that the piece that we can touch, hear, see or experience directly with some other sense, that this mistake could be corrected by shifting our thinking to a way where we acknowledge that the piece that we can touch, hear, see or experience directly with some other sense, includes things like context, audience and artist, just to name a few. The piece does not have a priori contain any attributes that makes it art. Neither does it contain any attributes that includes things like context, audience and artist, just to name a few. The piece does not have a priori contain any attributes that makes it art. Neither does it contain any attributes that only is a part of the whole phenomenon that

This raises questions about subjectivity and objectivity and about art and society. If we think of art through the perspective of the experience, it means that as an experiencer we try not thinking about what other individuals understand as a part of the phenomenon around the art piece at a specific moment in time. As an experience, it is about the perception of the situation and its context. It is about the perception, whatever it is, the experiencer – I can no longer say that my statements are true in relation to this new cut inside the phenomenon. This is also a reason I separate the terms “art piece” and the “art piece’s space” in this essay. I often talk about two different framings of the same phenomenon of which they are a part. It seems that this mistake could be corrected by shifting our thinking to a way where we acknowledge that the piece that we can touch, hear, see or experience directly with some other sense, includes things like context, audience and artist, just to name a few. The piece does not have a priori contain any attributes that makes it art. Neither does it contain any attributes that only is a part of the whole phenomenon that

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

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

This example shows that it also seems to be hard to make statements about chickens and eggs, and also at least for me – these statements are not relevant. The link of actions changed after the school shooting. I have been changed because I have heard about the school shooting. I do not think about those premises acknowledging systemic determinations of objectivity, like certain in these questions whether and at the same time. It is a matter of perspective. We do not need to be afraid of a sharp boundary in space and time because there are no sharp boundaries to be crossed. We do not need to make statements about chickens and eggs. The only thing we need to do is get further in the understanding that they have altered each other. The meaning of art and I was not meaningful in itself as something that was not meaningful. Not even seemingly unrelated events are necessarily unrelated, even though the relation might not be between them but to be entangled. Similarly one can here word “intra-actions” to talk about these relations.

Some outcomes include the larger material arrangements (i.e., set of external practices) that effects on agency can be termed “subject” and “object” (in contrast to the more familiar Cartesian cut which takes this distinction for granted). To see the aggregated set as a mediation within the phenomena of the cultural ontological and semantic indeterminacy. In other words, when do we present relations rather than within phenomena move through specific acts of actions. Crucially, then, now actions were not agential equally the mediations are mutual mediations phenomena. The notion of aggregated inability is fundamental importance for the absence of a classical ontological condition of statements becomes above view and observed. It provides an alternative ontological condition for the possibility of objectivity (Roos 2007, 139-140).
In Barad’s spirit, my perspective in this essay is that there is no absolute truth (which I feel is a synonym to a more “traditional” way to think of objectivity) to be found. There is only human knowledge that is more or less true right now. Also, I do not want to make a stand on the manner of a truth, or “objectivity” in the minds of the writers. "The appropriate is in the state of becoming on human perspective – at least I try to analyze a human phenomenology, for example art. And I do not think it is very fruitful to try to define objectivity in any other way than through the state of a truth where we are right here and right now. Beyond this, it might be fruitful to think about what objectivity could be to the future, or – in other words – what potential lies in its future perspectives. And this is counting of philosophy, and should be thought of through the worlds of Alfred North Whitehead (1920, 1929) that I could in the introduction of this essay in philosophical discussions, the more or less of dynamics constant or non-coaxial of statements in an evolution of itself. These are human ideas about objectivity should be based on we know knowledge we have right here right now, and at the same time we should also open up how we think about objectivity and be present of the state of the world. In this way, we can approach Barad’s suggested definition of objectivity: objectivity means being accountable for marks on bodies, that is, specific materializations in their differential mattering. We are responsible for the cuts that we help enact, not because we do the choosing (neither do we escape responsibility because “we” are “chosen” by them), but because we are an integral part of the material becoming of the universe. Cuts are especially marked out by individuals if the larger material arrangements of which “we” are a part.” (Barad 2007, 176)

Where does the art piece end?

We can broaden the thoughts above by thinking of them through the metaphor of diffraction in a water surface. If we think that both subject and object at the time of their meeting are two stones thrown in a still water surface, they make waves in the surface at this point in time. When the two ring-shaped waves meet each other, they combine and effect each other. After a while, when the waves have made far enough, there is nothing left of the original ring patterns, and it is not possible to see which wave is the other. When looking about the relationships between subject and object in art, it is quite pertinent to even talk about any kind of law or way under such a condition. When the two waves meet, they combine, and cause a larger phenomenon that is the water surface. And you can try to think of any meeting between two agents instead of a material phenomenon through this metaphor. To broaden this metaphor in a simple way every encounter with art is an event creates a small wave pattern in the water surface. When we stand on the water surface, we see our small waves, but from this point of view it is hard to see the bigger waves. But if you zoom out a bit, you can see one big wave in the sea. At this moment we can represent that the larger phenomenon has occurred together. From this position we can get a picture of how the natural forces in the “art world” are a whole. And when you move even more, for example when you look on the water surface from an airplane, you get far enough to distinguish the medium-sized waves from each other. But once we get a bigger form – such as waves, ripples and currents – and also recognize the larger phenomenon that the waves are made of or more in motion. From this position we can – in this simplified example - think that we see the “art world” relates to the world as a whole. Above all, I have made statements of what we should think about objectivity in a new way. I do, of course think that we should not say anything. I will make statements about how things relate to each other when we think through a human way to think about objectivity. We cannot use one description of the world to think about our own thought patterns. We enough to do something, and are not ready to be wrong. Because of this, thinking through patterns in so very hard.

Therefore, I want to use a non-context using simple statements in Barad, before continuing my own discussion. To get beyond the representational and Cartesian view of the world, Barad (2007, 56) states that she wants to present a “realism toward phenomena and the entangled material practices of knowing and becoming”, where phenomena “are neither individual entities nor mental impressions, but entangled material agencies”. As I already introduced, Barad uses the word “intra-act” (instead of interact) to describe how the material agencies act in relation to each other. For example when we look on the water surface from an airplane, we get far enough to distinguish the medium-sized waves from each other. But once we get a bigger form, such as waves, ripples and currents – and also recognize the larger phenomenon that the waves are made of or more in motion. From this position we can – in this example and simplified – think that we see the “art world” relates to the world as a whole. Above all, I have made statements of what we should think about objectivity in a new way. I do, of course think that we should not say anything. I make statements about how things relate to each other when we think through a human way to think about objectivity. We cannot use one description of the world to think about our own thought patterns. We cannot be wrong, and are not ready to be wrong. Because of this, thinking through patterns is so very hard.
The phenomenon I am actively shaping and it shapes me. And this makes the agents entangled (non-human) agents. But these agents themselves effect the phenomenon itself – together with other agents entangled in the phenomenon. And this makes the agents entangled (human and non-human) agents. But these agents themselves effect the phenomenon itself – together with other agents entangled in the phenomenon. And this makes the agents entangled (human and non-human) agents. But these agents themselves effect the phenomenon itself – together with other agents entangled in the phenomenon. And this makes the agents entangled (human and non-human) agents. But these agents themselves effect the phenomenon itself – together with other agents entangled in the phenomenon. And this makes the agents entangled (human and non-human) agents. But these agents themselves effect the phenomenon itself – together with other agents entangled in the phenomenon. 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It can be harder to imagine how the experiencer leaves traces in the art piece, but this follows important as any agent in the world – human or non-human. Surface – that it creates over time that is highlighted, and in this way the piece becomes as always follows the same terms. Instead, it is its influence on the world – the rings in the water widens in this way. It becomes hard to think about the piece as a static physical entity that have not seen the performance itself. But the phenomenon or the space of the performance to some of my friends, they get an idea of the performance, even though they have never seen the performance itself. For example, we can try to look at the world through the perspective of “the art piece” for the past that she might not deliberately dwell more on what does the art piece “see” or “experience”. Let’s make a thought experiment. 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If it is possible to define specific agents – such as subjects and objects – within each phenomenon (and only within these phenomena) and that from the inside of the phenomenon we cannot say anything about the whole phenomenon’s objectivity or truth, then it must mean that if we want to know something about the phenomenon as a whole we have to step outside it and observe it from the outside. But even from this position, we influence the phenomenon – this new subject – which we observe, which in turn means we become a part of a new, bigger phenomenon of which the old one also is a part. In this way, the objectivity we can talk about is always in relation to the phenomenon of which it is a part. Barad has a good example of this.

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

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

This also means why we so readily bump into problems when thinking about art pieces as entities. If we for a moment accept the thought presented in this text as a perspective, it is easy to see that drawing about the world through entities is a simplified view that does not take all the aspects of an art piece – or any phenomenon for that matter – into account. If we think about the art piece as a phenomenon consisting of different agents – which includes all the human agents that are, have been, or will be part of this phenomenon, as well as all the non-human agents that are, have been, or will be part of this phenomenon – it’s understandable that the “object” that is set aside as a noun and that “we” can “observe” apart from the phenomenon itself is the art piece. And if the phenomenon is that much more complex than what we can understand from our subjective perspective, we have to be aware that even the most simple and basic phenomenon cannot be simply thought to be a part of the phenomenon itself, and because the phenomenon itself is so broad faced and this possible to relate to, we can be confident in the claim that we can draw from the phenomenon from any angle and talk about its “arts” – or re-describe this phenomenon in another way. (And in my example above, from icon to films “art” is another ability.)

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

I stand in a forest without a map.

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

Now I have to make a choice: I have to choose a direction to walk. What do I base my choice on? Do I base it on what I see before me, or do I base it on what I think that might be at the location that is now at the end of my field of vision? Do I choose the uphill, that is heavy and hard to walk, because I think that I can get a good overview up there and then have a clearer picture of what direction I should choose – although this includes a risk that what I see from there is not what I was hoping for? Or do I choose the easy way down to the water? Even this contains a risk – I may realize that the water is not a lake, but an ocean that I cannot cross. Or do I decide to go into the dark forest hoping to find something there, but with the risk of getting lost and returning to the same place again?

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

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

Therefore, we get the idea of drawing a map.

Skogen

Jag står i en skog utan karta.


Och nu når jag där upp i holmen och ser att jag inte vet något om det land som jag kommer till. Under det tiden jag tänkte mig att jag skulle se på ett vis av att rikta mig mot något under, kom jag att tänka mig att jag inte vet något om det. Och nu när jag ser det upp, ser jag att jag inte vet något om det. Jag kan inte se något som jag inte vet något om, jag kan inte se något som jag inte vet något om, jag kan inte se något som jag inte vet något om, jag kan inte se något som jag inte vet något om.

Men jag vet att det är viktigt att veta vad jag hoppas på. Eller vill jag att det har en mera allvarlig riktning att jag ska veta vad jag hoppas på? Eller vill jag att det har en mera allvarlig riktning att jag ska veta vad jag hoppas på? Eller vill jag att det har en mera allvarlig riktning att jag ska veta vad jag hoppas på? Eller vill jag att det har en mera allvarlig riktning att jag ska veta vad jag hoppas på? Eller vill jag att det har en mera allvarlig riktning att jag ska veta vad jag hoppas på?
As a matter of art?

It’s impossible to know everything about reality. There are constraints. We humans are born as psychological beings. Asking, “What does it mean? What is it about?” I answer with a performance about perspective and gravity. Or about the baroque era.

– Kirsten Dehlholm (Hotel Pro Forma 2017)

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

Going through the process of writing this text, I have run into everyday situations in my work, or in other people’s artistic work – whether as an experiencer or as a colleague – that feel like evidence that the thinking thought paradigm very instantly affects the artistic work. There are thoughts and the art pieces, I have started to think that there are alternatives that lead to different working methods, structures and relations to artistic activity.

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

I feel I cannot approach these questions without thinking about the reasons why an artist makes a work of art. It is in some way a matter of intentions and intentions are a matter of world view. But through a diffractional thought pattern, the world view is not chosen by us, but is a result of our intra-action with the world. We affect the world, and the world affects us, in a constant change. It isn’t enough to think about why something happens in general, that’s an easier task, and then derive this, step by step, towards the intentions of artists in relation to specific pieces.

In my opinion, thinking through a reflective thought pattern easily leads us to think that the only thing important is to impact the art piece in one relation to one intention. If we must the piece to change the world in any way, the important thing is to fill the piece with statements or questions, with the center that drives the intention in the best possible way. This thinking easily leads us to think that the work purely has the means. By thinking through a diffractional thought pattern, we try to discern other aspects as well.

I want to bring up one more concrete level, and think about how this way of thinking really might effect when we create art as human beings. Thinking of art through a diffractional thought pattern is not only a matter of world view. That kind of work does a diffractional thought pattern suggest and what is the difference when comparing to a reflective thought pattern?

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

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Moreover there are strict boundaries – let’s assume that every parent wants the best for their children. The same reason, it’s easier to assume that every artist wants the best for their pieces. So, in this discussion, we assume that the intentions are “good”. But what does “good” and “best” and “relation to what” mean in this context? Art is a kind of magic that can be used to manage the most important questions for our children (or at least to try to be happy). To make art, we must be something else – or a combination of these – on the earth. The intentions are in relation to the parents world.
We do not need to create platforms inside of which experiences can happen – and the variety of experiences we can only try to “raise” the art piece in the best possible way. We can only create potential.

For example, if we think about the art piece’s space, this space has not yet taken on material form that the first experiencer will step into. Just as parents step into the life of their child earlier than other human beings – for example what you do as a parent – and follow that example. A simplified version of it is: an art piece is not an object, but a space – which, as said, can be thought of as a metaphor of the artist’s art piece in spacetimelike, where every agent that has, has been or will be in relation with the phenomenon is situated. Or if we look at the example of the art piece’s space, it is a metaphor of the life of the child – all the experiences she has, everything she is right now and everything that will affect her later on. As parents, we can only try to raise her to the best possible way.

We create platforms inside of which experiences can happen – and the variety of experiences is infinite inside the framing of the potential.

Artistic agency and authorship

Just as parents step into the life of their child earlier than other human beings, we can probably safely say that the artist steps into the art piece’s space earlier than the first experiencer.

When the potential starts to interact with the child, which becomes an idea for us, and we choose to explore this idea further, to interact with it. For example, for whatever reason, we encounter something that becomes an idea for us, and we choose to start to act in it. For example, for whatever reason, we cannot understand that the way we work – taking both physical, social, linguistic and imaginary aspects into account – really affects the art piece, then how can we really tune our art pieces that has been recognized after the death of the artist. And just try to bring the wrong content in the wrong spaces. It is comparable with trying to sew a perfectly clean fabric in a mud pit. And the better we are at building this space, the better potential we create for the art piece.

We do not need to be prisoners of imaginary structures and rules, but to some extent the task is impossible for us. And the way in which things affect the potential – the manifesting methods. For example it is from some time thinking about a great deal of land and soil and my focus on the potential of the soil. So, our style can slowly take it from us by going through the different (diffractional) stages that it has to, to slowly form the framed potential – or space inside the art piece’s space. Only then can we say that the art piece is formed.

We create the circumstances in which we function, and this is a part of what will become the art piece. We do this as agents in the world and this is a matter of how we choose to work.

If we do not understand that the way we work – taking both physical, social, linguistic and imaginary aspects into account – really affects the art piece, then how can we really tune our art pieces? And if we cannot understand that the way we work – taking both physical, social, linguistic and imaginary aspects into account – really affects the art piece, then how can we really be good parents for our children? What is the idea of avoiding all evil pits? As artists, we build the art piece’s space by creating working methods and material setup for others. We create the circumstances in which we function, and this is a part of what will become the art piece. We do this as agents in the world and this is a matter of how we choose to work.

This means that it should be transparent about our intentions – to the world, but especially to ourselves. It is a means of what we think the art piece wants to be, and it is a means of what we think the art piece wants to be, and it is a means of what we think the art piece wants to be. And the better we act at handling this space, the better potential we create for the art piece. Therefore this facet becomes how we think of the art piece at some point in time.

And if a state, text or an idea contains what is immediately perceived as “good” or “bad” art, because this concerns the early, risky work. In our history, we have many examples of art pieces that has been recognized after the death of the artist. And just try to bring the wrong content in the wrong spaces. It is comparable with trying to sew a perfectly clean fabric in a mud pit. And the better we are at building this space, the better potential we create for the art piece. Therefore this facet becomes how we think of the art piece at some point in time.

We create the circumstances in which we function, and this is a part of what will become the art piece. We do this as agents in the world and this is a matter of how we choose to work.
So how should we view the artist’s relation to art pieces? As a reference to the artistic identity
and the art in the artwork, I want to cite Barad. In the acknowledgement of
Meeting the
Universe Halfway
, she writes:
So this acknowledgment does not follow (and does not not follow) the tradition
of an author reminiscing about the long process of writing a book and naming
supporters along the way that made the journey possible. There is no singular
point in time that marks the beginning of this book, nor is a writing process that any
individual “I” or even group of “I’s” can claim credit for. In an important sense, it
is not even useful that I “have written the book, so that it is an act of mine.” On the
other hand, “we” have become “we” through many acts of “we”-ness, rather than the usual
“interactions” that are expressions of joint activity or conjoined processes that
result from acts of speech that arise in the process of writing. A text and naturally
constructed text is not, in other words, “we,” rather than “I” and “you,” a “we” and “you” that
are together in the same time, nor is it a sum of forces that are not traceable in the ocean of the
world, or are they really traceable without making arbitrary assumptions?
We can think of a case where the working group has been working very collectively, and
where the working group that they share the authorship of the piece is the audience in this
case thinks of the artist as the author, and the performances as “intrasite” of the piece. Does
it change where the authorship lies? And should the directors point out the authorship is not theirs
alone? Or if the director does not acknowledge that the performers could be artists,
but still use them as an artistic agent to build their performance, does this change the relation
between claimant and the audience in this case happens to this group?

So how should we then relate to the question of authorship in art? I think we can think of
the authorship through the metaphor of an art piece’s space. Each piece is, in a sense, a
sum of forces that share authorship of the piece, and every time an audience experiences
the piece of art, it is their space, and the performance that they experience is also part of
the artistic space, and adds to the space. So when the audience experiences a piece of art
they are also authoring it, and giving credit to the artist who created the space for them.

Even though Barad’s writing in another discourse, the content of this acknowledgement
can be applied to artistic practices as well. As an artist we make the pieces as much as the
pieces make us – we “intra-actively” make each other. When thinking about art through a
diffractional thought pattern, it also becomes complicated to define the “authorship” of an art
piece. As a result one should be very careful when assigning with definitions. Because where
the piece is as I seen from the other end of the spectrum, or in an art piece that is not traceable to the sense of the
world, or are the really traceable without making arbitrary assumptions?

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Structures and ethical aspects

A human being in this society has many roles. Some of these roles are work related, some are social, some are personal and many different roles in different contexts – and that seems to be a problem with Barad. She also means art and art at all the time. Is it a role that an artistic effort is a significant part of the world in the right context, it is a part of the art piece's space. Being a painter, sculptor, musician, performer, director, choreographer, scenographer or something else does not automatically make someone an agent. It is in some contexts – inside phenomena – these phenomena have more artistic agency and some less so inside the art piece's space. And even in the cases where we usually consider that the piece is made by a single artist – for example, a painting or a musical piece – the musician's artistic agency is bigger in relation to the whole space of the art piece.

In this case the musician's artistic agency is bigger in relation to the whole phenomenon. We can also think of the individual musician becomes an artistic agent inside this space. But the artistic agency of the individual musician is relatively small in relation to the whole phenomenon. We can also think of this in the context of the changing relationship between the artists and their roles differently, and there is no problem with that per se.

Firstly, “scenographer” as a role relates to how one views oneself, which role one identifies with. For example, I do not think of myself as a scenographer just because I have worked on some projects – these kind of examples in any artistic field. People are different and interpret these identities and roles differently, and there is no problem with that per se.

Secondly, “scenographer” as a role relates to how one perceives others. I have realized that others do not always perceive an agent with the same tools. I would like to think of this as a spectrum, where some agents have more artistic agency and some have less so inside the art piece.

Thirdly, “scenographer” as a role relates to what one sees in a specific project. In this context it can be to do the work that one kind of work one is expected to do in an agreed manner. In some cases it can even get upset when they inside the frame of some project are expected to work in an experimental way or if they are asked to be a part of a more democratic group. And if we still, in a collective art process (or in parenting) find ourselves in situations where both parts cannot accept and where both agents have space to give their best regardless of the decided hierarchy or the roles inside the working group. And it has to do with both what kind of work I am expected to do – an agreement made between the working group – and what kind I get when the work is done.

Something is to try to find our own ways. What is to say is not an answer, and it is a matter of context and how we treat each other. It is not an argument to say that “I am like this” or “we have always done like this”.

But if we still, in a collaborative art process it is a matter of both ways. People are different and interpret these identities and roles differently, and there is no problem with that per se. But it means that we have to be extremely transparent to each other when we communicate these things to one another. We need to be aware that the other person does not automatically have the same view of other roles as others. And we need to communicate it in order to avoid problems that could build the possible space for the art piece. And if there are differences in the working group, we need to find the person that the roles inside the working group – and what kind I get when the work is done.

But these roles are only words, and talking about them in this level, it does not necessarily include anything artistic. There seems to be some confusion here – is it inside the doing, field or the performing arts. It is some question about if we book people to projects or if we book the work, field or the people who will become artistic agents in the projects. Visual designers, for example, identify themselves very much as “scenographers”, “costume designers” or something else does not automatically make someone an artist. And this is no problem, some projects are more collaborative than others, but the point is that it is not a matter of “either or”.

For example, I have realized that others do not always perceive an agent with the same tools. I would like to think that roles like X can be seen as X or Y can be seen as X. This is not necessarily about making democratic artistic decisions. It would be ideal if there is to think that there is no equivalence of roles. This relationship between parents does not necessarily need to be democratic in a good relationship – there are perfectly well functioning relations where only one of the parents makes all the decisions that regard the child. And this does not mean to say that in some families some of the artists have more artistic agency than others. In fact, there is no problem with that per se. But it means that we have to be extremely transparent to each other when we communicate these things to one another. But that is only my subjective view of it when “I” make a cut between myself and the working group – and what credit I get when the work is done.
So these are examples of how we could think about the structures during the work with the piece - while building the art piece - together with the piece in a way that respects the structures.

This means that there are structures that define the art piece. The piece is in its core the space where people can come and discuss the issues presented and raise questions.

It is therefore important to be aware of the existence of these structures as well as the existing space, and to be able to see the alternatives. Otherwise, it might lead us to just presenting problems in existing structures, but not being critical to the structure itself (of which we are a part).

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

The question of responsibility can also be applied when we consider the ethical responsibility of the professionals working with art - such as artists, cultural journalists, critics, curators, and institutions deciding for the funding. Of course the experiences are free to make their own assumptions, but if these turn into assumptions about the artist's intentions, for example "it is clear that the artist intended to do this with his piece", it is in turn to put words into another's mouth.

And maybe this is not so much a problem with an experiencer that went and then experienced art as a part of their free time. But when these same assumptions are made by professionals, it is a different story. I think there is this kind of thinking also among professionals. An everyday example of this, the other day I went to the Helsinki Art Museum to see an exhibition called Nautinto/Njutning/Pleasure, where works by Anna Retulainen, Jukka Korkeila and Elina Merenmies were exhibited. As I was enjoying the exhibition with a person dear to me, we happened to hear what one of the guides was saying. The guide was going into some religious and sexual topics in the artists personal lives and making statements based on this. I do not know if the guide or the person deciding for the content of the guided tour in this case took the responsibility, because if the artists in question have stated that their own religious view or sexuality is a source for their work, there may be no problem. But if not, there is. It is comparable to citing someone in an academic text without being able to make the reference.
Today we know that the universe is expanding, in the same manner as the people of the time of Galileo knew the earth was the centre of the universe. As far as I have understood, we can see it because we know what colour the light that reaches the earth should have. This is based on a knowledge of how the elements are distributed in the universe. But the colours change, depending on whether the material emitting this light moves towards us or away from us. The colour of the light thus changes in the same way as the noise of an ambulance as it passes by. As it approaches, the sound pitch is higher than when it moves away, and in the moment between these stages we experience a rapid, yet gradual change between these pitches. If the universe would be a chaos of motion, the average of the colour distortion would approach zero. But this is not the case. The case is that most of the light is redshifted, which means that matter emitting the light moves away from the Earth. Thus, we know that the universe is expanding all the time and that the space that exists around us moves in a certain direction, which is “away”.

In other words, there are two main points of view on this matter. The first point of view is that the universe will always expand, just as the tree will always grow. Others think that there must be a point for gravity to claim its space, which would cause the universe to start to contract at an unimaginable moment in the future. And maybe there’s someone somewhere on the surface of the earth, who simply thinks it’s just a proof that the universe breathes in and out, just like us.
Conclusion

The world is changing. We’re in the midwife of a new era, often referred to as the Anthropocene. That means we are already, in humanity, have started to acknowledge how we change the world. This in turn means that there is a paradigm shift going on. A shift in thought is happening right now. But it is subtle and slow change, and it can be hard to perceive on an everyday scale. But it is there, we are living and it is out there.

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

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

We do not need to be right, as long as we are prepared to be wrong. And if we – deeply inside – feel that we have taken all the perspectives into account, is it enough? We can make big claims about the world, and we do not need to be afraid of being wrong as long as we have thought it through and as long as we are prepared to be wrong. And I think that art is all about this as well. If we have the courage to claim something, as we make a statement or in some way express something, we make a safe place that allows analysis and discussion. It is about making phenomena and structures visible and tangible. It is about bringing what we do not see into art. To make new propositions, to alternatives, to definitions followed by new definitions, to the understanding of questions and answers. And as we return to Mika Hannula’s pondering about the talk produced in the field of contemporary art cited in the introduction of this essay. The talk is needed in order to understand structures, but is not enough in itself. It is about how this talk can reach us, become responsible artistic actions.

I do not claim these thoughts to be new in any way. I know artists that think about similar questions, even though they have never heard of diffraction or similar thought patterns that are already existing inside artistic communities and probably elsewhere in the society as well. We do not need to call it “diffractional” or understand how it relates to some “reflectional” thought patterns. The main point here should not be to interpret some kind of meaning for diffraction or similar thought patterns. The main point here is to keep an open mind and to understand what it means to be wrong and not to see things in one way. But the realm of art is only about and they would be explored with other eyes. And this is important to understand.

And I do not claim to be new research when the preconditions. This may be easy to think about these questions inspired by the thoughts presented in Meeting the Universe Halfway, but I do not claim that I have understood these or the ontology of agential realism fully. But I have used it as a source of inspiration and it has led me here. Someone else may need some other kind of source to get hold of their own thoughts. This, I hope this may have given some readers something to think about, because it certainly has given me.
References

Published


Unpublished


Between night and day there is a time which cannot be defined as night or day.

Natt och dag

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

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

Natt och dag