
Ptarmigan

Helsinki / Tallinn
Annual report: 2010 — 2011



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Cover: Non Grata, Diverse Universe performance event, Tallinn, June 2011.

Photos throughout by: Ptarmigan staff, Antti Ahonen, Carsten Stabenow, John Grzinich, Flo Kasearu, and possibly others we forgot. Thanks!

From the team....

It's exciting to be writing our second annual report as we now enter our third year of operations. The past year has been an incredible time of transition for Ptarmigan, as we have shifted in many different ways: structure, location, size, and focus. But the one constant that has remained is the passion we've felt, both as organisers and from the audiences and participants.

Though we look quite different from last October, in some ways we've finally found ourselves; our strengths and weaknesses have become more apparent after time, and our sense of community has been more clearly defined. We have recognised "collaboration" as a motivating force, and since opening up Ptarmigan to work with other organisations and groups, we've found these experiences enormously rewarding.

Some of the same challenges remain from last year, as stated on this page in the previous edition of this report. While these pages exist to document our activities over the past twelve months, it's also a place for us to ask questions to ourselves and to anyone reading this.

At the core is the eternal question: how do we survive without compromising the non-commercial, artist-run nature of Ptarmigan? What, if any, is our place in art and cultural production? How do we ensure that we reach the widest and brightest possible audience while maintaining our focus on unusual events, creative forms, and cross-disciplinary activities?

The challenges will always be there, and it's important that we shift and evolve, adjusting to meet them. Ptarmigan is many things, but first and foremost it's an artistic project in itself. And as we are based in the

experimental arts, Ptarmigan is one such experiment, built around a fluid core of self-reinvention. The ideas are the fuel; the projects and the people, which are inseparable, are the engine.

Now we're in two cities; two countries. Are we one community? We have decided to write this report as one entity; though we are two legally distinct organisations, our collaboration is one bridge across the Baltic. Collaboration (with ourselves and with other organisations) has become the theme of the past year – and we are proud to be part of many ever-developing creative networks.

As we said last year: Here's to the future!

The Ptarmigan Team



Andra Aaloe, Ptarmigan Senior Aesthetic Tactician - *building culture, one stroke at a time ...*

Year in Review

In reviewing the past year, the obvious starting point is our biggest change – we have expanded operations to Estonia, with Ptarmigan Tallinn opening in April 2011. But is this an expansion, or just a shape-shift?

But let's go back to October 2010, where our last report left off. Things were rolling along in Vallila on Nilsiäkatu, but the ever-present economic pressure of operating unfunded in Helsinki became an unavoidable reality. Ptarmigan ran for a year and a half without any infrastructure funding, through a serendipitous combination of ludicrously low commercial rent and a strong volunteer network. But this takes a human cost; the rising costs of living and the increased effort required to operate Ptarmigan at the highest level began to converge into a rather bleak projection. Our beloved building was sold to a development company that was extremely uncommunicative about their plans, and the board members who rented studio space (which paid the rent) were no longer comfortable investing in Ptarmigan's future towards a potentially unstable economic situation.

Our co-founder and Creative Director, Tara Pattenden, left the organisation in early 2011 to pursue her independent work. This put us at a crossroads, but one that did not necessarily have a correct or incorrect path. Co-founder John W. Fail made the personal decision to relocate to Estonia, and Sari Kivinen took over in Helsinki as the new combo position Director/Janitor. The decision was made to close our Nilsiäkatu space at the end of the calendar year and to continue Ptarmigan in Helsinki as a nomadic, mobile curatorial platform.



Temporal Soundings workshop, Helsinki, June 2011



Tashi Iwaoka, SHuSH Helsinki, June 2011

Tallinn provided an intriguing possibility for the Ptarmigan model. The lower cost of real estate would enable the same model that Ptarmigan Helsinki operated under for the first year to be economically feasible, at least in the short-term. And by continuing the project in Helsinki without a physical space, Ptarmigan could be reinvented – alternative organisational strategies would be necessary, and we would require an increased emphasis on collaboration with other groups. Our residency programme could continue as a residency-centre-without-a-centre and without the overhead of Nilsiäkatu (which was previously over 1000€ per month, entirely self-financed) we could strategise toward a future: two Ptarmigans, linking the alternative arts communities of the two cities.

Tallinn was an appealing choice, as numerous other self-organised culture spaces exist there, all with different approaches to cultural logic. An Estonian Ptarmigan could look to join these unique creative communities, exploring a developing city that, while geographically close to Helsinki, has always felt like another world. Some of our recurring projects (such as Svamp, Clip Kino or the Labyrinths and Rings artist talks) could be established in Tallinn. And ideally, creative practitioners from Estonia could be introduced to our network in Finland, whom they might not otherwise have found access to, and vice-versa.

And so it goes. Circumstance blessed us with a beautiful, unbelievable location in the Toompea area of Tallinn's Old Town, and we opened doors in April. In

Collaborations

Ptarmigan has always been based on collaboration, as we have sought ideas for projects, performances, workshops and other events from others. But the past year has brought us further into the realm of collaborating with other groups and institutions.

Helsinki has been the most necessary place for collaboration, as our homelessness has brought us into the fold of the **Oksasenkatu 11** artist group. Oksasenkatu 11 is an artist-run gallery in the Töölö neighbourhood that we began to work with in April. Since then we have considered it to be our primary home in Helsinki, and have sought to bring events to the gallery that extend beyond their regular exhibition openings. We also hope to introduce the Oksasenkatu 11 artists to Tallinn, and continue the partnership from the perspective that we are projects of each other's projects.

XL Art Space opened more recently in the Kaisaniemi area, and we have begun to collaborate with them as well. Rather than seeing XL as just a room or a venue, we have established the Durational Relational XL series which brings Ptarmigan Helsinki's interest in performance and live art to the installation-based exhibitions in XL. Each month, performers will create a durational performance in response to the current exhibition at XL. We also hope to return to curating experimental music in Helsinki through the XL space.

The **Äänen Lumo** organisation has been Finland's most consistently innovative promoters of challenging sound and music over the past decade. Our affinities naturally converged and we have been able to continue the monthly Svamp improvisation workshops in Helsinki. We also assisted them with the organisation of the 'Temporal Soundings' workshop this June at Oksasenkatu 11.

Since the 2010 festival, Ptarmigan has maintained a loose association with the **Pixelache** festival. Now, as Pixelache shifts to focus on its Pixelversity programme (while simultaneously redefining its scope to the entire Gulf of Finland), we hope to establish a greater bond, ideally connecting like-minded Estonian creatives with the Pixelversity network.



Core of the Coalman, Tallinn, September 2011

In Tallinn, Ptarmigan has taken a very open relationship to collaboration as we feel out our place in the city and get to know the communities. Since we opened doors in 2009, we've been friends with (and greatly influenced by) **MoKs**, the Mooste Centre for Art and Social Practice in south Estonia. This friendship became a true partnership this summer as we worked with the **Tuned City** festival. Tuned City, an official project of the European Cultural Capital Tallinn 2011, was a week-long festival exploring sound in the urban space of Tallinn. Originating in Berlin in 2009, Tuned City Tallinn was led by MoKs; Ptarmigan provided office space and facilitated the workshops. The festival was one of the defining moments in the history of Ptarmigan, and we are excited to continue working with MoKs, with whom we share many philosophical affinities.

Our interest in promoting music continues in Tallinn and we were invited to curate experimental sounds in **Kodu Baar**, a recently opened bar in Tallinn's old town. Working with Kodu has allowed us to easily facilitate concerts in a lively, atmospheric environment.

As we go into year three, we hope to expand these relationships and build further ones with other like-minded people and organisations.

Events

Events are the essence of what we do. In the past year we've held 29 events in Helsinki, and 55 in Tallinn (over six months).

Here are all events organised by Ptarmigan from 16 October 2010 through 15 October 2011.

Helsinki

2011

October	8	artHOP, October 2011 (various locations)
	2	103°52'74"N 103°70'41"WE performance by Sasha Rajsic (XL Art Space)
September	30	Durational Relational XL: Sari Kivinen and Amal Laala (XL Art Space)
	15	Svamp, Syyskuu 2011 (XL Art Space)
August	23	'Aurally and Audaciously' sound art performance by Ola Ståhl and Neil Chapman (Harakka island)
	6	'FILM' collaborative presentation by Ola Ståhl and Cassandra Troyan (Oksasenkatu 11)
July	29	Kathryn Zazenski & Trevor Amery artist presentation (Oksasenkatu 11)
	15	Motel Sisters performance forum (Oksasenkatu 11)
	14	Labyrinths and Rings: Lewis McGuffie and Ola Ståhl, performance closing by Matti Lehtinen (Oksasenkatu 11)
	19	Svamp, Kesäkuu 2011 (Sibelius Academy)
June	12	ShuSH (Tarmonkuja space in Jätkäsaari)
	11-12	Temporal Soundings workshop w/Patrick McGinley and John Grzinich (Oksasenkatu 11)
	28	Svamp, Toukokuu 2011 (Sibelius Academy)
May	7	artHOP, May 2011 (various locations)
	9	'Invisible Forces' film premiere (Orion cinema)
April	9	'Invisible Prom' music and performance night (Oksasenkatu 11)
	3	Svamp, Huhtikuu 2011 (Sibelius Academy)
	2	artHOP, April 2011 (various locations)

2010

December	17	Domestic Violence, Maroon (Nilsinäkatu)
	11	It's All in Your Mind festival (Nilsinäkatu)
	3	Dinosauruxia, Lapin (Nilsinäkatu)
November	27	Cristiano Rosa 'Short lived like a butterfly' performance, Koelse (Nilsinäkatu)
	26	Sipsi, Hima Glad ja Sähkömuna, Kulkija, Korpimetsä (Nilsinäkatu)
	24-26	DIY Together workshop w/Cristiano Rosa (Nilsinäkatu)
	19	Labyrinths and Rings - Catriona Shaw (Nilsinäkatu)
	17	Trash Me Not workshop (Nilsinäkatu)
	16	Arturs Punte 'Downgrade to Silence' performance, Vigdis Haugtø artist talk (Nilsinäkatu)
October	12	'Antarctica Starts Here' slumber party / performance / sound / video night (Nilsinäkatu)
	28	Labyrinths and Rings: Arturs Punte, Gilfer (Nilsinäkatu)

Tallinn (*all events at Ptarmigan, Toom-Kooli 13, Toompea unless otherwise specified*)**2011**

October	13	Liminal Images: Selected films of George Kuchar	
	12	Movement / Liikumine free movement event	
	5	Movement / Liikumine free movement event	
September	1	Gherkin Free Youth Passport variety night	
	27	resonance performance	
	27	resonance workshop with William Bilwa Costa and Kristin Orav	
	24	Café Hardcore Metaphor closing party (Café Hardcore Metaphor)	
	23	Labyrinths and Rings: Hardcore Metaphor	
	17	'Under Your Skin' tattooing workshop with Justin Tyler Tate	
	16	Core of the Coalman, Shawn Pinchbeck (Kodu Baar)	
	15	'How to relax around circles' relaxation talk/performance (Café Hardcore Metaphor)	
	14	Rise and Shine breakfast event (Café Hardcore Metaphor)	
	10	'Tetsuo and Rejuvelac' event (Café Hardcore Metaphor)	
	9	Microfeel artist talk	
	9	Microfeel concert (Kodu Baar)	
	7	Movement Hour / Liikumistund free movement event	
	6	Liminal Images: Selections from the Zanzibar films	
August	1	Café Hardcore Metaphor opening (Café Hardcore Metaphor)	
	31	Clip Kino: Occult London	
	30	Movement Hour / Liikumistund free movement event	
	28	Svamp, August 2011	
	27	Germ Free Youth Passport variety night	
	26	Close Reading with Ola Ståhl and Neil Chapman	
	25	Topias Tiheäsalo and Alfredo Costa Monteiro, Ola Ståhl and Neil Chapman	
	18	Labyrinths and Rings: Rachel de Joode and Kimberley Bianca	
	16	Movement Hour / Liikumistund	
	14	'Under Your Skin' tattooing workshop with Justin Tyler Tate	
	July	30	Fuck Folk Party (Kodu Baar)
		27	Clip Kino: McLuhan Media Massage and Belated Birthday Bash
		18	'Under Your Skin' tattooing workshop with Justin Tyler Tate
16		Germ Free Youth Party variety night	
13		Labyrinths and Rings: Patrick Farmer	
7-10		Framework Radio documentation and production workshop with Felicity Ford and Valeria Merlini	
5-10		Tuning the City workshop on Tactile Acoustic Interventionism with Mads Bech Paluszewski	
4-5		Metaphones Workshop with Unsworn Telecom	
4-10		12-Tone Filter workshop with Jürgen Lehmeier, René Rissland and Florian Tuercke	
3		Hobielektroonikaringi 'Elektron' meeting	
June	30	'Under Your Skin' tattooing workshop with Justin Tyler Tate	
	29	Clip Kino: Africa and Amateur Anthropology	
	28-3	City Sounds Concerts workshop with Ici-Même	
	27	Photography workshop with Predrag Tasevski	
	26	Svamp, Juuni 2011	

	25	Hobieelektronikaringi 'Elektron' meeting
	20	Photography workshop with Predrag Tasevski
	20	Fast Food for Ears workshop with Jukka Hautamäki and Dennis Tan
	20	Squarewhite, Ihokas, Raul Keller, Fast Food for Ears workshop participants (Piip ja Tuut Mängumaja)
	13	Photography workshop with Predrag Tasevski
	6	Photography workshop with Predrag Tasevski
	4	Timo Viialainen, Maike Lond, Melting Hearts
	3	Diverse Universe performance event
May	29	Svamp first session
	14	Labyrinths and Rings: Sam West, B-Galleria
	2	Clip Kino: American propaganda and educational films
April	23	Ptarmigan avamisüritus / opening event
	18-22	Radio Aporee workshop with Udo Noll

Workshops and classes

Ptarmigan continues to use the term ‘participatory cultural forms’ to describe our interest in events that engage, educate and develop the public. We have specifically sought to create a framework for unusual educational forms and have been able to provide a working space for these events throughout our time in both cities. Here are some highlights of these programmes.

Sound, music, and listening

Ptarmigan has always had a close connection with sound and music, and many of our workshops explore this. We’ve tried to explore DIY “maker culture” as well as more open-form approaches to improvisation, recording, and listening. We were the workshop centre for the Tuned City festival in July, but also organised independent events.

Workshops on sound electronics always prove popular and we’ve tried to offer them whenever possible. Our favourite model for any workshop is to have a public presentation immediately after the workshop ends, so participants can demonstrate what they have accomplished to a larger audience. We followed this model last November in Helsinki, when Brazilian artist **Cristiano Rosa** led a 3-day workshop on circuit bending (which was supported by Pixelache). Similarly, we had **Dennis Tan** and **Jukka Hautamäki** lead a short, one-day class on building DIY synthesisers in Tallinn, which was also followed by a concert.



DIY Togeher workshop, Helsinki, November 2010



Felicity Ford, Framework Radio documentation and production workshop, Tuned City Tallinn, July 2011

In the summer, Estonian-based sound artists **John Grzinich** and **Patrick McGinley** led an overnight workshop called ‘Temporal Soundings’, which explored the medium of recording, using site-specific sounds and spatial interventions. This was organised in collaboration with Äänen Lumo. Additionally, the monthly **Svamp** meetings have been reactivated in Helsinki and started in Tallinn. We aspire to build a dialogue between improvising musicians across the Gulf and bring both sides together every few months.

Art, performance, photography

One of the first regularly occurring workshops organised at Ptarmigan Tallinn was a four week overview of photographic techniques, led by Macedonian photographer **Predrag Tasevski**. Predrag went through the basics of using a camera, studio and street techniques, and image processing. The classes were offered for free and had an enthusiastic audience.

‘**Movement**’ is another recurring event in Tallinn, which explores free dance and movement on a bi-weekly basis. ‘Movement’ does not have an instructor per se, but operates as a loosely gathered group of enthusiasts, and is open to anyone.

Recently in Tallinn, American artist **William Bilwa Costa** and Estonian artist **Kristin Orav** led a mixed-discipline workshop called **resonance**, which was intended to explore improvisation, bringing together musicians, sound artists, movement-based artists and dancers. **resonance**, as the name suggests, looked at the properties of the different rooms in Ptarmigan and led to an unpredictable and surreal public performance.

Other workshops

We're also looking to organise workshops and classes that explore interdisciplinary forms of knowledge that may not be so obviously connected to art. The excitement of non-institutional pedagogy is when the idea of education itself can be experimented with.

One example of this is 'Under Your Skin'. The Canadian artist **Justin Tyler Tate** has been organising this, a monthly workshop on DIY tattooing techniques. This intensive, three hour course involves a lecture component that covers history and safety techniques, followed by a practical, hands-on session. Participants learn how to work with both professional tattoo equipment and home-built inkers, and in recent classes will actually construct a DIY tattoo gun of their own that they can take home.

We hope to merge a learning-based element into our monthly **GFYP** variety shows (see below); at the most recent event, Director of Creative Hemispheres **Lewis McGuffie** demonstrated how to make cocktails. He guided participants through the process of constructing either a cosmopolitan or a vodka martini, explaining their characteristics; the participants could then enjoy a drink each had made.



Lewis McGuffie, Ptarmigan Director of Creative Hemispheres
*Demonstrating cocktail making skills during Gherkin Free Youth Passport
variety night, October 2011.*

Music and performance



'The Bow of Odysseus': Erik Alalooga, Hans Gunter Lock, Meeland Sepp and Andreas W, GFYP Tallinn, October 2011

On 12 June 2011, Ptarmigan co-organised **SHuSH Helsinki**, the first outlet in the city for the SHuSH collective, which seeks to activate unusual spaces in dynamic, one-night festivals. SHuSH brought together an enormous amount of performers, musicians, moving image artists, workshops, and other artforms, together in a 5000m² concrete building in the developing Jätkäsaari area of Helsinki. Several hundred people gathered for an incredibly diverse and awe-inspiring night of music and art that featured activity by **Murmer, New Charlesville Sound Art Collective, Pentti Otto Koskinen, Plucié and des Andes, Tomas Szrama, Lisa Erdman** and more. When other unscheduled performers crashed SHuSH the whole night transformed into a chaotic, wonderful explosion of madness.

We've continued to regularly organise music events in both cities. In Tallinn, we have one or two concerts per month, either at the Ptarmigan space or in other venues, most notably Kodu Baar. Our involvement with Tuned City (see below) has deeply immersed us in Estonia's sonic arts scene. Though the lack of a

permanent space in Helsinki is significantly limiting for organising concerts, we try when possible to bring our music-based audience into the artist talks, performance seminars and other events we operate.

For the second year in a row, Ptarmigan hosted the **'It's All In Your Mind'** festival, a celebration of Finnish experimental music organised by **Jari-Pekka Koho**. Artists such as **Olimpia Splendid, Vapaa** and **Grey Park** explored the outer sounds of electro-acoustic space, and it showcased emerging artists alongside more established ones.



Ihokas, Tallinn, June 2011

There's been lots of other music, including touring artists like **Core of the Coalman**, **Microfeel**, and **Maroon**; plus great local artists in both cities, such as **Sipsi**, **Raul Keller**, **Savidivas**, and **Maike Lond**.

We've also provided Finnish musicians with an outlet in Tallinn. In just a few short months, artists such as **Melting Hearts**, **Dinosauruxia**, and **Ihokas** have performed to Estonian audiences. In both cities we organised several sound-based performances for our resident artist **Ola Ståhl** (see below).

Performance and live art has become a major focus of our activities in both cities. In Helsinki, Oksasenkatu 11 has been an outlet for the **Motel Sisters** of Australia, who explored celebrity and simulacra through performative lecture (which was also taken to Tallinn the following evening). The new programme **Durational Relational XL** will be a regular series of performances relating to the work exhibited at XL Art Space at any given time.

After opening in Tallinn, performance quickly became a major focus of Ptarmigan's activities from day one. Soon after opening we hosted the **Diverse Universe** tour, which featured Estonian legends **Non Grata** on tour with a variety of other performance artists from America, Ireland, Brazil and Denmark. Finnish performance artists have also come to Tallinn, such as **Timo Viialainen** and Ptarmigan director **Sari TM Kivinen**. But there is always a constant presence of Estonian performers and we try to incorporate a live art element for all of our monthly variety shows.



Ola Ståhl and Neil Chapman, Tallinn, August 2011



Ola Ståhl and Neil Chapman, Harakka, Helsinki, August 2011

Tuned City Tallinn

The centrepiece of our summer was July's Tuned City festival, a weeklong exploration of sound in Tallinn.

Tuned City, led in Estonia by MoKs, was an incredible experience that created some of the most amazing sound-orientated work we've ever been involved with. The festival actually began in April with the **Radio Aporee** workshop. This pre-festival event, which was technically the first event we held in Tallinn, gathered about ten artists and anthropologists together to experiment with sound mapping over a weeklong period. Led by **Udo Noll**, Radio Aporee participants explored the city, seeking distinctive sonic elements to record and share through Noll's Radio Aporee website.

At the end of June, the Tuned City team arrived from various parts of Europe and Estonia. Ptarmigan was transformed into the main office for the event and a workspace for a variety of artists. We facilitated all of the workshops in the festival and assisted in all other aspects of the week, which included concerts by **Charlemagne Palestine**, **Thomas Ankersmit**, **Maja S.K. Ratke**, and **Charles Curtis**, a three-day academic conference on sound art, and many site-specific projects in various locations around Tallinn.

The workshops were a core component of the festival. This included the guided sound walks by Grenoble's **Ici-Même** group (who led participants through urban space around Tallinn's Balti Jaam railways station with their eyes closed) and the Metaphones project by **Unsworn Industries** (which constructed a telephone-to-telephone speaker system in public space). Danish artist **Mads Bech Paluszewski** experimented with his "Tactile Acoustic Interventionism" system, which literally transforms urban space into conductive speakers – a public playground was thus transformed into an electrified, interactive listening experience.

Another workshop was the **12-Tone Filter**, a large sonic filter constructed to transform traffic and city noises into new listening experiences. This workshop travelled around the city creating urban interventions and encouraging the public to actively mix and listen to their environments. Throughout everything, the **Framework Radio** documentation and production workshop assembled a team to document the festival, and then produced an experimental audio documentary of the entire week.



12-Tone filter workshop, Tuned City Tallinn, July 2011

Film and video



Rachel de Joode, Tallinn, August 2011

Ptarmigan maintains an active interest in the moving image, whether through film and video production or in conjunction with performance. Though we don't have equipment to project celluloid film, our main performance space in Tallinn is perfect for screening video work. In addition to these regular projects, we frequently have video content in our GFYP variety shows (see below) and are always up for one-off events. Ptarmigan also organised the premiere of **Juliacks's** film *Invisible Forces* in both Helsinki (at the Orion cinema) and Tallinn.

Clip Kino

The Clip Kino format was started by **Andrew Paterson** in Helsinki and we hosted several Clip Kino nights during our first year. Clip Kino presenters curate a selection from freely available Internet content using sites such as YouTube or Vimeo, based around a specific theme. These videos are then screened and discussed, aiming to take the normally private act of watching Internet videos out of the home and into the social arena.

We were quick to start this project in Tallinn, as Clip Kino has been "franchising" into other areas (including Latvia and Thailand). We try to organise a Clip Kino every month, and so far we've organised nights around topics as diverse as African anthropology, Marshall McLuhan, American propaganda films and occultism in London.

Liminal Images

Our newest project, **Liminal Images**, is a monthly film and video night that looks at the transformative movements in film culture in the 20th century, specifically in the realm of experimental cinema. Each month, we screen selections from a time before the moving image was all-pervasive. These films will range from classics of early 20th century surrealism to 1960's agit-prop, structuralist/materialist cinema, and other such (anti-) classics. Like Clip Kino, these screenings are followed by an open discussion about their content.

GFYP

This summer we launched **GFYP**, a monthly free event to present diverse creative practices – a ‘culture variety night’. The event is always named something with the initials G.F.Y.P., determined through a semi-random algorithm, and changing only one word from the previous month’s event.

The name, while meaningless, exemplifies how GFYP celebrates diversity, eclecticism, obscurity and obfuscation. Each month is curated around a theme, and we hold an open call for submissions. On a given night, you might see a musical artist, an academic lecture, a performance piece, a short film or video, or a strange intervention.

Though we have only held three GFYPs at the time of this writing, they have quickly emerged as our flagship audience-based event.



David Rothenberg and UmruX5, GFYP Tallinn, July 2011

Other programmes

Labyrinths and Rings

We started the **Labyrinths and Rings** nights in summer 2010 without realising how simple of an idea it was. Though there’s nothing new about an artist talk, Labyrinths and Rings attempts to emphasise the social aspect of artist talks and have a liveliness that is often missing from more academic environments. The events always include a small, moderated Q&A session and always involve food and conversation.

We organise Labyrinths and Rings whenever there are people passing through Helsinki or Tallinn who would like to do something at Ptarmigan but lack the time to commit to a longer project. In the past year we’ve



artHOP, Helsinki, April 2011

held these regularly in both cities, bringing artists from Australia, the UK, Sweden, Denmark, Finland, Australia, Latvia, Spain, the United States, and the Netherlands.

artHoP

The **artHOP** project started in Helsinki as a way to redefine what Ptarmigan could be without a physical space anymore. artHOP events gather in front of a gallery or exhibition in Helsinki and participants travel around the city looking at work, usually visiting three exhibitions and then a fourth location that is not art-based (such as a market hall or train station). The social, participatory aspect is in the forefront as artHOP attendees discuss the work.

Other events

In November 2010 we organised the all-night slumber party ‘**Antarctica Starts Here**’, an attempt to create a low-key festival of minimal sound, video and performance. The entire Ptarmigan space was opened up and people were encouraged to bring pillows and sleep. There were live, minimal music performances including **Antti Tolvi**, **Nuslux** and **John Grzinich/Evelyn Määrsepp**, plus video installations and loops in multiple locations throughout the space. Ptarmigan continues to be interested in unusual formats for events, such as long duration and low volume experiments.

Artists and residencies

All of us are artists and Ptarmigan is one facet of our individual work. In this practice, the collaborative natures of the events draw many creative practitioners into our world; nothing occurs here without artists involved.

We've always included residencies in our operations since the beginning, whether they are funded two-month residencies (such as what KK Nord supports) or short-term, self-financed projects. We choose applicants based on their ideas, and are particularly interested in people who work from a similar mentality to us – who have participatory, socially-driven projects and who view Ptarmigan as a place to realise these ideas.

We have hosted four residencies in the past year in the Kulturkontakt Nord programme, which enables artists from the Nordic and Baltic countries to work for two months at Ptarmigan. A fifth resident has just arrived and a sixth will be in Helsinki before the end of the calendar year.

We've worked with far too many people in the past year to list everyone, but the KK Nord residents have an essential part of our activities. **Arturs Punte**, from Latvia, was our first, who constructed a sound/video poem called 'Downgrade to Silence', built around his experiences in Helsinki. Arturs also contributed to 'Antarctica Starts Here' (see p. 16) and became a regular at other Ptarmigan events and workshops during his residency.

Vigdis Haugtrø from Trondheim, Norway stayed during Christmas 2010 and created a book that explored cultural identity as seen through the presentation of the holiday season. Our residency programme took a break in early 2011 as we sorted ourselves out in terms of relocating and re-establishing operations, but then rebooted in July with Swedish artist **Ola Ståhl**.

Ola was working on a project called '**FILM**' which investigated a family text and was split over three residencies in Sweden, the USA and concluding in Finland. His Ptarmigan residency brought him to the north of Finland to explore textual connections and to Tallinn



Café Hardcore Metaphor, Tallinn, August-September 2011



Café Hardcore Metaphor, Tallinn, August-September 2011

to collaborate with UK-based writer **Neil Chapman** in several performance events. Ola's approach to text and language was wildly experimental and his work at Ptarmigan was incredibly fruitful.

One KK Nord residency was moved to Tallinn, and for this we selected the Danish art collective **Hardcore Metaphor**. Their project was to construct a temporary artist café/studio and organise various events in it. Though open for just a month, **Café Hardcore Metaphor** (which was located not in Ptarmigan but in a residential space in the Pelgulinn neighbourhood), was a busy centre for countercultural activity. Though their residency has ended, the activated space will likely remain as a second, temporary space curated by Ptarmigan.

The future

It's been a crazy year, but Ptarmigan is still here, and if anything more dynamic than ever. A year ago we stated in the annual report that we did not wish to become a traditional institution. But it's undeniable that we are an organisation, built on the talents and efforts of many people – and this organisation has an identity and an image.

Luckily or unluckily, we haven't made anything resembling a career out of this. As busy as we are, there's still nothing resembling stability. The ideology is to shove economic concerns aside and plow ahead with what we want to do, but the reality is that we shut down Nilsiankatu because of those concerns. So it's difficult to assess things through traditional models of growth and outreach.

Ptarmigan exists as two organisations in two different countries, but is also one project. We have big plans for the next year, but each plan is really an experiment. Not all will work, and that's okay. We'd love to establish a residency for scientists to conduct research while collaborating with local artists, but will it happen? And will we find any willing scientists? We'd love to have a more sustainable model for regular educational programming, just like we said on this page last year. Are we any closer to the goal? We'd like to be able to spontaneously organise events in Helsinki like we used to, but is that possible without a space?

Questions will always be there – when answers are found, new ones will emerge. But if anything can be gleaned from this transitional year, it's that we love challenges. And we love doing this.

