# CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>INTRODUCTION TO KUKKIA</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GARDENING TOOLS</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ILLUSTRATIONS</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISOLATION AND BREAKING THROUGH ISOLATION</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JOHN GRZINICH AND EVELYN MÜRSEPP FROM ISOLATION TO EMERGENCE</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ZASIEDLAČ-ASUTTAA-INHABIT</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AKTIO – KULTURA</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JONIMATTI JOUTSIJÄRVI ACTION THAT IS RECALLED IS THE SEED OF A CULTURE</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FERTILISM</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ILLUSTRATIONS BY DWI SETIANTO</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RITORNELLO</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FRANCO ‘BIFO’ BERARDI SWARM RHYTHM REFRAIN SINGULARITY</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOTES</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE CHRONOLOGY OF KUKKIA</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND PHOTO CREDITS</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
So it is also with the lily; it is silent and waits. It does not impatiently ask, ‘when will spring come?’ because it know that spring will come in due course, knows that it would be least useful to itself if it were allowed to determine the seasons of the year. It does not ask, ‘when will we get rain?’ or ‘when will we get sunshine?’ or say, ‘now we have had too much rain’, or ‘now it is too hot’. It does not ask in advance what kind of a summer it will be this year, how long or how short. No, it is silent and waits – that is how simple it is. But still it is never deceived, something that can happen only to sagacity, not to simplicity, which does not deceive and is not deceived.

Then comes the moment, and when the moment comes, the silent lily understands that now is the moment, and it makes use of it.

Kukkia was for a moment and not for ever. As Kukkia group, we, Karolina Kucia and Tero Nauha, existed publicly from autumn 2004 to summer 2008 when we buried the public side of Kukkia. We created several performances at different locations, festivals, events and site-specific works during those years. This book is not only a documenting of this practice, but a collection of short texts that revolve around the subjects with which we have been working.

We asked John Grzinich and Evelyn Müürsepp, the organisations of the Postsovkhoz04 festival in MoKS, Mooste – where we met and worked together for the first time – to write about the idea behind the Postsovkhoz events. Jonimatti Joutsijärvi, poet and and witness of many of the performances, writes about the concepts around aktio and kultura. Dwi Setianto, a visual artist and collaborator in two of the projects, which took place based on the concept of fertilism, provided some of his illustrations as interpretation of this process. Franco ‘Bifo’ Berardi, a media philosopher and activist, writes about the “Swarm Rhythm Refrain Singularity”. These concepts, which are very central to our work, can also be found in many contemporary art practices.

This quote from Søren Kierkegaard was something that we came across in 2005, which set in motion the germination of Kukkia – kwiaty, flowers. In the Finnish translation of his text, he speaks simply about flowers, and not specifically of lilies. Kierkegaard was introduced to us by Mika Aalto-Setälä. He teamed up with the final Kukkia project by executing the layout and graphic outlook. We found that this idea of a flower reflects our way of practise: wait, and when the moment comes, make use of it.

GARDENING TOOLS

There is an ecology of bad ideas, just as there is an ecology of weeds, and it is characteristic of the system that basic error propagates itself. It branches out like a rooted parasite through the tissues of life, and everything gets into a rather peculiar mess.¹

On the July 10th in 2008 the Kukkia group was buried on Viðey Island, near Reykjavik.

A practice is a way to give form to potential, give space for certain seedlings to grow. But, there are always weeds, noise and excess. There is no ultimate documentation, but only a form of documentation, to signify "what is important", or moregrandiloquently: "what needs to be done!" Still, another approach is to embrace the ephemerality and faultiness of practice, the knowledge that, in fact, potentiality cannot be fully actualised. A process of probing is a wasteful process, and certainly not very efficient. We did lose and waste lot of 'seeds', which were never recovered. It may have seemed that it was even a destructive or suicidal process at times, nevertheless it was never that conscious process in the "deployment of potential".

What did not appear? What remained silent, or did appear but was never registered? Discard the object that you have found and used for a certain purpose. This resonates with excess. Bury something that is dear to you — perhaps the dearest, perhaps so much so that you cannot approach it. Or burn it. Or send it by mail to someone else. Or share it with everyone.

What you need, is a stone to make soup. Then, you need to find the other ingredients, but the base of the soup is a stone.

Xuefeng was once tenzo² at the monastery of Dongshan Liangjie. One day when Xuefeng was washing rice, master Dongshan asked him, 'Do you wash the sand away from the rice or the rice away from the sand?' Xuefeng replied, ‘I wash both sand and rice away at the same time.’ ‘What will the assembly eat?’ said Dongshan. Xuefeng covered the rice washing bowl. Dongshan said, ‘You will probably meet a true person some day.’³

For Kukkia, an idiot is not a person but an 'impossible' project or approach that immediately highlights all your resistance and self-defeating counterproductive ways. In this way a process of production also becomes a process of auto-production and environment. There is a need to find a being where there is not yet a connection. There is a need for function when there is no model or system yet. There is a need for a machine which has no purpose. A 'kombajn', a combine harvester, made of patterns in different degrees of nature. It does not collect the crops. You actually don't know what it does and how it does it. It will, so it does. No one knows in advance how an idiot machine will work, it is a practice of risky combinations.

³ Tenzo, head of the kitchen in a Zen monastery.
IMMEDIACY. When it starts, then you go. When it collapses, then you go. There is no time to stop and form an opinion...

In the Sandö island, close to Nauvo in the archipelago of Turku, where we lived for less than a year from winter to the end of summer 2005, the idea of Kukkia found its verbal expression. This was an isolated place, and a place for a simple way of living. The house, which was rented from the artist Ilkka Sariola, had no running water or central heating, only wooden stoves and an electric radiator for extreme cold. There was an outhouse, a well, apple trees and a small shed. It was a powerfully silent place. In that spring, 2005, Kukkia found its name from a reading of Søren Kierkegaard, which we transposed a little. Kukkia – flowers – where each one is blooming towards a sun, in its own singular way, as Mika Aalto-Setälä said of our name Kukkia.

Then, in 2008 while we were in the residency in Reykjavik, when we started the process of writing this publication, we found out that the reason for Kukkia had passed. And again, we laid in tall grass surrounded by the silence of volcanic Viðey island. Kukkia was for a moment, not for ever.
Isolation, Karolina, August 2004, Poznań, Poland

Isolation, "20 min, 34 sec", Karolina, September 2004, Oroński, Poland
zasiedla
– Asultaa –
Inhabit,
January 2005,
Szklarska Poręba, Poland

zasiedla
– Asultaa –
Inhabit,
May 2005,
Waino Aaltonen Museum, Turku, Finland

Isolation,
Karolina on the beach of Hel, Poland and Tero on the beach of Sandö, Finland,
September 2004
Aktio,
"Re-enactment",
Helsinki, 2005
Fertilism characters
Fertilism, Revolutions-event in Vaihtolava, Helsinki, October, 2006.

Shell compounds at Lomé, Togo, June 2008.

Bootlegged petrol for sale, Cotonou, Benin, June 2008.

Ritornello, map and script for performance, 2008.
In the changing constellation of the pack, in its dances and expeditions, he will again and again find himself at its edge. He may be in the centre and then, immediately afterwards, at the edge again; at the edge and then back in the centre. When the pack forms a ring around the fire, each man will have neighbours, to the right and left, but no-one behind him; his back is naked and exposed to the wilderness.

On Friday, 20th of August in 2004 one of us, Tero, walked as direct a line as possible in the direction of Poznań and stopped at a spot 5 km closer to Poznań, where Karolina had started her action at the same time. There was no predetermined duration, but these actions followed a similar structure: two actions taking place simultaneously in two

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different places. Often, one of the actions took place in an art event such as an opening or a performance festival, and the other one in a more private location.

*Were you afraid of me then? No, I wasn’t afraid of you at all.*

These actions took place after the initial performance that started our collaboration in the Postsovkhooz04 event, entitled Isolation. It was a ten-day workshop arranged by an artists’ organisation, MoKS, which is located in the rural countryside of Estonia, in a small village called Mooste. There we met, and practiced every day from one to three hours per day. We worked with objects and silence. This took place in forests, fields, on gravel roads or in abandoned buildings. More or less consciously we were working with intercommunication and probing if such a thing does exist in the practice of performance.

*We believed it did exist, that it was something alive, between two people, without words.*

Performance ought to be communicative. Or, put differently, performance is to be considered as a performance of communication. We both rejected this idea; not that we would rather emphasise some other kind of signification, such as the expression of self, but rather that we sensed that to some extent performance is in any case a-communicative – not signified or documented. We did not practice in a traditional sense to build a score, but were probing orientation for our action. This became a lasting method for our work, not to build choreography or a performance score; we decided only our starting point, and how we would approach the action or how we are conditioned with the action. It it more this, than a methodical approach, or ideology or religion. It is almost a language that we did not fully comprehend. We were off the map, and moreover we did not really know each other at that time.

*Was it love then? But it wasn’t a romance. We were complete strangers to each other? This contact was an action, which was delivered to other people by way of the objects and our bodies. It took place around the village, and lasted for seven hours – the duration of the Isolation final event of that year, where other artists also presented their works around the village. To meet up with our wandering performance, there were two assigned events that allowed the audience to view the action more closely. We worked with the necessity kept*
in mind that we would do only what seemed in each moment necessary and try to act immediately – without hesitation or analysis. This would sometime be only the concentration of breathing while in an action. Such an approach made us more tools for something, and not active agents of commitment. Each was on their own, in the silence. This was at times confusing and unreasonable.

In general, there were quite a few spontaneous collaborations in the Postsovkh04 event. There were improvised collaborations taking place between sounds artists Michael Northam, Maksims Shentelevs and performance artists Joseph Ravens, apart from ourselves. Such collaborations created a field that allowed occurrences to take place. This field is a precondition to any action, but what occurred then and in general, however, are just single actualisations of the multiplicity of potentiality. This is the way Lars Larsson, who was present at that event, describes this a-communicative process of actualisation.

In our action, there were representations of the uncanny signs of cannibalism and decapitation. Yet, they occurred as smashed pieces of watermelon, or the skinning of a fish and eating it raw, and cleaning our hands on a hungry kitten. This part of event, seen by the audience made one observer comment our action accordingly: “This woman is eating man’s brains”. On the other hand, the actions took place in a way that resembled ‘breaking bread in church’, as Karolina noted. Later on, close to the end of the performance, two people as performers meet on a dirt road in the dusk. It is a purely imaginary and irrational encounter, and the ending for our practice.

People in the workshop were like wolves in the pack, busy on their own but still conscious of each other’s moves, as is described in the quote from Cannetti, and cited by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari in the *Thousand Plateaus*. Our action was located aside of these other events – also in between, as a passage from one to another. We were partially transmitters, and what’s more, this event of ours was possible because of this transversal field generated among the participants. Such a field is rarely a product of conscious choices, thus it is often clad with mystical overtones. But for us, what we were doing was still a complete surprise.

*It was active, activating and alive. It was like a virgin night, a cannibalistic ritual or some brutal courage. There was a soft sensitivity for other, different and strange, yet not distant. We were watching a landscape, meeting in a place with animals and people in some weird way. It was conscious or extra-conscious and dense. It was like saying ‘yes’ to everything. I was looking at a field through the flesh of a watermelon, touching the cat by fish skin, and stone with a stone. I was eating oak leaves, feeling the presence of my self with another body – close, etc.)*
in touch and in the distance. We made this notion of necessity and choice. That we would act from the first thought, or from a feeling that what one does is necessary to do – or that this has to be done right now with immediacy. With this determination, we tried to proceed without judgment, blockages or resistance. We were not transgressing borders, it was more of a way of talking.

After Isolation, simultaneous actions started to take place. There was a set time, but no specific communication about the content or duration.

I smoked a cigarette and sent an SMS to Karolina. Said I had finished. Two minutes later she replied that she was also smoking a cigarette and was finished. I came up and took a shower.

There was some kind of despair, erotic longing for each other’s presence. Some kind of madness of unfulfilled desire, perversion of secret contra-public ritual of building connections between each other and through, or despite, other bodies, objects, trees and distance. Karolina once went out of her flat in a costume: a men’s coat, red lipstick and kind of a bathing gown made from insulation tissue. Her head was shaved.

I went to the railroad tracks in the centre of Poznań. There were bushes and trees, empty beer bottles, cheap wine and liqueur, and other trash. There was also a men’s coat among the waste lying on the ground. A train went by. I felt like a pervert. You were somewhere there, I tried to recall your presence, the memory. Or sense your presence right at that moment. I felt like a pervert on a secret trip around town of which nobody knew.

These performances of distant nature touched upon a different side of longing and isolation; close to imprisonment, and also nostalgia. The distance and even the intrusive SMS telecommunication of ours, sometimes generated a uncomfortable situation. These performances concentrated on materials, since we were exiled from the protective, but temporary, community generated in Mooste. There were recurring materials in these mutual performances: bags, sleeping bags, grey fabric, bread, apples and the smell of Armani Mania. With shaved heads and grey clothing, we both had quite asexual, almost monastic appearances during this period.

These performances actuate some perverted, undefined images of sexuality and gender as well. Tero wrote after the mutual performance, which took place in the Rajatila Gallery in Tampere and in Poznań, in the 15th of October, 2004:

When the collective has faded away, a subject is grasping the symbols, the corporeality of symbols: bread as real flesh or wine as blood! [...] Narratives, and quite formal ‘poses’ or clear situations, we aimed to use the superficial and the spectacular image. To use it to show some brutality, without consolidation and hope. Not evil nor a saint. Actions of body, but with some rigorous, formal structures, that allow something that we cannot talk about to appear. Formality creates a disposition with the action.
In the end I hugged a tree that was in the correct spot.

Little steps going to the boat trying to remember you laughter. On the road. 5 min at the time. Te

Ok. Now I understand what is 5 five min. See you. k.

Got to my dads house. Alone, going bit crazy. Maybe you don’t want to see me again or want to forget. I don’t know anything now. Normality crushes me. But this is my process. But really really wish there will be time and place when we meet again. I want to meet you again. To tell you everything. Have to remember 5 min. Emotion is unnameable, you touched me like no one before. All is clear but scary. Clean yourself. T.

I will be fine. Woke up again. Strangely clear, but you’re not here. Te

Washing. notSureThatIwantBeClean. ABitBlind. EverythingHasNoSmell. madeFrom. I.dontKnowWhatAndIDontCare. justMyDirt. NothingHappen. washing. Still yourEyesParkOnThBench

I woke up just while before. Yes, it will be good. So, let’s go –

Now fucking love story. This is fine. Teach me something, what do you need to learn?

Anytime i get freaky i go to the trees or bury my head in the ground. Te

Oh, that’s nice. I really don’t know what i should tell you now. Are you sure that this is the best way for you? maybe you should speak with some competent person?

Sorry

But even if its still strange or strange now. its really good to hear your voice. And its better. And its not funny now at all.

Maybe I am confused now, maybe I should bury myself for a week. :)

Maybe a long walk. Maybe around the park or around the lake in Poznań?

Is it possible?
I ended up in a garden, which had a sign warning of a watch-dog. I turned around and tried to walk around the house, ended up by the river. I followed the river, and came into the garden of someone's summer cottage. A small dog started protecting its territory and came from the high grass. It followed me from a few metres and kept barking for almost 300 metres, until I was away from its territory. I felt tired and vulnerable, a fuck up.

The sun was going down slowly. I came to the river again; I took a photograph from the bridge.

Well. at least you could clean your head. I could walk here 5 km towards Poznań. :)

At 6 or right now? Or everybody at his own?

6 my time which is the same time as in Estonia, or your time?

I will walk 5 km towards Pzn. You can do what you need to. We'll see. Maybe no phone or sms – no talking?

No talking. Yes uff, i agree. maybe better. If you need something take it. I will see.ok. Is this funny for you now? k

Quite serious. Got to do something funny for you?

You mean after or before 7?

WE will se WE can TRY. Just text me when you feel that you finish. JUST FOR your KNOWLEDGE WE DON'T NEED ANY CONFIRMATION NOW

I am going to walk 5 km to the direction of Poznań. Should I text you when I get there or when I've returned home. Shall we leave in 5 mins?

Finished now. Took some photos and will send you email today. It was difficult but good in the end. Let me know when you want to how are you. Tero

Smoking now. I've just finish, but still outside

Just finished my cigarette. :)

O shit is have to go. Ania is waiting for me. wet shoes. See you :) 02.09. 2004

What time tomorrow some action? I will be at the island around 18 at my time. Maybe after that? T

Ok. Send me message. Nuku rauhassa K. Spij dobrze. T

At 18 my time-19 your? earlier? if you want at all today – of course: no pressure. k.

That's a good time, :)

Hyvää
A tree is caressing my cheek. Cut signs at the trees. Think of Tero's head. Takarivo. One tree has an elephant's leg. Caressing wet trees. A cat. We are looking into each other's eyes.

I felt Karolina's presence, inside my skin and in my pace.

A tree with cut breasts.

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Ai mita? :)

What's dobrowolnie? :)

Voluntary, freely? When you have and doing something with a good will (not just intention) and without any force and this one with dots above? Ai mitâ?

That's a good word to know, but ai mitâ means ok, what? T

That's good word to know too :) see you or myself or something else at 18-19 19-18 k.

dobrowolnie sztuk performance tak? :)

I don't know if you have stopped, but mine was short and bit difficult. I just performed in and around that house in the island. I will move there in octobre. T

Ty. Absent, distance, moment of presence. Still right now.

Finished half an hour ago. really difficult but one good moment. now strange state not very good. Big island? k.

Quite big. And a house in the forest. T

I will send you a text and drawing. Its a good house. Complete silence. T

After all. four hours action no action. good:)some document tomorrow.morning and back to Poznań. directly to work:)god, i don't like be so hurry.but ok. are you ok? what means ok. what you can tell me in this short mess. age? :/ not good. are you not tired of this contact still. is it real for you still? k.

Finished now but felt in some moment that you finished. but maybe sth. else. send email or call if you want. i send you maybe some electrons for a while. zobaczzenia.im curious that i will be able to show you this video :) k.

Finished. Good alone with rabbit in beginning & end. You were strong. Fuck with the audience. Too much performance and no reaction. Why. Email later. Cold weather, cold rabbit. You in cold room. And you? Text if you want. Zobaczzenia. T
The theme designated for MoKS summer art symposium in 2004 was ‘Isolation’. Out of the six years this symposium ran, the theme of isolation seemed to trigger more of a clear creative response from the participants than any of the themes from the other years. It is normal for a symposium theme to be loosely interpreted or put aside for a topic that is more relevant to the creative process of the visiting artist at that time. The theme as we gave it was meant to be a frame or departure point from which to develop work in the locality of Mooste, the village in south Estonia where MoKS is located. But the notion of isolation, in whatever form, seemed to be a subject to which everyone could relate. There were projects that explored social isolation, con-
structed physical isolation, analysed isolation and looked at ways of overcoming isolation. Yet despite this emphasis on the theme of isolation an entirely different theme emerged out of the conditions of the symposium that year, one of significant social cohesion among many of the participants, who came from a wide range of backgrounds. This brought a surprising amount of artistic connection, resulting in a surprising number of spontaneous collaborations. While much of this was publicly evident even in the first days, there was one new collaboration that developed in isolation, arousing a certain mystery through the feeling that a parallel event was even taking place. Amidst all the activities happening both in public and private space, this particular collaboration slowly integrated public and private through paired performative actions that started to form one unique practice. This became clear during the final presentation when it was announced that a durational performance piece was going to take place over an entire day with many of the elements happening in isolation, while a few were intended to be witnessed by the public. This crossing over from private to public created a distinct atmosphere. While I have little knowledge of what happened in private, the images exposed to the public of a transformative process of merging practices, remain clear in my mind. Figures holding watermelons, carrying them about the village. A dissection action cleaning out the innards of the watermelon followed by the same treatment to some fish. Knives held the debris that was carefully spread on the body of the other. These slow actions of ritual cutting were on display for all including the local children. A cat that adopted us that week took part in the eating of the fish. At some point the performers drifted off in the same stoic manner as they arrived. The collaboration I’m referring to is of course that which took place between Tero Nauha and Karolina Kucia, two artists who visited MoKS that summer, brought together not only by the symposium context but also a deep interest in the notion of performance as practice and common influence from the artistic education environment in Poland in the mid 1990s. The strength of this initial collaboration still continues today in a life bond that engages every aspect of their lives. It’s hard not to feel a small amount of responsibility for this and yet I would leave it only at our creating the conditions of the symposium and offering the theme of isolation as a departure point. All else, from the weather and the environment, to the independent ontological trajectories of Tero and Karolina, formed the fertile ground for the fertile collaborative effort we know as Kukkia. Our association with Kukkia didn’t end there. In fact it also continues to the present day through our parallel interests in collaborative practices. This became more evident in July of 2005 when we were invited by Tero to Hyvinkää in Finland for an art symposium that emphasised the realisation of site-specific artworks in the context of public space in the town. Apart from realising our own projects, we were able to witness the continued explorations of Kukkia. The centre of the symposium was a decontextualised structure in the centre of the town, an authentic ‘lato’, or simple hay barn that was transported from the countryside piece by piece and reassembled in the town square. In the ‘lato’ at one end, two figures stand at a table, each handling an egg. Karolina holds an oversized egg while a plaster hand is placed on her head in the same manner. Who is holding what? Tero is facing her holding an egg in his mouth. Both stare into an abstract space. What is most striking is the whiteness of the eggs against the aged structure of the barn. It shows a certain purity in form, fragility in position.
The two figures are connected through this positioning, paused, motionless as if waiting for a sign or an event to trigger that which will emerge from the shells. I can no longer remember how long they stood there, perhaps minutes, perhaps hours. Reflecting on this image, it plays out as a symbolic frame for Kukkia, a momentary pause to incubate a seed or idea before it is hatched and released into the world. There were many eggs on that table, implying a fertile ground for the years of collaboration that would follow. However one views the outcomes of such a collaboration, the evidence of a continually transformative process is clear in how Kukkia values the dissolution between research, process and performance in its potential as artistic material.
‘Zasiedlać - Asuttaa’ or ‘Inhabit’ was a series of actions that took place in non-art spaces and once in a museum context in the atrium of the Wäinö Aaltonen museum in Turku. This concept revolved around the idea of taking over a space or converting and inhabiting a space temporarily. It related to domesticity, food and consumption. These works generally had a long duration, either a day, or three days as in the project that took place in an apartment in Poznań between the 23rd and 25th of December, 2004. In this performance there was no audience. In addition, there was no vocal communication between the performers. The apartment at Ul. Słowackiego 40 in Poznań was a vast, bourgeois family house, which was at that time partially squatted, but otherwise desolate. It seemed that it had not been renovated in decades and the original wallpaper, cupboards and other signs of life remained from the previous owners.

Three days in closure. At home, old bourgeois flat. Old glossy wallpaper still from before the war. Marble basin in the bathroom. Old rusty pipes. Linoleum form the fifties on the floor. Empty here. Me and him. O God! I am washing the floor on my knees. This never finishes. Old wooden floor. He is in the kitchen all the time.

If performance is about the performance of power on ourselves and each other, then performance is of the structure of power. This power, which is not that much of a disciplinary but of a control nature, contracts with the state, family, economy and perception. These power relations are built both in the flesh and body of the performer. In these actions, in the Inhabit series, a deconstruction and reconstruction of daily contracts, ordinary familial, economic or occupational exchanges took place. This reflected upon the material environment of the space (a bourgeois apartment), materials (food or other consumables) and relationships (regulation of exchanges). In the performance that took place at WAM, the audience did not have direct contact with the performances but had to observe it from behind glass. The performers were closed inside the museum’s atrium and did not communicate verbally with each other. Within this framework, it was a contract.

Action is activity in homelessness, in the homelessness of existence – within an action. Action is a structural representation of each particular space, room, etc. – power-structures that the space evokes in the performers and are thus perceived by the audience, if there is one. Each space has a larger representational status than is assigned for it, and when it loses this status or is altered, the space and its relations start floating. The atrium with the fountain is obscured for a moment, when the performance takes place there. The performance and the space itself conjoin, not that the space would be only a prop for an action. The space also does not have one assigned purpose but is a reserve of unfulfilled purpose. In the moment of abandonment or new habituation, and even more in colonisation, some new purposes take place.

One day I am hustling into his mouth this birds’ heart pie that he baked for himself. Later on he is lying on the floor with a naked arse, with his trousers down. I am touched. I don’t know what to do. He looked like the rapist and the raped at the same time. He is not moving. I don’t know what to do. I am eating a carrot, like it would turn me on or something, but it is not true. I can’t play with it. It is serious.
If the world is a contract, it cannot escape being then a play between the voluntary and the involuntary. In the world of contracts, there are only interests. How to obtain more human capital – health, relationships, knowledge, and material things as well. It took place in the bourgeois house.

Walking in the snow. My arse naked, I am lying on my stomach in the snow, by a river, between the fir trees – a raped rapist. In the forest of acid rain, on the other side of the river, on the side of the Czech republic. Hishiriyo, non-thinking, non-walking, non-loving.

In the mountains. On the snow. He is lying again with his trousers down. How hilarious is that? Abandoned and exposed at the same time. Human (Man) (Male) composed into the landscape. Me (Female) watching, looking at, witnessing, documenting. We are both means as well as people. What kind are our relationships? We use ourselves for means to appear, to look at them and see – what are they? Where does a pose come from? How is this scene built?

In the atrium there is a sculpture of a woman without hands by the water basin.
It makes it clear that the people are material of composition just as the elements of décors are, but the posing also has sociological roots – in the theory of sprezzatura that was so popular in the Renaissance: a mode of posing that is particularly associated with ruling-class behaviour.\(^1\)

In this series the Kukkia group took an approach in which a performance action is an act about action. Not that much about presentation or what is visible, but action about structures, perceptions and control that function within the action itself. Action defines relations with the other, not only as ultimately stranger, but also as an object of desire or wondering. Moreover, action is turned towards the material world. It is poor, in which the agent becomes homeless and without possessions – action is an activity of homelessness, the place of human being in homelessness and poverty. Action is without a community and is not based on the communication process. These actions and performances were, thus, not aimed towards representative communication.

The actions took place in galleries and workshops and at performance events. Often the content was highly politicised, yet rather obscured in the action. Nevertheless, in ‘Kultura’, which took place in the old Shipyard of Gdańsk on June 20th, 2005, and also in a performance event in Hyvinkää, July 3rd in the same year, the content was directly political: in the context of the Solidarity movement, which has withered into something other than radical, and in Hyvinkää with a reading of Marx’ Communist Manifesto. There was both recognition of the anarchist, and of resisting power and the possible fascism embedded in posing, stylised and a-communicative or amoral actions. We were the context of an action, not a representation or image of the political – a context of becoming political.

A potency of power establishes contracts within the state, family, relationships, the economy, and focuses perception. Relationships of power and structure are built both in the flesh and body of the performer and in the receiver and witness. Thus, the action resembles economic relationships and intentionally does not create an illusion of freedom or catharsis. Action deconstructs and releases new flows of desire: some are momentary, others unnameable.

An action is to represent, decode and deconstruct these daily contracts, ordinary exchanges which are carried out

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Such actions have always attracted those people interested in *aktion direkt*, which in our present neo-liberal context is translated as the phrase *Just do it!*, because there is no alternative. We had such an interest for these actions, but still we embraced a distance for action – what is an action if it is an action for nothing? Aside from this amoral territory, these actions included some humorous aspects as well. Through these actions a temporary vocabulary was created, to instigate some different approach for performance – instead of metaphysical concepts such as presence, absence or responsibility.

**VAGINATION:** a corporeal action. Temporary transformation towards the internal.

**DEMONSTRATION:** action in the vicinity of each singular daimon or demons.

**SPECTATION:** a material action saturated with metaphysics, a purely mimetic action that resembles pure art.

**CAGEOMANIA:** a monomaniac action, obsessed with pseudo-zen and fraudulent silence.

**PERVERSIACTION:** everyone has their own. The performer shows what turns him or her or it on. What is the incomprehensible object of hopeless desire?

**APORIACTION:** non-imminent, confused or obscured form of performance.

within familial, economic, occupational, recreational, and other relationships. Action is to define our relationship to other beings, not only as an ultimately non-related being but also an object of desire and amazement and a matter of exploitation. Within this framework, the world – the world of *homo economicus* – is a contract and action is a deconstruction of this world. In an action our existence is turned towards the objects of the economic and materialistic world. We may remain in the approximation of being, homeless and without possessions. Action is activity in homelessness, in the homelessness of oneself or other beings. Being within the inaction. Materials in these actions were very rudimentary; they were often not enduring or sensitive for transformation and metabolism. They were changeable like desire, hunger, need, emotion, bodies or food.

*I loved to touch his ears, wrists, feel bones beneath. Then, he said.*

*I’m sick. I was always sick. Now you have this sickness too. I have been giving this to everyone. Everyone loved me like you did. I am sorry. That’s it. I can’t help you.*

Action is a dead moment
Action is a failure of communication
Action is not
Action is not existentialism
Action doesn’t ponder
Action is not reaction
Action is not moral or responsible
Action does not respect
Action does not chatting
Action is a performance in performance
Action has no value, like love
From a fear, fascism grows. We live in and surrounded by fear. Fear is a contracting and diminishing emotion – yin. Fear does not expand or foster exploration in life. Such a fear is fascism, and moreover it is a prevalent fear. In our projects we aimed to approach this contour of microfascism, which lives inside and outside of common sense. It declares: “this is how I am”, or “the world is clearly like this”. This is the trunk of microfascism. Nevertheless, outside this, there is an infinite and potential realm, which is not bound by fascism – it is not constructed on the structure of fear. We did recognise some signs of this particular outside in butoh, experimental theatre, such as that of Grotowski, but also in performance and contemporary popular culture. In interspecies communication we must leave fear and fascism. Aktio was not against, but for something.
“If it burns you, it is a work of art.” Hasan Shushud

Looking at a photo of young Jacques Lusseyran I know that he doesn’t have to use much energy to keep up the face of a cultured man. So he can just concentrate on receiving the light through his blind eyes. His look, his half open eyes, touch the photographer. For me what I see in him is an aktio. No communication. The act of seeing and being seen. What he wrote in And There Was Light about finding ways to perceive reality after he lost his sight, and about the resistance movement in France during World War II, and about how he went through the concentration camp, and about what is to serve others, all these are descriptions of essential examples of the processes of aktio and kultura.

In their serious game, called “Kukkia”, Karolina Kucia and Tero Nauha ate good food and wrote about ideas and theories in order to take a step out of the ideas and theories that were closing their behaviour and perception,
and concentrated on trying and creating other forms of behaviour in practice together and with different types of audiences and groups. Among the concepts they felt to be a hindrance to their work are those like presence and absence. I happily use these words since to my mind they are accurate and understandable. So I wrote back in 2006, inspired by Kukkia:

“How to distill from what is going on something that is present? How to breed something that is present from what remains? How to track down what is absent?”

What remains of a bodily performance practice after some years? What Tero and Karolina did as Kukkia was for me something luminous: light, enduring and vital practices that reached towards odd names and unnamed moments. Nothing spectacular. A lot of waiting, situations slowly appearing, sudden moments of high density action, very clumsy and painful acts.

They couldn’t have a big audience, although the spectator could become very close to their actions. That happened to me, and I know that it happened to others also. Kukkia didn’t aim to show everything that they did or to be audience friendly. They didn’t want to create a following. This kind of attitude is just right for creating moments that last, that become seeds for the possible growth of a culture of intentional acts towards what is at present unknown. In this way it is not surprising to find myself writing about these acts, which tried to disturb communication, with a small, crippled black and white cat on my lap trying to get attention.

There is always a distance between what we think we do and what really happens. What we think we see blurs our perception and creates infinite possibilities for escaping from the real world. Perhaps it was Grotowski who said somewhere that “to do is to question what a human being can be”. This is what I thought of when I was watching various performances by Kukkia, and this is what I think now when I try to recall what I saw.

When words systematically fail, acts may give at least a possibility for a state of being that endures for a deep moment the impressions the world gives us. Words and theories in most cases just block perception. Unless they are aimed at opening. The act of necessary art happens in the chaos between the expectations and perceptual habits of the spectator and the intentions, plans and ideas of the performer.

**TURKU, FINLAND, MAY 2005**
WÄINÖ AALTONEN MUSEUM

In Turku Kukkia had an hours-long flow of actions in the atrium of Wäinö Aaltonen Museum. The atrium was in a small inner court that had glass walls and could be seen from four directions. Inside a museum, outside it. In an aquarium or display window. Display window for a culture not ready for and not aiming for wide circulation in the lives of the masses. I remember actions that resemble many fundamental bodily and societal practices. Like agriculture, beginning a friendship or family, use of power to shape human bodies into social formations, creation of fixed symbols and gestures that contain control. The circulation of the energy of attention and perception through space with another. Shared metabolism.
In the closed atrium Kukkia was in between a fine arts culture and the impossibility of escaping that culture. It was just between the already fixed and the impossible, where any form of human creativity can be manifested. I remember Karolina planting chicken eggs in the soil of the small garden of the atrium. A nest for an evolutionary jump, a rooted bird.

**KUOPIO, FINLAND, SEPTEMBER 2005**

ANTI FESTIVAALI

In Kuopio’s ANTI festival I saw a long action happening on a hill and on an old staircase next to a road outside the town centre. Difficult place to live. For a day. A downhill; a slope. Descent and ascent. A staircase overgrown with bushes. Karolina sweeping the beginnings of forest away from stairs no one uses near the railway bridge. Tero running down a hill, pumping the dust out of the full dust bag of a vacuum cleaner. Cleaning nature away to create culture, spoiling nature with the dust of culture.

The audience in Kuopio consisted mainly of passersby in cars, a few by bike or on foot, and not of people intentionally coming to see the performance. Many of those who came for the show didn’t spend much time watching. Most of the time it wasn’t that entertaining. At some point the action becomes a drama, a poor theatre play. “The performance is about performance”. Kain and Abel, the division of species, the separation of cultures by murder. There the audience appears. But as the play disintegrates the audience also disappears. Theatre melts into passive and active happening, the audience becomes separated people with differing relations to the possible magnetism of Kukkia.

**KAJAAANI, FINLAND**

It is impossible to understand what happened by just looking at photographs. Momentary compositions of social structures of performance, gestures, directions, intensities, possibilities are visible, but nothing can be heard, and perfume doesn’t reach the photograph. No movement of bodies or movement of the substance around bodies can be detected. Imagination takes care of that.
Verticality: a black and white figure standing on the edge of the roof of a massive white or grey building. Horizontality: a do-it-yourself superhero figure biking on the street below, in front of the audience. A working class hero. Political statement, a task for the spectator: “SAY ALOUD: THUS THE COSTS CAUSED BY A WORKER ARE CUT TO ALMOST ONLY WHAT HE NEEDS FOR HIS OWN UPKEEP AND FOR THE CONTINUITY OF HIS SPECIES. THANK YOU!”

The comical death of the hero – falling on ground with the bike, a burst of tomato sauce spilling on the white snow – manufacturing a series of cloned abiological and asexual males: many pairs of overalls attached together are thrown out from the back of the dying hero. A caravan of useful personalities, social roles, even socialistic roles. Continuity of species. Empty offspring made of cloth, workers without sex and substance, soul leaking and bursting out into the cold winter air like tomato sauce.

A significantly wrongly read sentence: “sukunsa jatkamiseen”, which I read as: “surunsa jakamiseen”. Continuity of species turns into sharing of sorrows. Empty children, just clothes not many would wear these days (because there is no work to be done).

Avoiding meanings creates an abundance of meanings. I cannot understand what happens in photographs but by misunderstanding I can create a meaningful connection to any cultural system and so alter these systems. Verticality and horizontality create a cross. Death in the middle. And I’m quickly leading you to think about Christ. All real religion is horrifyingly humorous. Mute humour. A smile that encircles (ymmärtävä hymy).

Sharing sorrow creates the possibility of growing a soul. It is not mine.

HELSINKI, FINLAND, 19TH OF MARCH 2005
LÀ-BAS, SHINING BODIES PERFORMANCE EVENT

Self-rape. Two times repeated, beforehand practiced act. A cloned act from another act that steals life away in daily circumstances. Cloned moments. The audience disappears after the first act – only a few people stay to see the repetition after cleaning the space, a second identical self-rape. A practice of self-rape, even a culture of self-rape. Pekka Luhta with his video camera (oh how I hate video cameras at fragile moments), me and maybe someone else. Like the camera, I’m also looking more greedily now that the audience has disintegrated. The culture of the performance club is a little further away, but the cultura of the Kukkia group is here, going on in time, in the basement of the old cable factory. And someone in another place, on the island Sandö a couple of hundred kilometres to the west of Helsinki. Doing what at the same time? A mirror? A transformed echo? Aktio separated in space but connected in time: kultura.

TURKU, FINLAND, 8TH OF APRIL 2006
FLUXEE

It seems that one of the Kukkia performances I saw was not really appreciated by them. It didn’t feel good they say. This uncanonical piece of Kukkia (perhaps the one accidentally rotten flower in a flower basket otherwise so delicate) needs some attention. It happened at Fluxee performance
club in Turku on the 8th of April 2006. There were chairs spread out in the space in different ways – the audience was symbolically broken. What should one look at? A hint of a private act behind the public performance. Karolina hid in a suit that made her quite anonymous. Half animal. A fish was just laying on her raised palm. She just held that fish during the piece. Tero’s action was much more active and aggressive. Against the wall, as a militant political hare. An emotional role. The handle of the teacup he threw against the wall as a gesture of catharsis I made into an artefact: I picked it up and used it on the same evening as an artificial ear that listened to some sacred sentences from an open book.

POSSIBILITY OF A LIVING LANGUAGE

Many of the theoretical starting points or partitures for the actions written by Kukkia are not much as themselves but only in relation to actions in the real world, serving as tools for action. But some passages are different. States of being manifesting in language. Reading them is refreshing, it changes the tempo of the life inside the reader. The textual touch.

It really doesn’t matter what verbs they used when approaching the open ground of action through language. If they wrote that they “present and deconstruct” the daily economy of the roles and the habits in family life and in society, they still seemed to be playing home, playing life, playing unknown with a serious intent to understand. With a heartfelt concentration to show where there is joy to be shared or a thought that can turn the mind as the soil is turned. Intensity to be shared in the vanishing point of the moment to which all perception is drawn. To act for that is not nothing. The cat is with me, cleaning his fur with his pink tongue.

“I loved to touch his/her ears, wrists, feel bones under. Then, he/she said. I’m sick. I was always sick. Now you have this sickness too. I have been giving this to everyone. Everyone loved me as you did. I am sorry. That’s it. I cant help you.../ Sometimes I could kill. Sometimes I could love him at the same time. They are warming each other slowly, until they can’t stand it. I couldn’t take it – they say. I had to... I wanted, I needed that so much. They are warming each other until they can feel something. Then they can stop waiting. He/she made me feel.... they say.”

Words are not merely traitors of the energy that they need to consume from us, to continue their species and to share what is contained in them. Language can heat. Your mother’s tongue is shining. Some passages written by Kukkia make me feel such things that I start to look directly towards the others in this library where I write. I’m not afraid of them or my reactions to them. Nothing needs to be done, nothing happens, but everything has already changed for me. I am not alone.

“Microfascism is in the thought ‘I’m like this’ or ‘the world is clear and rational’. -- Outside this is unknown and undefined but vast space. -- Being without fear, without definition. When deer joins the dance in the night. Leave fascism, leave fear. Not against something but for something.”

It continues here. Now. I write you in it.
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The Kukkia project.

FERTILISM

Our thinking about fertilism concentrated on the body as a physical and metaphysical being. Being as being contaminated, soiled, decayed or destroyed. Aside from this macabre notion, the notion of a sacred body or purification is often to be found: distinction from corporeality. At the time our consideration of the body centred around these themes, and from the abject nature of the living body, aversion to it. Mainly we considered the body as a fertile organism, a living process of transformation.

But a body is not an organised system in this respect. It is of a different nature, which traverses from obscenity to heartfelt laughter. Or, is it that the obscurity of our actions muddled the view, that uncomfortably hairy arse that seems to demand more attention from the audience than the human face? Or was it that we as performers were idiotically and annoyingly primitive in our approaches?

Beyond the face lies an altogether different inhumanity: no longer that of the primitive head, but of ‘probe-heads’; here, cutting edges of deterritorialization become operative and lines of de-territorialization positive and absolute, forming strange new

The Revolution event, Vaihtolava, Helsinki; Kajaani Theatre event and the PAIR1 event in Lahti in November 2006.
becomings, new polyvocalities. Become clandestine, make rhizome everywhere, for the wonder of a nonhuman life to be created.

We would say that all of the performances and collaborative projects relating to the concept of fertilism were of not-knowing – they were “probe-heads”. The result may have varied, and even disappointed us, or it may have turned out that exactly the polyvocality of these acts stressed us individually. Fertilism is transformation, thus something we must have discarded. Moreover, not only during the period of these works, but the whole period of time that Kukkiagroup existed, stress was a common factor. This is not a stress caused by deadlines, but a sense of not knowing. It is the stress of not knowing, and not being sure of the value of all this. When a becoming something starts to takes place, it is not in this becoming that someone would be able to recognise what kind of being this becoming is. If a face is not so clearly a coordinate for our perception, or if there seems to be an abnormal amount – too little or too much – for example, too many limbs on the performer’s body, this whole process feels clandestine. Fertilism is a clandestine process, and occasionally it is wonderful. It is only the integrity of a produced identity that makes the process of the production of subjectivity so uncanny.

The concept fertilism was created by a lapse. Karolina was listening to a radio that had bad sound quality. Instead of hearing that this program was about fatalism, she thought that she was listening a program about fertilism: instead of fatalism, life could be seen through fertility. It is a fantasy of eerie creatures that are partly artificial and culturally produced. This is a life in a story of fertile artificiality. These
characters grow extra hands or legs and they have arses instead of heads. It is a macabre, silly, idiotic and potential existence – transformational, unnamed and potential.

It is not only a coincidence that our idea for fertilism started to sprout while working in a two-month residency in the Cité Internationale des Arts in Paris, July 2006. During this residency we took part in an intensive butoh workshop run by Atsushi Takenouchi and Hiroko Komiya. Karolina had joined their workshop earlier in Poznań and Tero had done some butoh practice some decade ago. For our perception, butoh is a practice of becoming. Kurihara Nanako, filmmaker and researcher, writes:

One day in 1988, at a workshop held at the International Christian University in Tokyo, Ashikawa told participants to become wet rugs. Wet rugs? We lay on the floor in various ways. ‘Feel the weight of water within you, a rug.’ She suggested a feeling of wetness by using a Japanese onomatopoeia: ‘jiy ujy.’ The sound implies water sweating. […] Ashikawa did not tell us what to do or how to behave; she simply gave us a few words. The participants were all adult women and some were modern dancers, and for all of us, it felt strange to seriously try to ‘become wet rugs.’ But in a little while I became sensitive to my own physical state of being; I felt freed from my daily self by becoming such a lowly thing on the floor.

Our practice of butoh did not result in clearly marked butoh performances, but in a more sensitive approach to the uncanny and clandestine reality of the performance of becomings. In a performance called Katedra, which took place at a Là-bas performance event in the Cable Factory, Helsinki, on May 14th 2006, some of the aspects of butoh’s
In the exhibition at Rantakasarmi gallery, which took place in January 2007, we collaborated with two dancers, Takayuki Ishihara and Christine Marquez. Their work was heavily influenced by butoh practice. Apart from them, we had invited a video artist, Markus Öhrn, an actor, Jakob Öhrman and a visual artist, Dwi Setianto. Each of the artists presented their work in this event in various formats: video, installation, drawing, sculpture and performance. At the end of the exhibition there was a day-long improvisational performance that aimed to interact with the audience. If the exhibition followed a traditional structure, then the content related more to fertilism. Christine’s performances were assembled around the concept of the body; she used mannequin legs, dozens of eggs and after she had smeared herself with these eggs, she coquetted with the audience. At the opening of the exhibition, adjacent to the video installation of Markus – in which Jakob is penetrating all possible holes of a forestry machine and other similar tools with a dildo – Jakob had an obnoxious, wild and at the same time hilarious act of trying to penetrate a houseplant, a weeping fig, with the same dildo. Dwi’s approach was maybe more
subtle, although the result was more uncanny than obscene. His drawings and miniature sculptures represented, or were made from, his own body hair. The beauty of these objects lured us into the realm of instability and eerie becomings.

In the Turdus Merdula performances, at Helsinki’s Theatre Academy, and the Performance Rocket performance at the Taju summer exhibition in Hyvinkää, in summer 2007, we collaborated again with Dwi Setianto. When the Theatre Academy audience entered the performance space, they literally entered darkness. There was no light and the room was filled with thick artificial fog and the sound of a blackbird singing from the sound system. There was nothing to see, and it capsized the anticipation of a performance representing something, as in this case it was merely nothing. After a some time, two characters appeared from the darkness with large papier-mâché heads and torches. They resembled some comic book characters, with their large heads bobbing in the torch beams. They ended up fighting and breaking the heads, which were filled with feathers and tar. Dwi appeared now and then from the darkness and with no clarity as to whether he was part of the audience or the performance. Karolina undressed herself and became almost invisible, since she was painted in black. She appears close to others out of the smoke and darkness, smiling. Tero, smeared in tar, was busy trying to melt coins together, obviously not succeeding. Dwi says: “What is this? I don’t understand.” Such a phrase did produce meaning for the performance seen, but crafted more confusion as well. This series of performances seem to be the most heterogeneous of all Kukkia performances. For the first time there was real collaboration with other artists, and a more scripted structure was used. In the
Performance Rocket the audience was entertained with b-quality jokes, banana splits and gymnastics. We were on the verge of insulting the viewers: would they consider us rather swindlers than serious performance artists.

Still, a script did not conjure more comprehension of what was going on. We were still working on the subject matter of bodily metamorphosis and becomings, yet we used more conventional ways of performing. The form of a performance was itself blurred or even trashed, and in the confusion we still did not recognise the emergence of becoming. Yet, it would be undiscerning and conceited of us to imply that these becomings were methodical.

Language speaks and asks:
I had hoped to meet my beautiful beloved,
There, where it smells of shit
Was not Bacchus engendered out of the very thigh of Jupiter?

In this project we worked with refrains, repetitions and narratives. In the spring 2008 we were at an artists’ residency in Villa Karo, Benin, which is run by a Finnish organisation and located in the small coastal village of Grand Popo. In Benin, which was formerly known as Dahomey, animism – voudou – is one of the prevalent religions. This is not black magic, but a true religion that deals with issues of everyday life, a religion that is founded upon communication between spirits. At first, we found this interesting and fascinating, but in the end more confusing and even irritating, because it really seemed to affect all everyday decisions of people’s lives, large and small. We did not develop a work around this fascinating subject, but instead seemed to be a bit lost because of it. Eventually we ended up making musical instruments in clay with the all-women Pottery Co-operative of Sé, which was in the nearby village of Grand
Popo. These women had created a flourishing business out of making pottery for everyday use. This they did not only in the surrounding area, but abroad through collaboration opportunities with Canadian and French organisations. They were skilled, and also very proud of their skills.

We wanted to make shallow pots that would have patterns on the surface, which we would use on a makeshift record-player. The patterns came from their own pottery designs or from ourselves. The process itself was interesting, since we asked them to do something that was not familiar to them: to make pots that were going to be used in some unknown fashion. Thus, sharing and negotiation was in fact the major part of this project. These artisans were ready to follow, but also were interested what we were heading towards – and they also had some input in these clay pots, which was not in our intention.

Similarly we worked with Boris, a part-time handyman from Villa Karo, who was a skilled carpenter. We asked him to collaborate with us to make a crossbreed of a hurdy-gurdy and a likembe, a thumb piano. It was a size of a large guitar, with crude metal plates that were suppose to be whacked by a wooden cylinder and make a sound similar to a likembe. These cylinders had a combination of traditional woodcarving from that area and our own grooves. Nevertheless, most challenging was to make the metal parts, which we did with the help of a local blacksmith and car repair man and with the patient translation of Gildas, our guide. We were not able to communicate what we really wanted, and the guy did not actually seem to know at all what a thumb piano was, or a likembe, mbila or whatever name we used at that point. We felt like silly ignorant jovos. We, actually, had some superficial idea of Africa, “where everybody knows a thumb piano.”

In this project, even haphazardly, we used the method of an idiot or barbarian, though it was not entirely explicit. We tried to propose a project that would start from a small piece of wood used to decorate the clay pots, and we proposed to develop an experimental instrument. Presumably what we were after was never clear to the women of Sé, Boris, or to the blacksmith/mechanic – even if we spent a lot of time describing what we wanted. We were barbarians in Africa,
because we presumed that, for instance, the likembe would be known by everyone: we knew that, being European intellectuals. Thus, our educated, intellectual minds were in fact colonial and prejudiced. Obviously, they knew what a musical instrument would at least approximately look like, but this object created a confusion of categories, as if it was a crossbreed or some kind of a monster. We continued letting this confusing and idiotic object grow on purpose: we were trying to generate a connection with the people, aside from producing ‘serious’ art conjured from ‘traditional’ ingredients. Perhaps it was also a cultural difference, which represented itself in the impossibility of understanding the description of shapes or purposes. There are automatisms of production, which are inscribed in mind and body, in the memory or processes. Our planned outcome did not belong in any conscious category and lacked affiliation with any desired object. Still, in the end we all – us and the artisans, manual workers and handymen – worked for careful completion of each movement. We were free of routine or self-evident results, nevertheless we did not know what the purpose of it all was. In the end the clay pots were ready, and our pots still looked like all the other ones. We were putting together the different automatisms. It’s not that we were idiots, but rather that this object was an impossible project. We created two objects of a hybrid nature, yet real and with physical dimensions. They became real beings, with no clear identity or use in the world, which is founded on narratives and automatisms.

Finally, as a seemingly minor project but still with a link to further Ritornello projects, we were observing how the gasoline was distributed in Benin. Generally there are no gas stations and it is bootlegged from Nigerian oil rigs and disseminated to sellers in private cars and trucks. You can find these gas stations everywhere, where the yellow gasoline gleams in the large glass jars. Close to our residency, we found Florenzo, a not-so-energetic businessman who still seemed able to make a living this way. He used old wine bottles to mix and serve his drink for the local engines, mostly mopeds and motorcycles. He was part of a network or rhizome of similar fellows that had created a kind of monster or hybrid within the official system.
Coming back from West Africa, where we worked with these idiot objects, we were not able to make full sense of it. Eventually, a narrative of a birth of mother emerged, which tied this experience together. It seemed that this narrative was already prematurely present in that period, but came into the light in the following story of a mother.

In the following year, we spend several months in two different residencies, apart from Villa Karo, at SIM in Reykjavik and Circolo Scandinavo in Rome. After Benin we started working quite extensively with text mixed with floating narratives emerging through machinic systems or objects. We appropriated material from Antonin Artaud, Félix Guattari, Rabelais, Paul Éluard and Molière or texts describing mythical birth. We blended these texts in such a way that it was easy to recognise their origins. In a small performance in Katariina gallery in Helsinki, just after our return from Benin, our performance was conjured in a more straightforward way with a sound improvisation created by Karolina’s voice and metal or jewellery trash brought from the Grande Marche at Lomé, the capital of Togo; the text was spoken.

One part of the Ritornello project, and also of Fertilism, was our exhibition at MUU gallery, in March 2008. This exhibition was an experiment with two individual series of performances that took place in the gallery. Being a Kukkia event, it had more a style of two exhibitions following each other. In Reykjavik we worked more determinately with the personal stories of people living in Reykjavik and with a blog describing the life of an immigrant Polish worker living in Iceland. Only after our residency in Iceland did our subject matter start to take shape. We were moving towards the patterns and refrains that create a mythical narrative. However, instead of taking this as a foundation or something universal, we wanted to locate these stories in the actual, singular, body – the body of a mother. The ‘non-immaculate’ mother, the non-personal mother.

In her psychoanalytical research Bracha L. Ettinger writes, in contrast to Lacan, that a foetus in a womb lives in matrixial connection with the mother, and the mother with the prenatal child. At the moment of birth, which is a moment of two births – of a mother and a child – this matrixial connection exists and is fundamental for the development of the relationship. Thus, a birth is not a trauma, as Ettinger writes, but part of the emergence of matrixial lines that connect all beings. Apart from this we were interested in the hero’s mother, and in other abnormal births of mythical beings and heroes, such as Athena. Franco ‘Bifo’ Berardi says that capitalism is the society of male heroes, but the mothers of these heroes are missing. For our interpretation, this enigmatic mother is born from the sewers, the cloaca maxima of Roman times. She is born from shit, as opposed to immaculate, heroic births. It was another psychoanalyst and cultural theorist, Dominique Laporte, who argued that there was a conjunction between the refinement of lan-
and the development of sewer systems in France and England in the 18th century. There was an urge to refine language and manners, to educate people, and at the same time to get rid of the stench from the streets. From his book we found fertiliser for our project. He starts his book by citing Paul Éluard and his poem from the collection *Capitale de la Douleur* (Capital of Pain):

“Language speaks and asks

‘why am I beautiful?

Because my master bathes me.’”

In a Boshogo, a Bantu creation myth, “there was only darkness, water, and the great god Bumba. One day Bumba, in pain from a stomachache, vomited up the sun. The sun dried up some of the water, leaving land. Still in pain, Bumba vomited up the moon, the stars, and then some animals: the leopard, the crocodile, the turtle, and, finally, some men, one of whom, Yoko Lima was white like Bumba.” Similarly, following the myth of Minerva, who, when “she was born to only one parent, Jupiter [...] ‘leaped forth from his brain’ fully matured and wearing a complete suit of armor” we created our own mythical stories centred around birth and the mother by using these fables. In the performance in Kiasma, in November 2008, there was a text that described birth as a, desire to live – a desire to produce my own birth as an a-mor-ther.

If a child decided to be born this way, or expel itself from the Father’s leg or to set a womb like a nest in the brain of the father and if this man must chop his own head off in order to give birth, this by nature is all ok. The birth of human beings is the birth of power. Birth is the production of creativity, when consumption is only a taste. Yes, He was a ruler, a messiah and abuser of power crawling through the inner chambers of a mother. But why was that little boy who was born from the left ear a chosen one – after mutilating the poor mother’s body?

In Rome, inhabited with mythical births, deaths and hybrids, we created a scripted performance around these texts. Moreover, it was a performance about birth and motherhood:

That’s how I was born

Me mother, me mother

I ended up in a wonderful place

It was full of breasts with grace

This place was my soul

Hundreds and thousands of them

I just moved my head slightly and nourished this femme.

Anytime I felt hunger or thirst

There I made my word at first

That’s how I was born

Me mother, me mother

We performed at the Invenzioni event organised by Circolo Scandinavo and the School of popular music in Testaccio, among contemporary music composers and popular musicians. This piece was a concise, anti-theatrical performance based on the text: a performance of the script, rather than a performance about performance. This work was a dream: “What if I could just play like a child with everything that determined who I am and how I relate to the world and others?” We had created a primitive story of a mother, who is a missing character and also a missing story of the birth of mother. In the end the path we took was to follow the story of the hero’s mother rather than the hero – that story has no evidence of her existence.
Language speaks and asks:
why am I beautiful?
Because my master bathes me.

*Capitale de la Douleur*

**Paul Éluard**

There where it smells of shit
It smells of being.
Man could just as well not have shat,
Not have opened the anal pouch,
But he chose to shit
As he would have chosen to live
Instead of consenting to live dead.

There is in being
Something particularly
tempting for man
And this something is
none other than
CACA.

*To Have Done With The Judgement of God*

**Antonin Artaud**

I had hoped to meet
my beautiful beloved,
and now for what, I ask,
in such a pungent state?
May love be damned,
and balconies be damned too,
one emerges from these steeped
in piss and naked.

*L’Étourdi ou les Contretemps*

**Molière**

Text from a performance in the Katarina gallery, on the 27th of June, 2008.
African man we no dey carry shit
We dey shit in-side big big hole

For Yourba-land na “Shalanga”
For Igbo-land na “Onunu-insi”
For Hausa-land na “Salunga”
For Ga-land na “Tiafi”
For Ashanti-land na “Yarni”
For Ethiopia-land na “Sagara-bet”
For Voodoo-land na “Cho-Cho”
For Bemba-land na “Chimbuzi”
For Tunga-land na “Echibuzi”

African man we no dey carry shit
We dey shit inside big big hole

Before them come force us
away as slaves
During the time them come force us away as slaves
Na European man,
na him dey carry shit
Na for them culture to carry shit
During the time dem come colonize us
Dem come teach us to carry shit

African man we no dey carry shit
Na European man teach us to carry shit

*International Thief Thief*

_Fela Kuti*

Was not Bacchus engendered
out of the very thigh of Jupiter?
Did not Roquetaillade come
out at his mother’s heel,
and Crocmoush from
the slipper of his nurse?
Was not Minerva born of the brain, even through the ear of Jove?
Adonis, of the bark of a myrrh tree;
and Castor and Pollux of the doupe of that egg which was laid
and hatched by Leda?

_Gargantua and Pantagruel_

_François Rabelais* †

Text from a performance in the Katarina gallery, on the 27th of June, 2008
The automatic behaviour of the crowd compared to the ola\textsuperscript{1}, or to the swarm: a plurality of living beings whose behaviour follows (or seems to follow) rules embedded in their neural systems. Biologists define swarm as a multitude of animals of similar size and body shape, moving together in the same direction, performing actions in a coordinated way, like bees building a hive or moving towards a plant where they can find what they need in order to make honey.

In conditions of social hyper-complexity, human beings tend to act as a swarm.

When the Infosphere is too dense and too fast for the conscious elaboration of information, people tend to conform to shared behaviour.

Why do people start to act in a similar or uniform way, without any conscious agreement?

In conditions of hyper-complexity there is no time for individual rational decision, so decision is replaced by automation of cognitive behaviour.

Complexity is about the relationship between the social brain and the Infosphere. Complexity is when the Infosphere becomes so speedy and so intense that it outpaces the ability of the social brain to elaborate, and to rationally understand.

The Infosphere can be infinitely accelerated, the brain cannot: you can take pills and go faster, but there is a limit to brain acceleration. The limit is in affection, desire and fear, and love, death, illness, suffering. The limit is in the emotional body.

The relation between the Infosphere and the social brain is influenced by the psychosphere. The psychic dimension limits acceleration. So what happens when the ability of the social brain to process information consciously and emotionally breaks down? Swarm happens. Swarm is a condition of automation of social communication and affective relations. When a network is inscribed in the brain of the multitude you have a swarm. When the multitude faces the accelerated Infosphere, a network can be inscribed into its brain, so that multitude becomes swarm.

Kevin Kelly calls the swarm a super-organism which emerges from the mass of ordinary insect organisms. “The hive possesses much that none of its parts possesses. One speck of a honeybee brain operates with a memory of six days; the hive as a whole operates with a memory of three months, twice as long as the average bee lives.” (Out of control)

Felix Guattari speaks of retournelle (refrain) in order to explain the relation between the rhythm of singularity and the chaosmotic rhythm of the world. In order for the cosmic, social and molecular universe to be filtered through individual perception, filters or models of semiotisation must act, and these models Guattari calls refrain.

“A child that sings in the night because of his fear of the dark tries to re-establish control of events that are too quickly deterritorializing for his liking and that begin to proliferate in the

\textsuperscript{1} Ola is Spanish for ‘wave’. An ola is a large crowd action, like the Mexican wave often performed at sporting events.
cosmos and in the imaginary. Each individual, each group, each nation thus equips themselves with a range of basic refrains for conjuring chaos. “

The obsessional refrain is a ritual that allows the individual – the conscious organism in continuous variation – to find identification points, and to territorialise oneself and to represent oneself in relation to the surrounding world. This kind of refrain is the modality of semiotisation that allows an individual (a group, a people, a nation, a sub-culture, a movement) to receive and project the world according to reproducible and communicable formats.

But there are also refrains of singularisation.

The perception of time by a society, a culture or a persona is also the model of a truly temporal refrain, particular rhythmic modulations that function as modules for accessing, awaiting and participating in cosmic temporal becoming.

Guattari defines chaosmosis as the ability to transform chaos into order, harmony.

Refrain is a sound, a sign, a voice, a song that makes it possible to link our existence with the existence of other human beings; it is also the song of solidarity making possible rebellion and autonomy from the unified rhythm of capitalist productivity.

The essential feature of the refrain is rhythm. Rhythm is the relationship of a subjective flow of signs (musical, poetic, bodily) with the environment: cosmic environment, earthly environment, social environment. Rhythm is singular and collective. It singularises the sound of the world in a special modelling of environmental sound. But it is able to trigger a process of agglutination, of sensitive and sensible commu-

nality. Sometime people start to sing the same song, and to dance the same dance. It can be dangerous: on this kind of homogeneous subjectivation is based fascism, and modern totalitarianism in general.

But it can be ironic and nomadic, it can be the free choice that many make simultaneously. People start to create a new song, and they do so together. That’s a movement. What is a movement? It is an event opening a new landscape. When a movement happens (in the field of art, in the field of social politics) the effect is this. Thanks to the movement (literally, a displacement) you are able to see things that you did not see before. A new rhythm makes it possible to see a new landscape. And when you see the landscape, you discover new ways.

Rhythm is everywhere in social life. Work, war, rituals and mobilisations have their special rhythm. Poetry essentially deals with rhythm.

Rhythm and words, rhythm and voice, rhythm and gesture are the special objects of poetry.

In this book we do not want to compare poetry and finance. We want to find the similarity and coplanarity of language and money. Then we want to question the present world ravaged by the financial rhythm, by the point of view of different rhythmical possibilities.

The social erotic body, which semiocapitalism has subjected to the frantic rule of precariousness and competition, is now looking for a new rhythm. Poetry is the main tool for this research.

At the chaosmotic level, rhythm is the concatenation of breathing and the surrounding universe. In Guattari’s parlance refrain is the singular way of creating this concatenation, agencement, between singularity and environment.
At the social level, rhythm is the relationship between the body and the social concatenation of language. Social environment is marked by refrains, repetition of gestures and of signs that express the singular mode and simultaneously the relationship between the agency and the environment.

In the condition of desensitisation and of psychopathology the body comes back as identification, belonging, aggressiveness. This is why fascism seems to be the future of the world: because fascism is deeply inscribed in the automatic process of the psychosphere and in the automatic effects of the techno-linguistic machine.

In a letter to the semiologist Thomas Seboek, Bill Gates says that power is making things easy.

This is a bad reversal of the hippy utopia “info to the people” which nurtured the philosophy of user friendly interfaces. Bill Gates comes and says, oh yes, let’s be friendly: power is based on the ability to make things easy. Automation of brain processes in the situation of the acceleration of the Infosphere.

If economy and technology converge, absorbing and subsuming language to their rule, how can we find a way for the de-automation of language, for the autonomy of thought and of life?

Where is the line of escape?

The line of escape is the infinity of language: the excess.

Language and economy are converging and melting together, as economy becomes immaterial and capital becomes semiocapital, and labour becomes cognitive and precarious.

Language is reduced to a form of economic exchange, but language is not only a tool for exchange. Language exceeds the sphere of communication.

Poetry is the excess of language, what in language cannot be exchanged, can only be understood in the sphere of singularity. Poetry is singularity of enunciation, re-emergence of singularity, reactivation of living temporality beyond the reduction of time to the economy.

Here we can find the way to the de-automation of language, and to the dissolution of the swarm effect.
NOTES:
THE CHRONOLOGY OF KUKKIA

KAROLINA KUCIA (b.1978) • TERO NAUHA (b.1970)

ISOLATION – 2004
6th to 15th of August, at the Postsovkhaz04 event at MoKS, Mooste, Estonia
20th of August, in Hyvinkää and Poznań
10th of September, in Orońsko and Turku
30th of September, in Hel and Sandō
15th of October, in Tampere and Poznań
9th of November, in Sandō and Hel

ZASIEDLAČ-ASUTTAA-INHabit – FROM 2004 TO 2005
23rd to 25th of December, 2004, in an apartment at Słowackiego 40, Poznań
1st and 2nd of January, 2005, in Szklarska Poręba, Poland
21st of May, in the atrium in the Waino Aaltonen Museum in Turku

AKTIO – KULTURA – FROM 2004 TO 2006
25th of November, 2004, Kultura on Sandō island
25th of March, 2005, Là-bas, Cable Factory, Helsinki
15th of March, at Y gallery in Tartu, at Markus Öhrn’s exhibition opening
20th of June, Kultura, Wyspa Institute of Art at the Gdańsk Shipyard, solo performance by Karolina
3rd of July, Kultura, Solstice event in Hyvinkää
17th of September, Aktio at the ANTI festival in Kuopio
30th of November at the Pimeä festival in Helsinki
2nd of December at the Kajaani Theatre Symposium
8th of April, 2006, Soup, Fluxee, Turku
4th of May, Second Best Ideas, Maa-tila, Helsinki

FERtILISM – FROM 2006 TO 2007
14th of May, 2006, Katebra, Là-bas event in The Cable Factory
From July to August 2006, resident artists in the Cité Internationale des Arts, Paris
28th of October, in the Revolutions event at Vaihtolava in Helsinki
11th of November at the Kajaani Theatre Symposium
20th of November at the PAIR1 event in Lahti
13th of January to 11th of February, 2007, Fertilism at the Rantakasarmi gallery in Suomenlinna. In which we invited artists Takayuki Ishihara, Christine Marquez, Dwi Setianto, Markus Öhrn and Jacob Öhrman to participate
23rd of May, Turdus Merdula, at the Live Art festival and seminar at The Helsinki’s Theatre Academy. Performance with Dwi Setianto
9th of June, Performance Rocket, at the TAJU07 event in Hyvinkää. Performance with Dwi Setianto
RITORNELLO – 2008

March 2008, Kukkia, MUU gallery, Helsinki
28th of April to 9th of June, resident artists in Villa-Karo, Grand Popo, Benin
27th of June, Smell of Being, performance at Katariina gallery, Helsinki
July, resident artists at SÍM, Reykjavik
8th of November, Birth, performance during the seminar at the Performance Focus event organized by Là-bas
December 2008 and January 2009, resident artists at Circolo Scandinavo, Rome
21st of December, Ritornello, performance at the Invenzioni event at the Scuola Popolare di Musica di Testaccio in Rome

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Antti Ahonen 53, 74
Hannu Elenius 50, 51
John Grzinich 11, 29, 30
Lars Larsson 28, 29, 30
Pekka Luhta 23
Pekka Mäkinen 18, 19, 55
Mikko Orpana 56, 57
Rajatila gallery 33
Tomasz Szrama 23, 76
Markus Öhrn 53