

ART IN PRACTICE

Pedagogical Approaches

PERFORMANCE



Aapo Korkeaoja (edit.)

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PREWORDS

Performance art is like a dragonfly: an awkwardly beautiful creature that only lives in the current of a moment, soon to be just a memory. Its power is in its presence, in fearless encounters and in unfinished simplicities. It is the nomad of the artworld: unpredictable, diverse, and therefore rich. These are features I have wanted to root and flourish in pedagogy, not only to guide a meaningful art education, but also to develop practices that are eye opening and useful elsewhere.

For the writers of *Performance Art in Practice: Pedagogical Approaches* I set a goal: Write inspiring and concrete text about your practice as teachers and blow the ideas alive with your artist philosophy. As a result, these nine essays give a Finnish glimpse on what kind of thinking and methodologies are used in the creative processes and pedagogy of performance art and live art.

As boundaries between artforms vanish and individual, often corporal, subjectivity is at the core of contemporary art, it seems that performance art, which used to be hidden in the marginal of the marginals, is everywhere. In our ever mediating and hasty society, performance art skills become valuable. Concentration, emotional capacities, creativity and developing an effective presence without taking on a role, are things that performance art cultivates and can share with others.

Digitalization morphs cultures and the global knowledge society affects everything, including art education: the soon to be precariat professionals require stubborn sensitivity, and a range of aesthetic, technical, bodily, social and self-management skills. That is why an educator's main task is no longer just to pass on knowledge, but to help to navigate, distill and build. To be intelligent and effective, pedagogy has to be substantially professional and communicatively fluent, constructive, and as much ahead of its time as aware

of the past. Still, it is most important to be present, as listening is often better pedagogical practice than getting a message through.

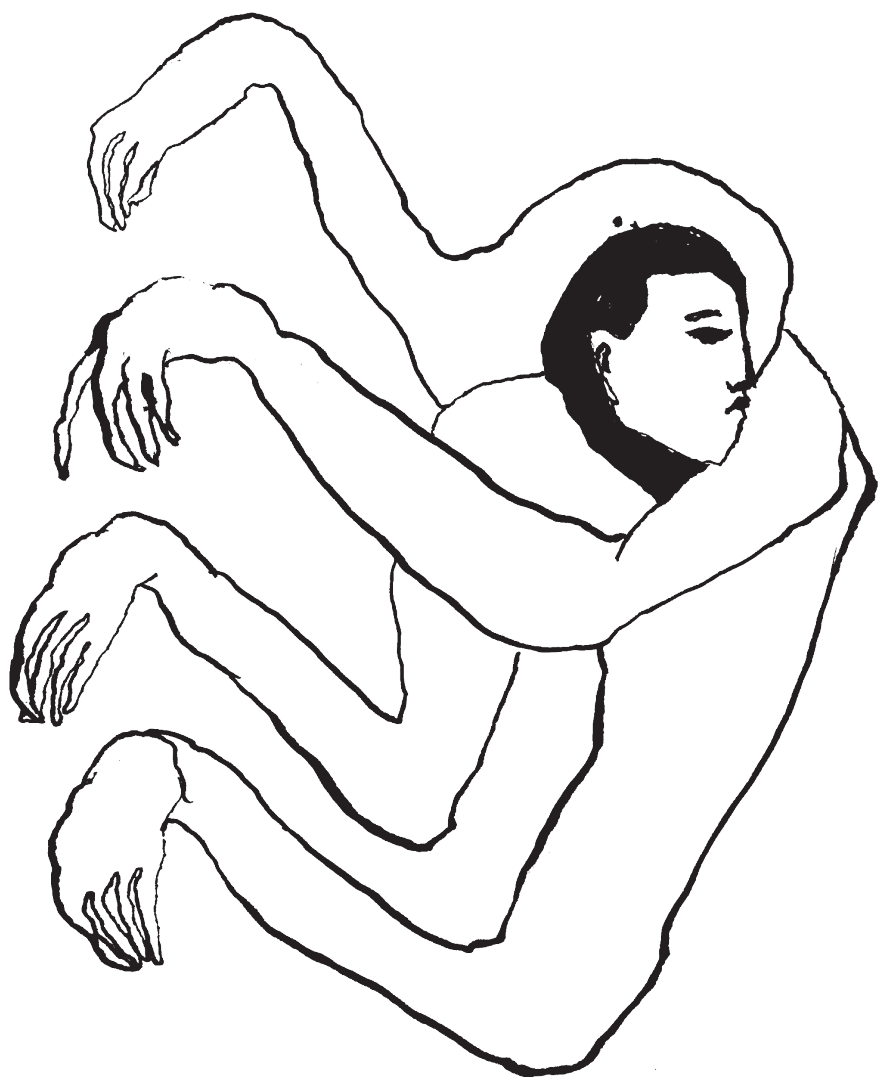
Research orientation is something that comes up in almost all of the texts in this book. It is peculiar how the act of research, a natural way to learn, has had to find its way back into art education, confronting schools and authorities that have claimed art in traditions, power relations and bureaucracy. Both art institutions and individuals are searching for meaningfulness in society, which more than ever needs solidarity, sophistication and beauty to survive the crises we face.

Even though this book pokes and challenges art education, pedagogy is not only about schools: it is a way to understand a substance through a variety of bodies, eyes and minds. We write about concrete processes that constitute performance art and live art: to inspire regardless of whether you are looking for input in your personal, everyday performances, to plan workshops, or just want to understand what the heck it is all about.

THE NEW SCHOOL

In 2010 when I started designing the performance art BA course at SAMK, Kankaanpää School of Art, I did not have much to grasp on as references for curriculum work. The idea for this book was already born then and realized by transforming that birth-angst into a celebration of the course's ten year anniversary. In parallel, I challenged the writers of this book, my colleagues, all of whom are performance or live artists, educators and researchers at Finnish universities, to write about their knowledge and experiences from practical/ methodological, as well as philosophical perspectives.

Finland has a young and specific performance and live art culture. Performance artists are educated at MA-level at LAPS, University of Arts Helsinki since 2002 (see Dr **Tero Nauha's** essay, page 174) and at BA level at SAMK, Kankaanpää School of Art, a program I have founded and been leading since 2010. The remote town of Kankaanpää has offered a great place to nurture experimental art education in a small community of teachers and students working together. The Kankaanpää education is presented



in Tuomas Laitinen's, Eero Yli-Vakkuri's, Pia Lindy's, Jussi Matilainen's and my essays.

I worked as a curator of Fluxee - a venue for experimental performances in Turku, Finland between 2003-2013. The audience, who could not make a difference between performances made by live artists or performance artists made me ask: why should I?

In Finnish, live art is 'esitystaide', a portmanteau word, which consists of two words: *esitys* = performance and *taide* = art, directly translated as 'performance art'. Quite confusing. This problem with the translation makes it obvious that these two terms are local, language-specific and what they refer to is variable even within a small country.

Regarding this, in the early 2000's, when establishing Presentaatio Communication Centre for Performance and Live Art Finland, we decided to bring performance and live artists together in a union and combine the two Finnish terms as one: 'performanssi- ja esitystaide' (performance and live art). We wanted to collaborate and leave semantics with restrictions to swim in their own little pond.

In order to bring diversity to the traditional fine art school, I followed the same politics while naming the BA course at SAMK, Kankaanpää School of Art 'Esitystaide', even if the curriculum consists of a diversity of contemporary arts related subjects. In order to make it simple, I chose to use 'performance art' in this book regarding the course and my own artwork. The other writers published here also make their own definitions, which are context sensitive and might contradict each other because this publication doesn't seek to fit the vast cultures of performance art and live art into holistic frames.

TEXTS

For this book, each writer has written an essay that has a practical and philosophical aspect in relation to their own practice as educators, researchers and artists.

Tuomas Laitinen, an artist, a doctoral candidate and a member of Reality Research Centre takes a very interesting view in his text on how practice-based research can be seen at different levels of education and in diverse circumstances. He suggests practices grounded in a type of thinking that concretely challenges structures of art pedagogy.

Founder and the former professor at LAPS, the artist **Annette Arlander**, writes about the always-current subject of Fluxus and her own experiences using a conceptual approach in performance art pedagogy, including event-scores and related practices in differently designed processes. Arlander, with a great deal of experience of performance art education, writes about pedagogy and performance art in a fresh and direct way.

Dr **Pilvi Porkola**, an artist-researcher currently working at the University of Turku, has a significant and playful approach to a key theme in performance art: the self. In her text, she gives examples on how to approach the self as material and research, and how to develop performances, that dig into the aesthetics of navel-gazing, with an academic twist.

Eero Yli-Vakkuri, an artist and a doctoral candidate, analyzes his time as a student at Tallin Art Academy: how Jan Toomik's teaching, full of action and direct approaches, affected him and his own pedagogic practices at Kankaanpää School of Art. His radical, critical but also humorous approaches are good examples of this genuine artist's way of translating his own art practice into pedagogy.

The Live Artist and dancer **Pia Lindy** writes about a body-centered approach in performance pedagogy. Rehearsals that focus on bodily perception, examining time, space and behaviour, are valuable as they can be applied in various circumstances. Her text, floating between poetic philosophy and long-term practical knowledge, is a pleasant read.

In his rich text, **Jussi Matilainen** analyzes the effect of modernism in art schools and performance art as a counterforce in the sphere of pedagogic establishments. His text, full of picturesque wording, offers rigorous thinking that reflects from within and without The Artist and Society- course he leads at Kankaanpää School of Art.

Leena Kela, an artist, curator, doctoral candidate and director of the Saari Residence, constructs an alphabet for performance art in her essay. She unwraps performance art clichés and reconstructs linguistic philosophy through practical exercises that reflect language both playfully and academically with performance art.

In his text, Dr **Tero Nauha**, artist and the current professor of the LAPS Programme at the University of Arts, Helsinki, approaches neo-liberal capitalism and derivatives, which are not only complex instruments of financial manipulation, but also affect all of us, who live in societies that depend on capitalist arrangements. He takes a view on MA level performance art education, its societal relations and its future.

My own approach has been to define the very elements of performance art education. As an education designer I have had to look at a wider picture in guiding and choosing what is valuable to be included in an education, how it should be done, and by whom? For this publication I chose to write about the basics, since I find the grass roots of performance art to be very interesting and difficult to deal with, because nothing can be taken for granted. I open up the whole performance art elementary course at SAMK, Kankaanpää School of Art, practice by practice, and write about the philosophy on which it is built.

Besides the great writer's group, I want to thank **Katriina Sjöblom** for her fierce and touching illustrations, **Hanna Vaskivuo** for a beautiful lay-out, **Mary Paterson** for language and editorial wisdom, **LADA /Lois Keidan** for a brave new collaboration and especially **SAMK/ Tiina Savola** and **Matti Velhonoja**, **Presentaatio ry** and the **Finnish Cultural Foundation**, **Satakunta Regional Fund** for their support in realizing the work.

On a sunny, freezing January afternoon at Kokemäki, Finland, 2022.

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