

# Less known than the unknown

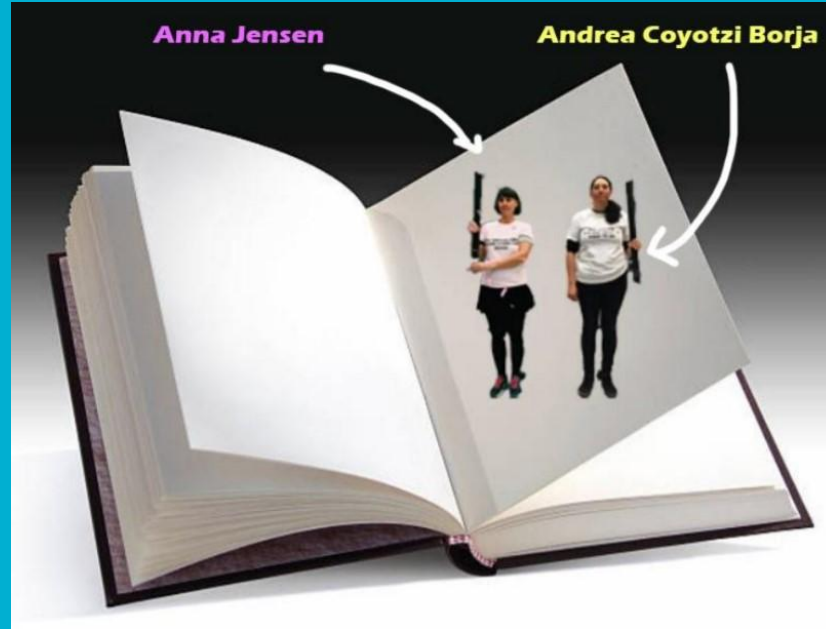
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How to Artistic Research

By Andrea Coyotzi Borja & Anna Jensen

LAPS 3.12.2021

# How to life below average



<https://howtolifebelowaverage.com/>

<https://viccaproduction.com/>

# Lowering your expectations below average

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How to Life can be thought of as a “reorientation device” (Sara Ahmed’s concept): in a system of possible actions, we are testing impossible actions. This notion takes us to the everyday, which is one of our main interests, and how it is organized, structured and filled with expectations, and how these expectations tend to fail and open gaps and splits that make us feel uncanny. How does the everyday happen, how are we confronted, and how do we approach it. The topic of orientation is related to how we feel at home in the world, and what happens when we don’t? Where does the notion and idea of belonging falls in all of this?

# Teaching as approaching the unknown

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This is our professor Harri Laakso during his 24h lecture in Pori in 2012.

Taking teaching seriously, as sharing and an experiment, research and work of art



“Maybe artistic research should not be viewed in relation to, say the natural sciences or humanities, but as imaginary activity – not because it does not yet exist, or because it is only always yet to come, permanently not yet, but because it is basically the activity and interplay of mental and material images.”

Harri Laakso, *Pressings*  
Figures of Touch, 2018

Art and artistic research as a constant  
state of *becoming*

“the center of a philosophy does not lie in a prenatal inspiration, but that it develops as the work progresses, that it is a becoming-meaning, which builds itself in accord with itself and in reaction against itself, that a philosophy is necessarily a (philosophical) history, an exchange between problems and solutions in which each partial solution transforms the initial problem in such wise that the meaning of the whole does not pre-exist it, except as a style pre-exists its works, and seems, after the fact, to announce them.” (Maurice Merleau-Ponty 1988, 19)

# Research-based site-specific practice

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Using “known” as a method to approach the

Unknown: from Pori Biennial to World Expo to Encyclopedia

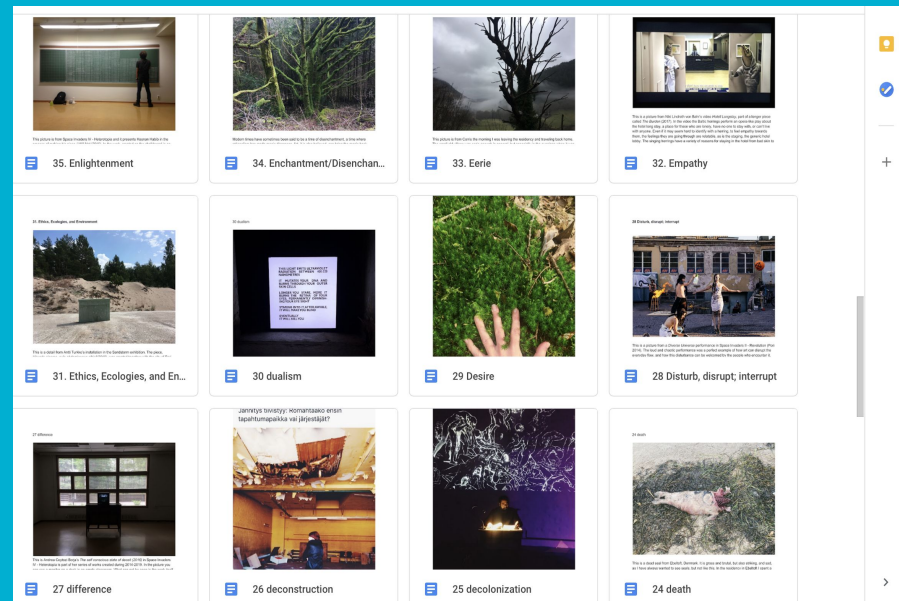
Art happening in a place and in a temporal, cultural and thematic framework: Heterotopia, Living Together and The Gift (and Sandstorm)





# The Uncanny Soul of a Place and A Being. A Meandering Encyclopedia on Curating, Communities and Contemporary Art

My proposition is that art has possibilities but also responsibilities: that art has meaning, and it can create sense of meaning and purpose that are sometimes considered to lack in the modern, neo-liberal world. Something that artist Dylan Ray Arnold calls “tactical re-enchantment”. This subversive potential also means that against the traditional understanding of art as autonomous sphere, art has not only autonomy as endless “freedom”, as it is not free but always happening in a specific time, space, and context.



**3. Abject****4. Alienation and Anxiety****5. Affect**

5a) Distance

**6. Anthropocene****7. Anthropology****8. Archive****9. The audience, Public & Spectator**

9a) Participation

9b) Centennial

**10. Becoming****11. Being-with, Co-existing**

11a) Living Together

12. Body

12a) Biopolitics

**13. Boundaries****14. Canon****15. Caring**

15a) To care

15b) Curiosity

**16. Collectives**

16a) Porin kulttuurisäätiö

16b) Space Invaders

16c) Making-with

**17. Community****18. Communication****32. Environment**

32a) Landscape

32b) Environmental art

**33. Eerie****34. Enchantment / Disenchantment****35. Enlightenment****36. Exhibition**

36a) Event

36b) DIY, Temporary use of space

36c) Gentrification, segregation, interaction

36d) Saatanan kesänäyttely

**37. Feminism****38. Form / Formlessness****39. Friendship****40. Genealogy****41. Gift**

41a) System of giving and exchange

41b) Space Invaders Cholula edition

42. Gaia, Globe, World

42a) Pori World Expo

**43. Ghosts****44. Heterogeneous****45. Heterotopia**

45a) Third Space

45b) Space Invaders Matinkylä edition

**46. History**

# In the middle of things (Research on the infraordinary)

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*What is the infraordinary?* is not a question to be answered, but one that needs to be made.

Asking about the infraordinary invites the act of observation and reflection on everyday customs and habits that echo social mechanisms and generate an awareness of what seems to be moving/working “below”, out of our immediate sight.

*“There is always background noise, there is always a symptom, a sign, a scent. So we were interested precisely in those things which are the opposite of the extraordinary yet which are not the ordinary either - things which are 'infra'.”*

Paul Virilio on Georges Perec”, AA Files, No. 45/46 (Winter 2001), pp. 15-18. Architectural Association School of Architecture.] (Virilio, Paul p. 15)



# In the middle of things

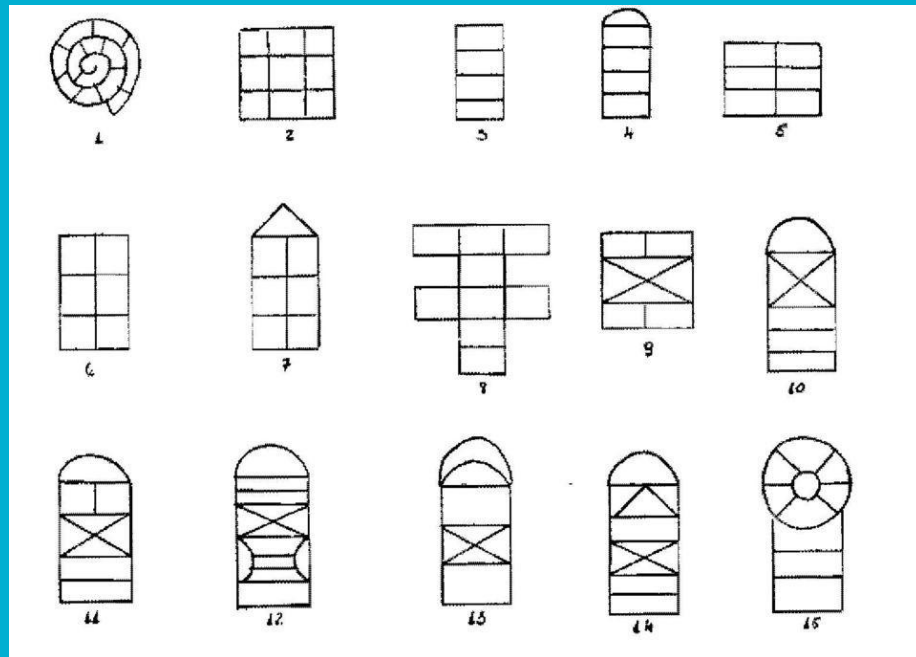
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Structure of meandering → Reference to Julio Cortazar's book "*Rayuela*" (Hopscotch)

The notion of hyper narrative → Shifting trajectories.

The writing process of the dissertation document, as it is with thinking, had no definite order or set direction, but rather hints and crumbs that were followed. I walked, following the concepts, ideas, theories, memories and reflections, and I gathered. I gathered by writing.

The experience of writing and reading about the infraordinary goes in the same way, without a definite direction, but rather as meandering through experiences, thoughts, ideas, doings and undoings.



Pääkirjoitus | Pääkirjoitus

# Miksi nykytaide on niin vaikeaa?



“Why contemporary art is so difficult?”  
Helsingin sanomat 2.12.2021

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For artistic research, this becoming less known is not the negative it might be in other disciplines, and can in fact be considered a state in which to linger. As Elizabeth Fisher and Rebecca Fortnum make clear in their preface to the edited collection *On Not Knowing: How Artists Think*, artists use **strategies** ‘to “think” in ways that stray beyond the methods of other disciplines’, and **their research occupies ‘a kind of liminal space where not knowing is not only not overcome, but sought, explored, and savoured’**. (Fisher and Rebecca, ‘Preface’, *On Not Knowing*, 7.)

WHICH ARE OUR STRATEGIES?

HOW DO WE EXPLORE?



“Practices are never complete but the opposite: prone to mistakes, sometimes breathless and loaded with errors. At the same time, theories are never innocent or legitimate in themselves but instead relative and thus sometimes prejudiced, narrow-minded, or even possessed by a Tourette’s-like compulsion to repetition.”

# Experimentality

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“The playground for experimental art is ordinary life. But playing in this ordinary world does not mean including even more features of the common place than we are already used to finding in exhibitions, concerts, poems, dances, films, and performances. Such appropriations are the traditional strategies that turn life into art. No matter how much life we confront in them, their standard contexts never allow us to forget art's higher station. In contrast, the experimental artist who plays with the commonplace does so in the very midst of crossing the street or tying a shoelace. There is no excerpting and re-enacting them on a stage, no documenting them for a show. Art is thus easily forgotten. And that is the condition for experimentation: the art is the forgetting of art.” Allan Kaprow



# Situatedness

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“Situatedness is the notion that our own experiences (historically, culturally, familially and personally) dramatically shape the way we interpret and respond to the world around us—and that to understand and impact the world around us, we must look outside of our own perspectives to understand the ‘why’ behind others’ perspectives and behaviors.”

Site as a starting point. Curator of Gibca 2021 Lisa Rosendahl: how to explore the colonial past of the country and the historical layers from the perspective of white swede was to start from a specific space and use Franska Tomten as a position.

<https://theblacksheepagency.com/blog/understanding-our-situatedness-blowing-up-assumptions>



# Everyday, Art and/of Orientation

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Within the concept of the everyday many factors and outcomes become visible, such as are routines and the way in which they form an everyday that is supposed to be more or less similar to everyone, everybody sharing the common everyday, but which it isn't. In a way, the concept of the everyday acts at times as a marginalizing structure. As Ahmed writes: "Objects, as well as spaces, are made for some kinds of bodies more than others" and also The work of repetition is not neutral work; it orients the body in some ways rather than others."

This also considering the nontraditional nature of the work of an artist, or a researcher. Work, family, relationships, living, traveling, routines: wake up, brush your teeth, put on makeup, eat breakfast, go to work.. Reserving "everyday" to able bodies that fill the societal expectations. Working outside the normative/expectations (i.e. working in the field of art, for example, or in other precarious position) one ends up working double shift: doing one's work but also explaining it all the time, both to others and often even to oneself. This is why art is always political.

Different spaces and locations and environments, from urban to rural from private to public. By different acts and actions we do minor changes to get a closer view: what if? What happens when something changes? Or how does it feel when something has already changed? This is how I feel it, how is this space for the others? How do we inhabit spaces and how do spaces inhabit us?

# Art as knowledge production



Art

Practice  
Production  
Research

Approaches of art and research.  
How they interweave and influence  
each other.

All art being research

Vs

Understanding art as a way to  
produce knowledge capital

“If orientations point us to the future, to what we are moving toward, then they also keep open the possibility of changing directions and finding other paths, perhaps those that do not clear a common ground, where we can respond with joy to what goes ashtray.” (Sara Ahmed)

# Play and Game

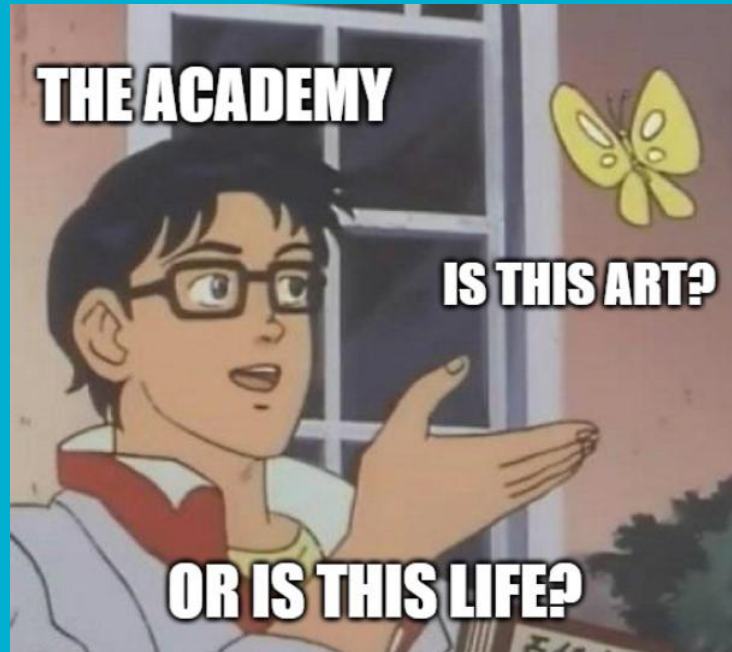
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“Play, of course, is at the heart of experimentation. Elsewhere, I’ve pointed out the crucial difference in the English language between playing and gaming. Gaming involves winning or losing a desired goal. **Playing is open-ended** and, potentially, everybody “wins”. **Playing has no stated purpose other than more playing.** It is usually not serious in content or attitude, whereas gaming, which can also involve playing if it is subordinated to winning, is at heart competitive” Allan Kaprow

Trying to be open minded all like



*Is this art or is it life?*



# Materials and References

## Books and reading

Reclaim Artistic Research  
Lucy Cotter, ed.

Approaches to what?  
Georges Perec

Essays on the blurring of art and life  
Allan Kaprow

## Websites

<https://howtolifebelowaverage.com/>

<https://viccaproductioin.com/>

<http://porinkulttuurisaato.org/>