

X-OP Platform Maribor

Presentations and discussion 23rd of May

Exhibition 23rd - 31st of May 2011

X-OP Cultural Policy Group

The group was formed in the early summer 2010 when Bo Karsten, director of Art School Maa, and Johanna Fredriksson, producer working in the Helsinki-leg of X-OP network invited some artists for meetings in Maa-Tila project space. According to the initial plan the purpose of the meetings was to come up with an artistic program for the then forthcoming X-OP Festival, which was organized to coincide with the X-OP meeting in Helsinki. In the meetings more urgent, than to propose individual artworks to the festival, seemed to be discussing the trends in the cultural policy of Finland.

At the time acute issues were the plans to completely restructure the Finnish Arts Council (but partly due to strong opposition by artist unions it did not happen), and the new cultural policy plan of the Ministry of Education and Culture, which was being prepared with a long-term span of the next 35 years (the plan got published last winter). Also strong concerns were directed toward the overall shift in the cultural discourse and atmosphere in Finland toward neo-liberalism. Parts of this are high profile projects by the government, the cities and the private sector, where art is merely a branding tool of neighbourhoods, cities and the country. Also characteristic to neo-liberalism are preferences on an institutional level toward commercially oriented activities such as art fairs, private galleries and consulting agencies rather than supporting of knowledge production in museums and research centres.

Artists participating in the X-OP Cultural Policy Group are Tatu Engeström, Kalle Hamm, Ritva Harle, Minna Henriksson, Mikko Lipiäinen, Antti Majava and Tero Nauha. What is common with all of these artists is that for them art is a tool for participating in debate and

discussion in the society, rather than a channel for autonomous and personal self-expression, and therefore in their work they are dealing with actual local social and political issues.

But nevertheless this group of artists is not a homogenous group of friends, or a collective, but a loose group partly defined with the current geographic location of its members. Their subject matter as well as visual language and artistic media vary greatly. Neither do they completely share the opinion of what is to be done within the group. Last autumn the group decided to write a manifesto, which was to be sent to different newspapers in Finland. But the manifesto was never sent to papers as the group failed to define and articulate the common issues. For one there was not a consensus within the group on what is the main issue to fight against and resist in the recent developments in cultural policy in Finland, and what should be fought for. For some the main issue was about limiting *artistic freedom*, and there were concerns of diminishing freedom of speech. For others it was a question of *artistic responsibility*, and instead of crying after liberties, each artist should engage more in addressing social issues, which need urgent attention. But in both cases, what was a common concern was the resistance toward *instrumentalization* of art and artists for the economic benefits.

In KiBela gallery, in Multimedia Center Kibla, Maribor, each artist is exhibiting an earlier work, which relates to the discussions held in Maa-Tila space during the last one year.

X-OP – eXchange of art operators and producers is a gradually growing network of artists, researchers, operators, producers and centres with the aim to establish European platform for creation of art and exchange.

www.x-op.eu

Tatu Engeström

Tatu Engeström (b. 1984 Helsinki, Finland) is a visual artist based in Helsinki. He is soon to graduate with MFA degree from the Finnish Academy of Fine Arts. His artistic practice varies from gallery installations to interventions in public space.

With every new work I aim to create a strategy for producing and presenting an artwork. The context where the final piece is presented determines the form and the medium. With a good enough strategy anything is possible.

Image from video: "Police officer painting oval on museum wall"



KALLE HAMM & DZAMIL KAMANGER



Kalle Hamm (b. 1969 Rauma, Finland) is visual artist who graduated with MA degree from the School of Art and Design Helsinki in 2002. Dzamil Kamanger (b. 1948 Mariwan, Iran) is visual artist, who graduated with MA degree on visual art in the Kermanshah University in 1973. The artist-couple are known for their projects that are stretching the boundaries of visual art, and which research cultural encounters, global networks and position of marginal groups.

Pictures: Kalle Hamm and Dzamil Kamanger

From the series *Free Pizzas*

Hammer and Sickle Pizza, 2011, 33 x 33 cm

Black Power Pizza, 2011, 33 x 33 cm

Two pizza-makers

Pizzeria Babylon is an artistic collaboration, which we started in 1998 in Helsinki. At that time we were both working under-the-counter in a pizzeria in a Helsinki suburb. At first *Pizzeria Babylon* was a title for an exhibition, but soon it grew to a platform for different art projects that deal with 'otherness'. In our works we have dealt with issues such as encounters of cultures, global networks and rights and position of marginal groups in relation to majority culture. Of the material, which we have produced, we have constructed different work entities depending on the site of presentation and its specific characters. In our artistic work pizza represents the society, which anyone can bake to his/her liking.

As an overall framework of our work is postcolonial



thinking, which for us stands for critical observation of social, political, economical and cultural policies. Often life of members in marginal groups is politicized against their will. In these situations the members of the group have to develop survival strategies and rebuild their identities. Politicization against one's own will does not produce identification with citizenship or with the majority culture, but different identities of departure and arrival, where the individual constantly has to re-evaluate his/her world view according to the shifting situations.

"All humans are created equal" crystallizes the principle of the Enlightenment. The western countries have taken that as part of their politics and wish that also other countries would follow their example. A closer

examination reveals that realization of the principle has happened in the Western countries relatively late, or is still underway. Risk is that these principles remain as rhetoric speech especially when symbols and slogans of the Enlightenment are instrumentalized as commodity products, which have directed people's attention from unrealized promises to consumption. The philosophy of the Enlightenment has reached its self-destruction when the thought has become a product and language its advertisement tool. That is when no one can bake pizzas to their liking anymore.

RITVA HARLE

Ritva Harle (b. 1958 Pielavesi, Finland), studied inter alia in Art School MAA, Helsinki and Lahti University of Applied Sciences. At the moment she studies at the Masters Degree program in Cultural Policy, Department of Social Sciences and Philosophy, University of Jyväskylä. Her artistic practice consists mostly of community- and environment art projects.

My professional career started with the job of a dyer in the opera 'Don Carlos' at the renowned Savonlinna Opera Festival in 1979. After this I have been working in both small and big productions, in various places such as in opera, theatres, and TV- and cinema productions. My professional title has been, among others, a dyer, costumer, dress designer and scenographer.

Working in big productions in opera, theater or movie productions, I have never ceased to be amazed about the fact that despite peoples differing views, the work groups nevertheless manage to get along, and despite the struggle and incidents, the productions are carried to the end, to the premier. My broad working experience in these artistic fields has prepared the ground for my work as an environment- and community artist.

I graduated from Art School MAA as a painter in the 90's. As a student I started to search for a visual art form similar to the viewing experience of theatrical plays or music, to get an experience: "this moment is unique".

In the spring of 88, together with people I carried out a work named 'Montrepoo'. It was realized in the front yard of Riihisaari Museum in Savonlinna. It was my first art piece that could be afterwards called environmental art. Also the working methods, which were adopted were usual to community art. In my own work history, pieces which have been clearly planned by myself or as collaboration with other artists, are named environmental art, even if in making of them there have been lots of volunteers helping. As community art I categorize such pieces that have emerged in cooperation with other than professional artists, even if the outcome was significantly similar to environmental art.

It is hard to define where the work starts and where it ends; the so-called visible work is just one small part of the whole entity. In the background of each piece as a ground work there are countless amounts of permits, meetings for fund raising and for collaborations, and piles of all kind of documents.

In the 90's recession, a social element entered as part of my work. It became unbearable for me to witness people being stigmatized as outcast, when they fall out from



Montrepoo, Savonlinna, 1988, Riihisaari Museum, dyed natural silk, branches, sand.

the normal working life and the norms of the society, as if failure had been a self conducted life career. Society abandons the outcasts, the poor and the sick, because, at least in the cities, being broke limits down your possibilities of normal functions.

A big part of my community art projects I have made together with disadvantaged people. Most of the pieces were born in suburbs around Finland. My projects have



been physically and mentally hard, because the dark sides of the 'world's best country'¹ have been strongly present. For me now making environmental art is a form of resting and relaxing with art colleagues.

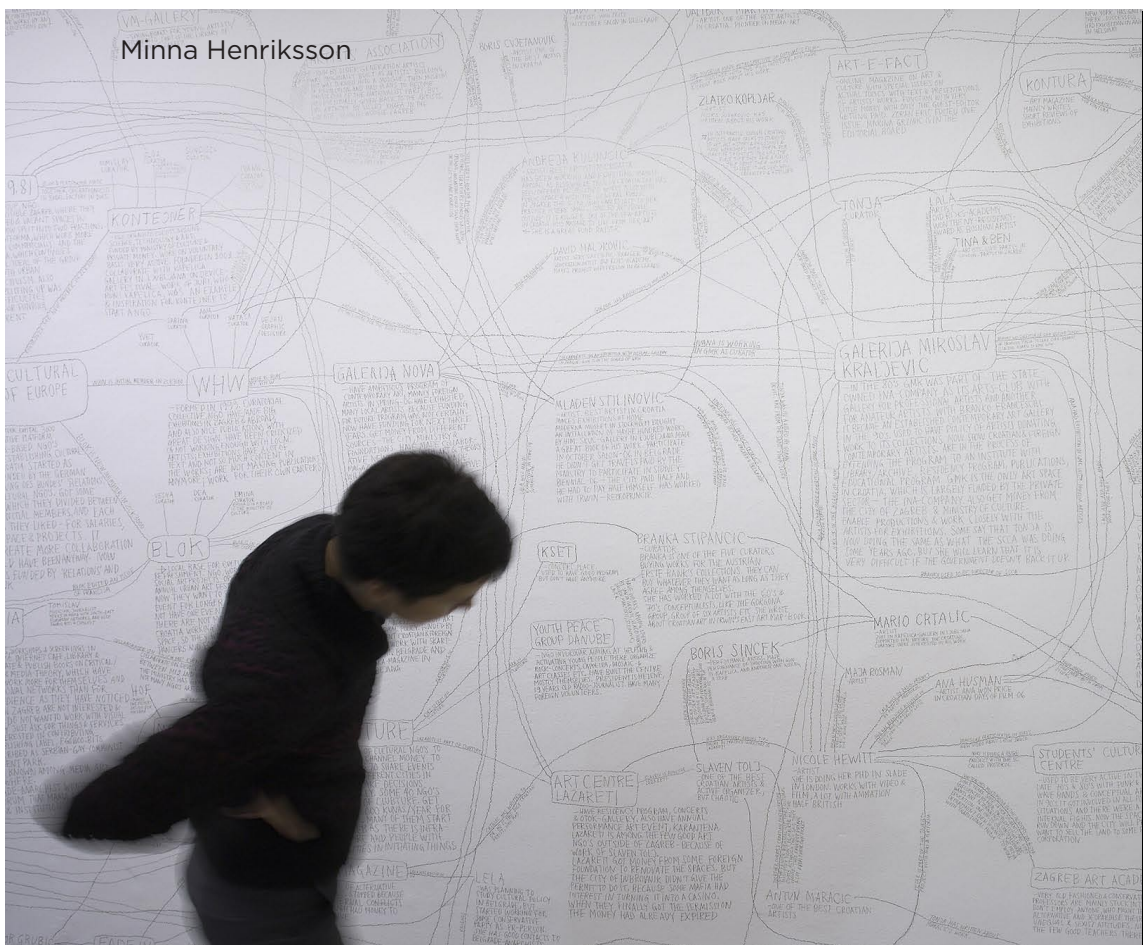
Teaching and lecturing have always connected closely with my work. It has been one way to finance my living, but more than that it has been a great pleasure and honor to work as an 'community art preacher'. Delivering

lectures has also enabled me to attend seminars without having to pay the expensive fees and to learn from other lecturers.

My piece contains pictures from along the years, of the projects that I have done. Laminated prints are from A4 to A7 size and they are attached to each other with metal rings. The result reminds of a 70's door curtain.

1. On 15th of August 2010 the American weekly news magazine *Newsweek* ranked Finland as the best country in the world

Minna Henriksson



Minna Henriksson (b. 1976 Oulu, Finland) is visual artist currently based in Helsinki, but she has stayed long periods abroad, including many Southeast European cities and has lived in Istanbul for several periods since 2003. She studied art in Brighton, Helsinki and Malmö. Alongside maps of art scenes she has mainly been working with installation and photography, and recently she realized a permanent public artwork in Trabzon, Turkey. One of her main topics of research is nationalism and she has been working on the issue in her artistic work as well as theoretically, especially its connection to contemporary art, together with her partner sociologist Sezgin Boynick.

Art Scenes

One series of works, which I have been working on in recent years are maps of art scenes. They are in the form of diagrams and consist of informal information that I have been told.

The maps are not based on empirical facts, and by no means do not claim to be, but are result of my subjective artistic research. Through presenting gossips and opinions, and concentrating on the mixing of personal and professional, revealing power positions and obvious corruption, they aim at bringing visible forces at play in the art scenes, which are invisible to the general public but have an impact on, or sometimes even determine, the artworks and exhibitions produced.



I have made map of the art scene of Istanbul (2005), Zagreb (2006), Ljubljana (2008), Belgrade (2009) and Helsinki (2009). The ones in the South-East Europe were made during two or three months' artist-residency stay hosted by a local institution, the one of Helsinki I made when I had recently returned there after a few years living mainly abroad. All of them were exhibited first locally, when the information in them was still fresh, often as installation. By time the maps lose their actuality and are easier for the art scene to digest as a picture of its dynamics.

Alongside the five maps I am also presenting other material, which has come about as a side product of the researches, and were sometimes included in the installation of the work.

The Ljubljana Map was realized during residency hosted by Kapelica gallery, and first exhibited in the gallery as installation, containing various different studies and audio piece, in June 2008. This final version of the map was part of exhibition *Museum in the Streets* at Modern Art Museum, Slovenia, where it was printed as poster in 3000 copies and distributed widely.

Left: 'Zagreb Notes', Galerija Miroslav Kraljević, Zagreb, 2006. Wall drawing. Photographer: Boris Cvjetanović

Right: 'Ljubljana Notes', Kapelica Gallery, Ljubljana, 2008. Marker pen on paper and sound. Photographer: Miha Fras

MIKKO LIPIÄINEN

Mikko Lipiäinen (b. 1975 Tampere, Finland) is an artist/activist who operates in the intersection of media, performance and socially engaged art. He is interested in the cross-pollination of the concepts and practices between online and non-online worlds. In his art practice he wants to have a role of a participator/facilitator and he seldom works as individual. In his recent works he has focused on the online world's effect on activist identities.

I grew up in an environment which provided all the essential elements needed for a landscape painting propagating the Finnish adaptation of the idea of Romantic Nationalism: the forest full of noble pine trees with views to a lake, even the great black woodpecker which is depicted in the painting of Akseli Gallen-Kallela, whose contribution to communicating the idea of Nation was essential in Finnish history.

In rural Finland where I have lived most of my life it was almost impossible to escape the presence of the romantic idea of self-determination of the Nation. The obvious reason for this is the ownership of the land - a very



practical thing for people dependent on farming and forestry.

Thus, nationalism was served to me in various forms: the deadly serious army parades, the populism of the Finnish Rural Party, the sentimentalism of Finnish pop music and the self-irony of TV-comedies that laughed at Finnish stereotypes - first the laughter was modest, later it began to ridicule these stereotypes more openly.

Like many in my generation I tried to escape this prison of nationalism by joining the international networks that many subcultures such as hip hop, electronic dance music, hacking and online gaming culture provided.

But now, after expanding my artistic practice to area that can be defined as traditional politics - labor struggle and land use - I find that there is no escape from the nationalistic discourse and way of thinking that is currently dominating the political sphere in Finland (which is not absent from the online world either) and which is preventing us from envisioning sensible solutions for the problems of globalization. This means that once again we, the artists need to confront the monster we have created. Needless to say, with conceptual instruments or weapons.



ANTTI MAJAVA

Antti Majava (b. 1977 Helsinki, Finland) graduated with MA degree from the Finnish Academy of Fine Arts in 2008, with studies also in Theatre Research at the University of Helsinki. His individual and group works have been exhibited internationally, and he is currently teaching art and ecology in the Academy of Fine Arts. He is a founding member of the Mustarinda Association. He lives and works in Helsinki and Hyrynsalmi, Finland.

Mustarinda Project

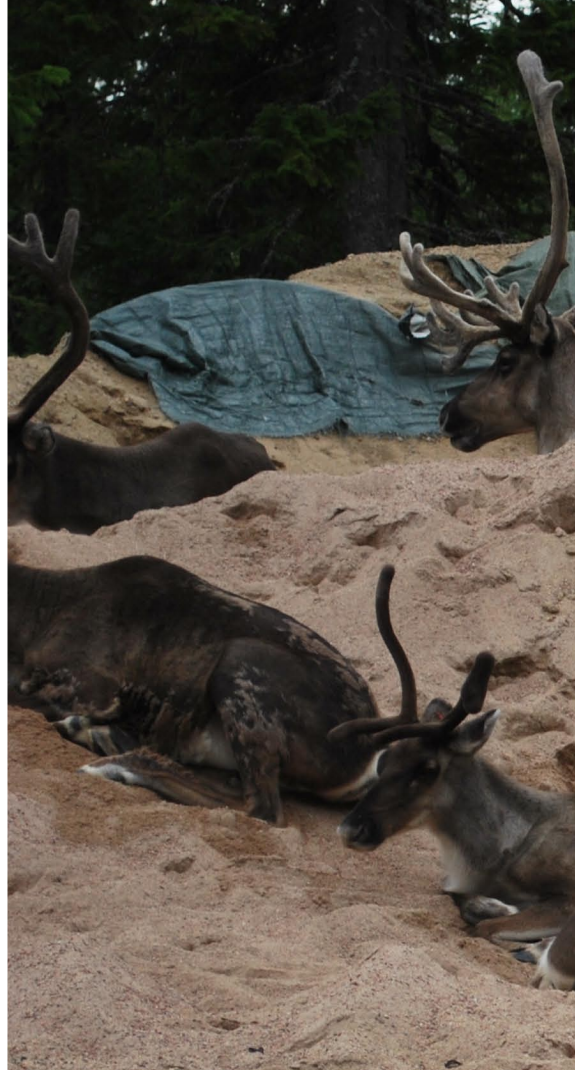
Mustarinda NGO is an art/research center organizing an artist-in-residence program on the remote hilltop of Paljakka in the Kainuu region in Finland. The surrounding old-growth forests offer a rare opportunity to observe nature's own form of language, structure, and operation. There is a particular physical and mental space for new ecological perspectives to arise.

Mustarinda aims to bring together artists, scientists, and people from various public and private organizations to work on the inconceivably wide challenges humanity is now facing. The theoretical and practical toolkit of Mustarinda includes:

- Eco-criticism and its visual counterparts. They inspire alternatives to "Nature" as an object "over there" and to capitalist consumerism as the only "realistic" option.
- Ecological thought piercing through all areas of life by means of "Ecology Without Nature": moving beyond romantic or instrumental ideas of nature.
- Creating a space for such avant-garde art and critical science that are marginalized in existing artistic and scientific institutions.
- Experimenting with creative non-economic action in regional development.

–Paavo Järvensivu and Antti Majava 2010

"...While countless works that depict nature can be found throughout art history, the human-centered perspective colors both art history as well as the present focus, in which nature is generally seen as a stage for human activity or as an involuntary object. In recent decades, a growing awareness of the impact of human activity on the planet and its ecosystems has also created a need to examine the relationship between artistic practice and nature. The mechanistic-deterministic worldview that is based on abstract forms and their measurability has proven incompatible with the planet's natural systems.



Eco-criticism is a promising example of a method for re-thinking art history as well as contemporary practices of art, green movements, nature protection, and consumer capitalism. It emphasizes the interaction between human and non-human nature and accordingly rejects the idea of nature as a mere object or a space for human activity. Eco-criticism is also closely related to feminist theory: the objectification of nature is seen having connections to oppressive practices towards women or the lower social classes. A re-interpretation of relationships to nature is thus integrated into the practice of visual arts as a new guiding principle..."

-Excerpt from the text: "Critical View Of Nature - Challenging Artistic Practice with the Representation of Biodiversity" Antti Majava/Mustarinda 2010



Reindeers
Photo: Antti Majava



TERO NAUHA

Tero Nauha (b. 1970 Hyvinkää, Finland), studied in Labti Art Institute in Finland, Poznan Art Academy in Poland and Rijksakademie van Beeldende Kunsten in Amsterdam, The Netherlands. At the moment he is carrying out a PhD research on Performance Art and Theory in The Theatre Academy in Helsinki and in Goldsmiths College of London in the department of Visual Cultures. His artistic practice consists of performances, video and audio works drawings and site-specific works. He is collaborating with performance artist Karolina Kucia and interdisciplinary group mollecular organization.

Performance in the context of neo-liberal cognitive capitalism

Two central concepts or constructions in my practice-based research are subjectivity and performance. I will try to track down the different devices and formations that these concepts have taken in the two epochal periods: of modernist-industrial context, and the context of immaterial labour, i.e. cognitive capitalism. There is a shift of contexts or transitions from an epoch to another, and both of them have different set of apparatuses in singular composition, and in relation to each other.

This contextual shift functions as a basis for my research question, which is how performance art, performativity and performance find their places in these two *disposifs*, and how do they function. How performance works in these contexts; how it mixes the processes of subjectivization under society of discipline (industrialism) and in cognitive capitalism (performance or immaterial labour)?

These two tracks develop my research context: the genealogy of modernist subjectivity in the liberal industrialism on one hand, and the argumentations on the post-fordist and neo-liberal subjectivization processes on the other hand. In the theory of contemporary art or performance these changes are reflected upon 'an ethical turn', which concludes such versatile theoretical approaches as those of Jacques Ranciere, Nicolas Bourriaud or Claire Bishop. These argumentations attempt to theorize the

(im)possibility of community or democratic in the contemporary art practices, after the pluralist, post-modern period. On the other hand something of a 'performative turn' has been taking place in the same period of time, which shows itself in the performance theory writings by Jon Mackenzie, and his idea of shift to a society of performance. Félix Guattaris practice on subjectivity through schizoanalytic approaches is one of the central points in these approaches towards cognitive capitalism, where theories of everyday life or minor are to be found in his texts, but even more so in the recent texts of Franco Berardi.

In my artistic practice three apparatuses or devices take significant place: loops, obstructions and glitches. In the relationship between capitalism and production of subjectivity, what kind of obstructions (not repressions), loops (or repetitions) and glitches of subjectivity are taking place in cognitive, neo-liberal capitalism, which are different from the fordist, liberal capitalism? What kind of performances are construed and constructed, when no universal foundation for subjectivity is to be found? Neo-liberal economy, with no state intervening individual enterprises, unless a crisis is apparent, still requires an increasing amount of administration in order to provide with freedom for the individuals to perform. Neo-liberalism produces freedom for us to be free.

www.teronauha.com

www.mollecular.org



Glitschenschlurfen 2011



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