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Ptarmigan

tempzine

Helsinki 12/2011

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** Ptarmigan poster centrefold **

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Ptarmigan is an artist-run project operating in Helsinki since mid 2009 and in Tallinn since spring 2011. From the beginning, “temp” individuals (defined as either temporary workers/volunteers or visiting creatives) have floated in and out of Ptarmigan’s orbit, becoming essential to how Ptarmigan is defined and constantly re-defined.¹

One of our aims is be trans-community minded as opposed to being stuck on familiar models of operation that don’t necessarily cater for a constantly shifting sense of community. We often ask ourselves – what kind of community are we, and in relation to what/whom?

This collated publication – collaged, photocopied and stapled – aims to document a few of the temps that have contributed to Ptarmigan’s community throughout 2011. Specifically (but not exclusively), this publication will focus on the Helsinki temp community of Ptarmigan. Our three main sources of temps include old friends (or friends of friends) visiting Helsinki or Tallinn from pretty much anywhere in the world, official residency artists from Nordic and Baltic countries funded by the Nordic Culture Point (KK Nord) residency programme, and various short-term visits (a night, a week, or so) by creative types engaging in performances, projects, and / or workshops proposed via our online form.

The non-temporary Ptarmigan crew is made up of individuals from various artistic and geographical locations with two predominant commonalities: a desire towards transdisciplinary projects that allow for social engagement at various levels (moving away from object-based art production), and a sense of outsider-ness due to most of us being foreign people to the locations where we operate

¹ Whilst the focus here is Ptarmigan’s experience many of these thoughts about temporary communities could be adapted to the experience of many organizations with resident artists, and such.

(this potentially allowing us more freedom as we operate outside of the stated norms).

A challenge in any artist-run organization is how to maintain ones own artistic practice whilst also committing to the organization from which one may or may not make a living. As the writer of this introduction I (now moving away from the collective “we”) am attempting to combine my artistic practice of writing and performance in the very act of writing this text and in collating this publication (which is a collective effort between Ptarmigan crew and temps). In giving my focus to many of the projects initiated by temps I constantly attempt to negotiate how my own practice and interests can combine with or complement the artistic output of Ptarmigan temps. For example, in the project HELseeNKI, orchestrated by our KK Nord-funded resident artist Johannes Blomqvist, various responses to the work have been recorded and interpreted. I have attempted to locate my own associations towards perception and senses in a text that documents fragments of the overall project. Another example is SHuSH and how Ptarmigan rep Amal Laala explores her practice of creating situations of activation, as she adapts the basic premise of a SHuSH event in various cities. SHuSH is basically an attempt to activate participants and audiences (or audience as participant) to form spurts of overlapping activities in abandoned spaces. SHuSH is one way to bring together many temps for a few hours; an event and location that is as temporary as its participants.

This small publication is aiming to share a slice Ptarmigan’s identity from 2011.

We hope you become titillated and inspired enough to develop a socially engaged transdisciplinary idea to contribute under the umbrella of Ptarmigan’s ever changing temp community!

- **Text by stmk-**

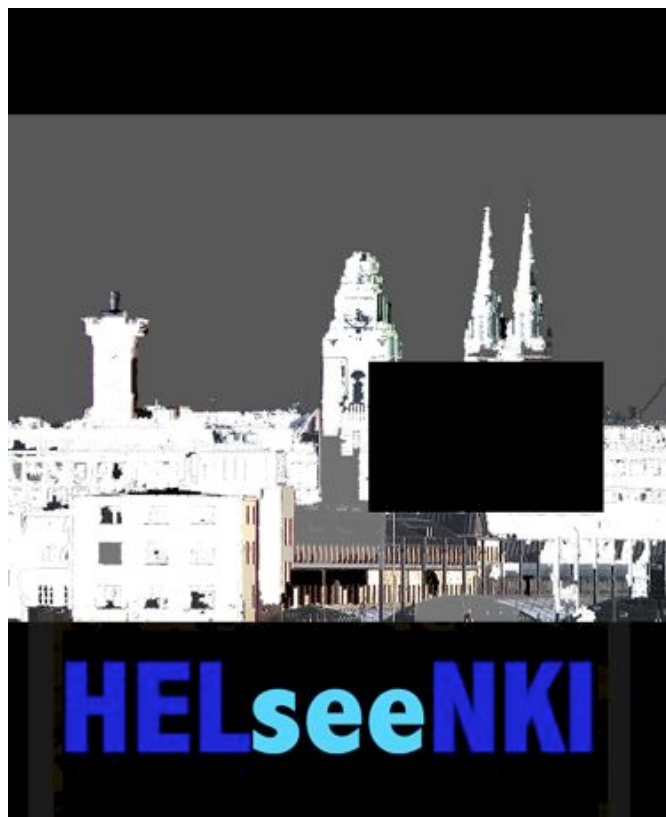
SENSES & SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT



-Image from HELseeNKI tours-

Sensing the Sights: Observing HELseeNKI

From 1st -11th of December 2011 HELseeNKI tours took place in and around Helsinki (some in the neighbouring city of Espoo).



Description

The tours were for one person at a time and took about 2 hours. For this reason there was only a limited amount of tours on offer to the public. There were twelve tours in total. The tours were with a visually impaired guide and the person taking the tour was temporarily visually impaired with a blindfold. The eyes of the tour belonged to a trusted guide dog.

HELseeNKI was conceived of by Ptarmigan's artist-in-residence Johannes Blomqvist and is based on previous experiences he has had working with visually impaired people as tour guides. The main outcome he hoped for was that the guides could share a slice of their everyday life with those taking the tour who in turn could experience a shift in their perception.

Taking care & trusting

My role in the first tour I experienced involved meeting the attendee of the tour at Toukonitty tram stop in Arabia, briefing her about the tour, blindfolding her, phoning the guide to meet us, and then handing the attendee over to the guide. They then began the tour. I felt an urge to follow, to make sure that they would be alright (what if they slipped on the fresh snow?) I resisted the urge and trusted that they would be ok, plonking myself in a nearby café waiting for the phone call that the tour was over.

Trust was an important aspect of the whole tour. To trust the guide, trust the guide-dog (who at times became confused by the extra person he was guiding), and above all trusting the situation and experience.

Post-performance

The feedback that attendees gave of the tours was very positive, many commented on how great it was to experience aspects of the guides' everyday lives. Connections were developed between many of the guides and the attendees of the tours, many vowing to meet up socially in the future.

In a post-performance debrief we asked the guides about their experiences and for feedback about the tours in general. One guide commented that it was helpful to realise that not everyone knows how it is to be blind. Another guide mentioned that she enjoyed introducing her home as part of the tour. Areas that were less pleasant included the concern about being responsible for another person in public places (especially when guiding amongst traffic). These were concerns that were addressed during the tours and the tours were adjusted according to maintaining a sense of safety.

The experience of working with Blomqvist in developing HELseeNKI has been particularly interesting as an example of a project that has brought together a collection of people from various backgrounds. HELseeNKI has been an example of one way to develop the temp community of Ptarmigan!

- text by stmk -

This residency project was funded by:



norden

Nordic Culture Point

co-organized by Sound of Charm & Ptarmigan:

TEMPORAL SOUNDINGS - a sound workshop

Led by John Grzinich and Patrick McGinley

June 11-12, 2011 at Galleria Oksasenkatu 11, Helsinki

description by John Grzinich:

Temporal Soundings was a unique 2 day workshop and overnight retreat that took place at Galleria Oksasenkatu 11 and the surrounding urban area in central Helsinki. The focus of the workshop was on the temporal aspects of sound recording and site-specific sound activity combining found objects and spatial interventions. The program of the workshop revolved around working with and analyzing two contrasting times of day, midnight and mid-day. Using these two times as a frame, we looked at the natural soundscape, found materials and physical spaces as 'sonic potential' for human intervention. This involved a range of activities from passive listening exercises to more active explorations using improvisation and game play. The focus developed into working within an hour long session at opposite times of the day, midnight to 1 am and noon to 1 pm by 3 separate groups in different parts of the city. Several concise 5 minute field recordings were made by each group that explored both active and passive approaches to interventions within specific sites. Following these 'magic hour' sessions we listened back to the recordings to analyze the temporal aspects of the sounds, events and actions that were documented.



TEMPORAL MENU by Iivi Meltaus

DINNER IN TAKE AWAY STYLE

potato salad with kidney beans and a lot of Levisticum officinale
homemade insanely awesome coleslaw, thank you cheese slicer and patience
olives marinated in herbs, garlic, lemon and organic sun flower seed oil
tomato & onion marinated in organic balsamico and olive oil
green salad, ajvar, some bread, butter, water

BREAKFAST RUNNING LATE

espresso in golden thermos bottles
green tea unprepared
organic milk to have in your coffee
organic orange juice and organic apple juice
rye bread
white bread
black estonian bread
smoke cheese accompanied by a cheese slicer
butter
tomatoes, a cucumber and a knife
ajvar
organic natural brown sugar to have in your tea / coffee
small container of salt
a lot of tags
nice handwriting

LUNCH STARTERS

leftovers from yesterdays' salad table
whining hungry people peeking in kitchen
no wine

LUNCH MAINCOURSE

perfectly al dente cooked spaghetti with
tomato sauce with roasted red bell peppers, lemon zest, caramelized onion and fresh basil
I topped with parmesan
II topped with fresh spinach
III topped with roasted sun flower seeds
wows

LUNCH DESSERT

Patrick's birthday cake = vegan lemon curd, fresh strawberries, lit candle
happy birthday to you in a cacophony of different languages
cappuccino for all except one
tea for one

Tactile Dinner

In October 2011 Carmen C. Wong presented the project *Tactile Dinner* as part of our Labyrinths'n'Rings presentation series.

Wong is founder and artistic director of the Washington DC based company Banished? Productions, which is: "an avant-pop performance company that generates immersive interdisciplinary art experiences for all, to re-create wonder and re-awaken the senses." (www.banishedproductions.org/website cited 18/12/11).

In November 2011 Wong shared *Tactile Dinner* with audiences in Helsinki as part of Ravintolapäivä.



Image courtesy of Banished?Productions

Hardcore Metaphor



Image by Hannah Harkes (from an audio play featured in a Hardcore Metaphor event)

August – September 2011

For the Ptarmigan residency programme, the collaborative project Hardcore Metaphor (Denmark) will open a pop-up Artist's Café in Tallinn's Pelgulinn neighbourhood. Café Hardcore Metaphor will be open to the public during the weekends, serving coffee, cake and a special surprise of the day. The café will host a small library of reference books and self-published artist magazines and serve as a platform for a variety of events, such as The London Urban Gothic Lecture and The Three Day Puzzle Lock-In.

<http://showtime.arts.ac.uk/cgcheung>

This residency project was funded by:

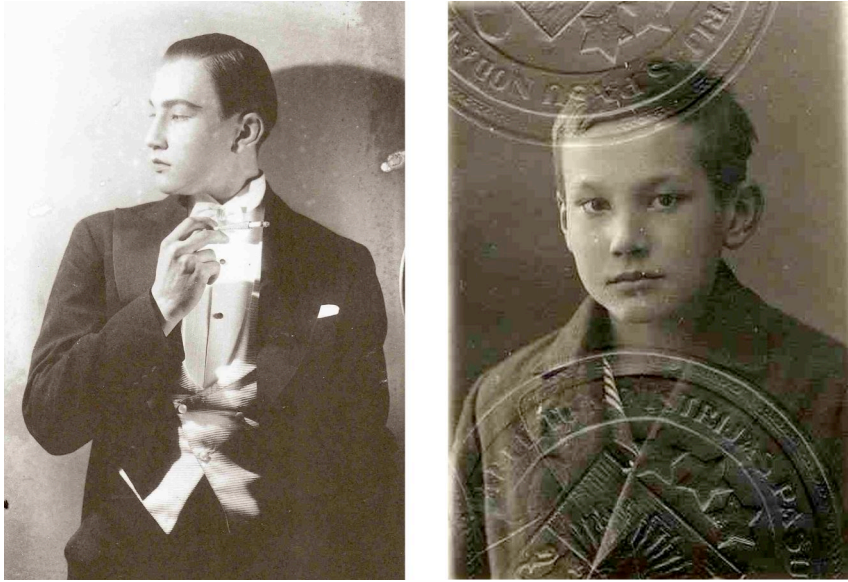


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NARRATIVE & FILM

Kristīne Želve: Teuvo Tulio *Between the Worlds*



Since 2009 Kristīne has been researching the Latvian - Finnish melodrama master, filmmaker Teuvo Tulio (1912 - 2000). She is currently making a creative documentary titled *Fedya* about Teuvo Tulio's childhood in Latvia and is developing an international multimedia project *Teuvo Tulio - In Between the Worlds* which includes an exhibition, film screenings and discussion panels to celebrate the anniversary of Tulio's birth almost 100 years ago.

During her Ptarmigan residency during November-December 2011, Kristīne conducted further research into Teuvo Tulio's life in preparation for the completion of *Fedya*. The following still images are from *Fedja*, snips of which can be viewed at: <http://vimeo.com/user5163746/videos>



This residency project was funded by:



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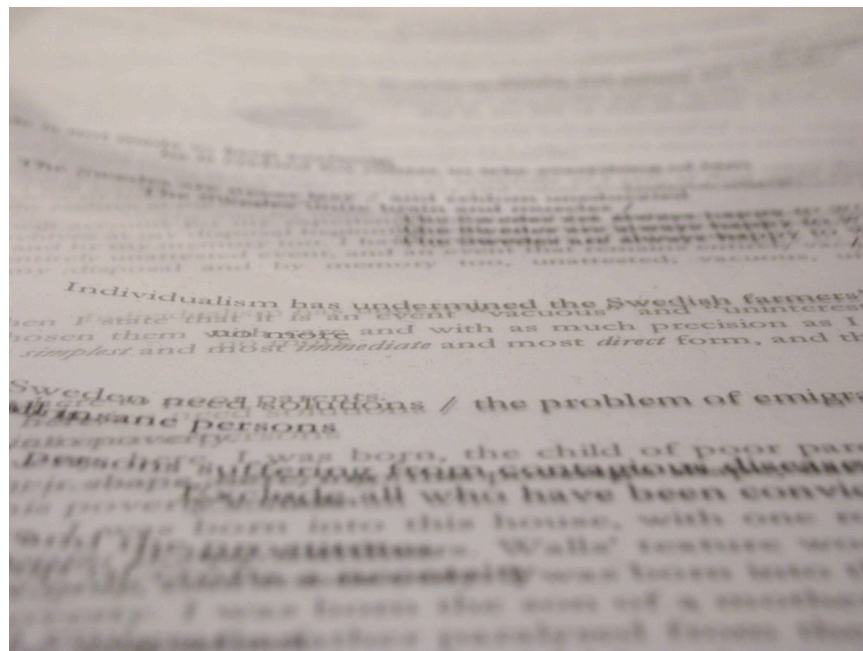
Nordic Culture Point

F I L M - Ola Ståhl

The project F I L M dates back to 2008, when Ola Ståhl was unexpectedly given the handwritten manuscript of the unpublished memoirs of his great granduncle, a person about whom he knew virtually nothing. Having previously worked extensively with the restaging and reworking of found sound and text, Ståhl began reworking this found manuscript, seeking to engage and amplify its peculiarities not simply or primarily in terms of its content, but also in terms of the style of the writing, its poverty and its affected, stuttered, polylingual quality.

Considering the manuscript less a genealogical document than the index of a series of significant geo- and sociopolitical shifts, these reworkings were intended to explore the ways in which particular forms of writing articulate subjective political experiences; how, for instance, the experience of migration creates a polylingual site where language becomes uncertain, subject to continuous displacement, or how the lack of conventional literary tropes articulates and negotiates positions within shifting class structures. The overall project F I L M comprises several series of such rewriting exercises, utilizing different methods, interweaving the manuscript with fragments of text from a wide array of discourses around such disparate but interlinked topics as autobiography, medicine, film theory, optics, camera and film mechanics, class structure, economics and migration. The version to be presented in Helsinki makes use of a process by which the text is translated

very quickly between Swedish and English, in such a fashion that traces of many of the loops and repetitions you go through as a translator, trying to find suitable equivalents between languages, are kept in the text, generating a rambling, incessantly looping, repetitive voice which never ceases to assert itself despite its own stuttered absurdity.



Ola was a residency artist with Ptarmigan throughout July and August 2011.

This residency project was funded by:



norden

Nordic Culture Point

SPURTS OF BECOMING/S

Witnessing the Prospect of an Escape

Reflections by Sari TM Kivinen & Gemma Tweedie

“Prospecting enacts an impossible digging of compromised labour. It’s not clear what she’s escaping from or to. It’s a slippery existence between desperation, ambivalence and finding a way of movement within structures.” (Gemma Tweedie 2011).

STMK: It is a crisp Autumn night out in Helsinki. The streets are buzzing with crowds of bar hoppers. The weather has recently taken a dramatic turn towards winter, causing a sudden increase in the layers of clothing one wears outdoors. On this particular night I am sitting inside the mbar, looking out towards the main street of Mannerheimintie. I am accompanied by a group of onlookers who have been invited to spend a few bucks at the mbar in order to sit by the windows to witness a performance by Gemma Tweedie.

The performance is called *Prospecting* and is part of a larger project titled *Unbecoming Escape*. I find curious Tweedie’s invitation for the audience to contribute to the economy of the mbar and the connection to themes that she explores such as “notions of escape from lived economies and myths of romanticisation.” (Tweedie 2011). On this particular evening Tweedie injects the normality of a bar hopping Saturday night with a touch of something out of the ordinary.

She walks up and down a small stretch of the street and carefully drops plastic spoons in a spiraling movement. She gets down low to pick them up and re-poses herself only to drop the spoons again. At times she uses the spoons to try to dig at the pavement.

In Tweedie's words: Prospecting is a situational performance in two parts. The first part is escape, trying to dig through concrete with plastic spoons, the second part is moving without progress /getting nowhere, dropping a spoon, to pick it up, only to drop another. There is no escape from the compromise of reality except in the façade of our glittering fantasies. So we sabotage our escape plans and dance the futility as best we can. Desperation is a feeling many people have underneath themselves or in small parts; To get away from it all, the cultural constructs, the city, to get beneath everything and leave it all behind. Prospecting deals with confinement of the open air, concrete barriers, which are invisible but all encompassing. As she moves steadily on shaky shoes, digging away at the pavement with plastic spoons, people stop and comment, "Where are you trying to get to, the other side of the world? You know it won't work. All your spoons will be broken. Soon you will have nothing". Futility is not clear-cut or total. Plastic spoons are pragmatisms of contemporary everyday survival, tools for eating.

In the gold rushes of the 19th and 20th century, prospectors searched for a way out of poverty but rarely retired rich. Prospecting questions what we see as labour to include less apparent hyper-feminine forms. Contemporary gold diggers' labour to create fantasies from the compromised reality they live in, in order to escape into better prospects.

STMK: Meanwhile inside the mbar commentators behind me are pondering about what the strange woman (is it even a woman?) on the street is doing, "common girl getta grip," one guy comments behind me, he continues throughout the performance to make comments asking his friends a few times, "my god, what is she on?!"

Associations to words:

The word prospecting connects in my mind the occupation of mining. Of digging for gold or for opal in the minefields. Digging for something that will improve ones quality of life. The prospect of what will be discovered.

The words 'unbecoming escape' cause me to think about the opposite of appropriate – an escape via inappropriateness – perhaps I could escape the suitable/ appropriate/ congruous/ graceful/ befitting way that I enact my womanhood..

Material. What is material?

Is it the body, the flesh, high heels, plastic, the sequins, and /or the spoons?

Cultural theorist Vikki Bell has stated that "the subject is produced as an effect of reiteration, and the subject by necessity reiterates itself in the terms of the constituting power, even if in that need for repetition there is the possibility of rearticulation and resignification."² Here Bell references a range of thinkers that each feed into the concept of the genealogy of performativity; from Nietzsche's 'no doer behind the deed', Foucault's power relations, John L. Austin's performative utterances, and Judith Butler's gender performativity. In the case of Tweedie's work I find myself associating the word unbecoming as a counter to the term performativity, which is generally viewed as a set of ritually and repetitively enacted behaviour instating the norms of acceptability.

² Bell, Vikki. *Culture & Performance: The challenge of ethics, politics and feminist theory*. Oxford: Berg, 2007.



Although (with a sigh) I can't help but wonder can we ever escape the norms that are so deeply embedded and ingrained? I submit:

"i do it for the joy it brings/ because i'm a joyful girl/
because the world owes me nothing/ and we owe each
other the world/ i do it because it's the least i can do/ i
do it because i learned it from you" (Joyful Girl, Ani
Difranco).

[Insert a small sigh – and conclude].



Gemma Tweedie, *Prospecting*, 2011. Dropping and picking up spoons.
Photos by Thom Monckton.

The MOTEL SISTERS on tour

Throughout July the Motel Sisters - hailing from Western Sydney (Naomicampbletown to be exact) – visited Finland & Estonia. For one fun-packed evening in Helsinki the Motel Sisters along with friends Kelly Monico and Brendan Carn (who they'd met at Arteles in a small Finnish town called Haukijärvi) joined performance forces for a night of Ptarmigan mayhem.

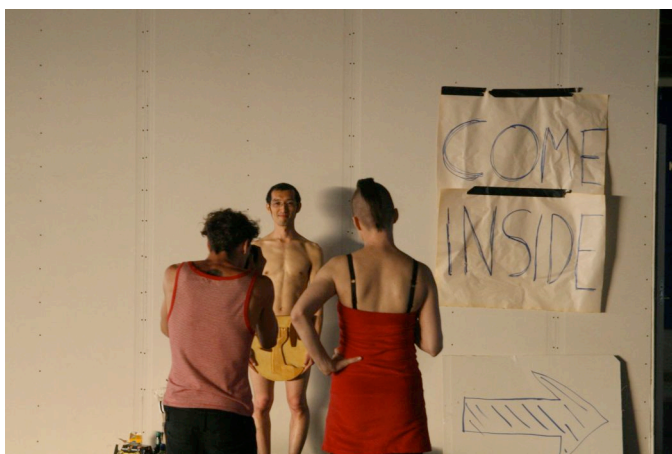


A touch of DIY glamour. Whilst this image is taken from a performance tour that the Motel Sisters did as part of Kiasma's URB 11 festival as representatives of Arteles City walks, the cardboard that they used to make their antennas was sourced from Ptarmigan's storage boxes.

SHuSH

The point is not to understand the outcome but just to instigate the process.
Abandoned and disused spaces.
A more realistic view.
Using people to change the world.

Experience.



[Image of an improvised performance action by Tashi Iwaoka, courtesy of Darren Webb www.drrnwbb.com]

Sharing of knowledge and resources.
Breaking the individualistic mentality.
Play.

Using the cross-pollination of pleasure and politics.
Getting people to actively participate in new situations and activism.

RISK.

Body or space being changed by people.

D.I.Y, taking back space.

Workshops.

Experimentation in front of people.

Subversion through art breeds change.

Story-telling? Myth making.....



**Change and revolution happening through individuals and their relations. Activation.
Re-activation.
Education through doing, participating and experimenting.
Power through creativity.
21st century community, coming together for a short period, away from the internet.
One night.
Melbourne, Vaasa, Helsinki.
Collective effort.
Getting people to think and act for themselves.
Cultural Resistance. Strategies of resistance.
Game playing.
SPACES, ACTIVATION and SELF-EDUCATION.**



Reflections by Amal Laala

Upcoming temp events 2012

January 19-29 – *Space is the Place*

(collaboration between Ptarmigan, XL Art Space + Kallio kunsthalle + the Finnish Academy of Fine Arts) – at Kaiku Galleria

February 1-5 – *How ta tawk and dans rite*

Interdisciplinary dance and media performance by Joey Chua Poh Yi, Anna Rouhu, Rhys Turner, Guadalupe López

[At Oksasenkatu11 – exact times & dates to be announced]



Image: Rimbun Dahan, Malaysia. Performed "Play. Move. Find." with EU & me (2010)

February 8 – *Labyrinths & Rings: Luciana Ohira & Sergio Bonilha present*

"transimmanence" (location to be announced)



+ many
many
more exciting
temp adventures
to follow!

