

# *Genre pictures and experiments in writing*

Doctoral Thesis in Fine Arts

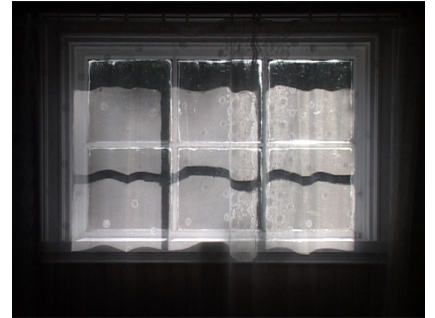
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## Introduction





## Dear Reader,

*In front of you are six windows, six small rectangles, each of which opens onto a different view. Some of the windows are interior windows, outside one window it is snowing, and the last one has curtains in front of it. Nevertheless, all of them are linked by the same medium: video. The rectangles are stills from videoworks that I have made, and if you touch the images you can view the videos in their entirety.*

*Except for the last window, which is an epilogue, a text also opens up behind each rectangle. These writings are descriptions of the processes of making the videos, but, at the same time, they consider how to write as a visual artist – so that the text is in harmony with the artistic work or even mirrors it in its structure.*

*Together these works and texts constitute a study in article form of the interaction between image, word and sound. Its parts have been made over a long period of time and published or otherwise made accessible to the public in exhibitions, in print or online.<sup>1</sup> That is why the views opening out from the windows also vary in their typography and layout. Each article is like a page of a diary that has been written at a certain time and place, at a certain point in the research.*

## Questions and answers

The first window takes us to a dance studio, where an Argentine tango is playing. The camera follows from very close as a woman practises in the studio, but the music feels like it is being heard from somewhere far away, from behind a thick wall. In the end, it emerges that the woman is pregnant, and that the soundtrack has been made from the perspective of the child in the womb.

Behind the second window there is total silence. Someone has died, and it is time to empty her home. The images change in slow dissolves: a nail begins to be visible through a framed picture, a ball of string appears beside the nail, and the table cloth under the ball of string turns into a pillowcase. On the soundtrack a spool of thread starts to roll and falls onto the floor.

The third window is not a metaphor, but a real pane of glass. In it we see the reflection of an apartment where a new-born baby is sleeping. During the ensuing minutes, the child opens his eyes, learns to move around, and begins to explore the world. He crawls on the floor, gets entangled in electric leads and tries out what they taste like. In the background a washing machine whirrs, delicate wash 40 degrees.

From the fourth window we see a kitchen where a suspiciously idyllic morning moment is under way. The apartment is the same as in the previous work, but the child has grown bigger, and there is a new baby in the mother's arms. It is as if the composition has been taken from the old art of painting.

The fifth window takes us to the home of the Dane Vilhelm Hammershøi (1864–1916).<sup>2</sup> The work's image track consists of interior paintings by Hammershøi – silent, half-empty rooms, through which a black-clad woman passes. On the soundtrack a group of artists and researchers try to console this melancholy-looking creature.

The sixth window is a white screen. On it is projected a series of slides, eight family photos exposed onto glass plates in 1910s or 1920s Finland. Most of the pictures are overexposed, double-exposed or otherwise damaged. Behind them we hear the murmur of speech, in which we can make out the words “red” and “white”.

The texts surrounding the works take us to studios and seminar rooms. In them I don't just describe how my works have come about, but also demonstrate this in practice: “Look, the microphone stood here when the words of consolation were taped and this is how you make a room into a ‘Hammershøi’...” Behind this is the idea that art itself is like research, it just has to be made visible.

In the editing stage the most exciting thing is matching the image and the soundtrack. At that point, it may feel like the image comes to life or that its meaning changes. This stage of the process also demands the most manual work, and if there is a sound designer involved, the collaboration forces you to articulate your ideas. Perhaps that is why specifically the interaction between image, word and sound has emerged as the focal point of my research.

The questions I ask are quite practical ones: “What would happen if I put the clink of a spoon here? And what if I bring it forwards a few seconds?” My treatment of the topic is not, however, limited solely to the artworks, since I have realized that writing also involves an interaction between image, word and sound or (my own) voice. In the final essay I even ask what could be the writing counterpart to the dissolves that I love so much.

And the answers, what kinds of answers does my research offer? It is clear that there are no universally applicable answers to such questions as the clink of a spoon. My thesis perhaps, nevertheless, conveys how subtle the process of working with images, words and sounds is, regardless of whether it is done alone or with someone else. I am even tempted to use an old-fashioned word like “sensitive”. You have to be sensitive to stirrings within you, and listen to them. If the clink of a spoon does not fit the image, you feel it as being uncomfortable. If, meanwhile, the sound is fitting, cold shivers run up your spine. This is artists’ professional skill, but it can also be called knowledge.

## **Frames**

I entered the Doctoral Studies Programme at the Academy of Fine Arts in Helsinki in 2006, but the story of the genesis of my research goes even further back, to 1999, when I began Master’s studies in Chicago (The School of the Art Institute of Chicago). I took with me a pile of old letters, which I had decided to make the subject of my work there, but I had no idea how this would go. How was I to present extensive textual material in a visual-art context, especially since I wanted to use my native language alongside English?

I soon found myself in the School’s film department, even though I had never made any moving-image works. So I began studying film in order to be able to use words and more than one language in my work. In film the words cannot, of course, be separated from the way they are uttered, and thus the third element in my research, the sound, entered the scene.

In recent years, the sound has, in fact, gained precedence over the words, and many of my videos no longer contain any speech at all. Nevertheless, my



work is still inspired by the “miracle of the image and the word” that I experienced in Chicago, and which is described in the third essay in my study. At that time, the miracle brought the face on the screen to life; nowadays, I experience something similar when the sound expands the space, or when the writing turns into an image.

The School of the Art Institute of Chicago is known for its tradition of experimental film, and I, too, originally shot my first videowork, based on the letters (*Pure*, 2002), on 16mm film. The camera was a hand-cranked Bolex, which ran for a maximum of 30 seconds at a time, so I learned to approach every shot with piety. Nowadays, I work digitally from start to finish, but the spirit of Chicago is still evident in my working process as a certain precision, a small-scaleness and personalness. In the third essay in my thesis I, in fact, employ the term “personal film”, which some people prefer instead of “experimental”. Nevertheless, I generally say that I simply make videos, perhaps because I do not identify as a filmmaker, but as a visual artist.

Sometimes, I may say that I also make paintings or tableaux, since I have realized that at heart I am a genre painter. This is one of the by-products of my research; a new viewpoint that is not connected with my actual topic, but which helps understand the nature of my works. After all, what is meant by genre pictures are the kinds of quiet paintings showing everyday life, such as Jan Vermeer’s (1632–1675) *The Milkmaid* or Pieter de Hooch’s (1629–1684) *A Mother’s Duty*, both from around 1658. To tell the truth, genre paintings can also show rowdy tavern scenes, but I represent the restrained branch of the genre, middle-class home interiors.<sup>3</sup>

The genesis of this realization is set out in the essay “A videowork as a genre picture”, so here I will only say that it all began at an artistic-research event,<sup>4</sup> where I showed an excerpt from my, at that point, still unfinished work, *Morning* (2013). “As a researcher I do not believe a word of what is said in the picture,” one of the viewers said, and added that the video reminded her of Vermeer.<sup>5</sup> When Vermeer’s name subsequently came up elsewhere, too, I gradually began to be convinced of our kinship. Later on, the family was further joined by Vilhelm Hammershøi, who has been called “the Danish Vermeer”.

The suspiciously idyllic *Morning*, and *Voices of Consolation* (2014), which consists of Hammershøi’s paintings, are the most genre-picture-like of my works, but the other interiors shot on a tripod are also indebted to the Dutch masters. In contrast, *Tango Lesson* (2007), shot on a handheld camera, is like a model study by a later painter, a *croquis* made with a single drawn line. It was in fact shot by another artist, the German Klaus Eisenlohr, who studied in Chicago at the same time as I did.

## Methods

The methods used in my research reflect the way I make art: I gather material and look to see what comes out of it. If a building nearby is threatened with demolition and has beautiful windows, I go there. I film whatever is possible right then, before the sun sets or the walls are pulled down.

When I began my research eleven years ago, it was mostly only possible to film in my own home. I was, in fact, in the final stages of pregnancy and, after my son was born, I cared for him at home for two years. In 2011, I had a second child, with whom I again stayed ‘at home’ for two years.

This does not, however, mean that the children were an obstacle to my work. On the contrary, thanks to them it took on an outright avant-gardist dimension, an attempt to combine art and life.

In practice, combining art and life meant that our home became a laboratory. Nowadays, that home laboratory is mostly a state of mind – a way of making observations in the midst of everyday life – but, a few years ago, the camera was still standing almost constantly at the ready in the corner of our flat. The young explorer in *Two rooms and a kitchen* (2010) is, thus, my son Elias and the new baby in *Morning* is my daughter Tilda. The father is played by their father and in the role of the mother is myself.

In the early years, I even went so far that, when my sound designer Tatu Virtamo came to visit, I asked him to tape our conversation at the editing desk. When we were working on *Room* (2008), this became a practice that we followed systematically, and the result was that I wrote my life’s first chamber play, the dialogue “What does silence sound like?” The text was published in the inaugural issue of *Journal for Artistic Research (JAR)* 0 in spring 2011, but before that, I performed it live with the actor Helena Kågemark.<sup>6</sup>

The editing process for *Room* also involved another experiment, which took on the features of a repeatable, empirical experiment. Its starting point was uncertainty: I had already shot the image material for the video long before starting my research, and I didn’t really know what I wanted to say with the work. And so I decided to give Virtamo a free hand and to see what sounds would do to the images. The idea was to later invite other sound designers as ‘guests’ and to explore how alternative sound worlds would affect the content of the work.

Even if the experiment did not go exactly as planned (Virtamo did not want the freedom and, after him, only one visitor came into *Room*), it showed the way for other projects in which I asked people for help in one way or

another. Quoting one of the pre-examiners of my research, Professor Mika Elo, this method can specifically be termed “inviting in guests”.<sup>7</sup>

Alongside Virtamo, those paying a visit to my research include the writer Riina Katajavuori, who I asked to write about my work *Morning* in the exhibition catalogue for the Turku Biennial, which in 2013 took as its theme “the idyll”.<sup>8</sup> Later on, I made a return visit to Katajavuori by reviewing her essay in my own essay “A videowork as a genre picture”.

Perhaps the ranks of visitors could include graphic designer Jorma Hinkka, who has designed the opening and closing credits for all my works, and also helped me make this publication. Other regular guests have been my colleagues from the Nordic Summer University artistic-research study circle.<sup>9</sup> They are artists and researchers from different fields who I have met twice a year, and with whom I have realized the videos *Reflections in a window pane* (2012) and *Voices of Consolation*.

*Reflections in a window pane* can be found behind the third video still, beside *Two rooms and a kitchen*. This is, thus, not an independent work, but a reflection or mirror image of *Two rooms and a kitchen*. It had its beginnings when I got my study circle to ask themselves two fundamental questions: “What do I see?” and “What do I hear?”

*Voices of Consolation*, in turn, came about when I noticed I identified with the woman who passes through Hammershøi’s paintings, and I asked my study circle to console her. As with my previous experiments this one is repeatable, and can be applied to any picture that is in need of consolation...

My study circle – or should I say my research group – also paid a visit to *Morning* after Katajavuori did so. On this occasion, I put them in the role of playwright, god or therapist and asked them to alter the flow of events in the video. This experiment shows perhaps most clearly how my home laboratory has changed over the years. It is no longer a one-woman effort, but a form of collective play, “lab work” in the sense that the term is used in performing-arts circles.<sup>10</sup>

As a method of artistic research, inviting in guests bears an affinity with the *generational filming* developed by Lea and Pekka Kantonen. In this the artists ask the audience’s help in interpreting home videos that they have shot, and then append the discussions as part of the next edition, or generation, of the videos.<sup>11</sup>

The Kantonens are also my predecessors in combining life and art. Their video diaries are, nevertheless, a lot rougher than my carefully composed tab-

leaus. This is one reason why I like the term genre painter. Right from the first handshake, it makes it clear that I do not use video as a documentary medium.

## **Literary experiments**

By force of circumstance I have also learned to produce texts in between everyday activities, spontaneously, and a bit at a time. Over the last couple of years, I have conducted a correspondence that combines life and art – a correspondence that is not part of my research, even though it could be – and when it came time to write this introduction, I asked myself, why not do it, too, in the form of a letter.<sup>12</sup> Wouldn't it be a perfect way to present a study that is by nature intimate and dialogical, especially when it all began with a stack of old letters? And aren't research publications descendants of the correspondence between scholars?<sup>13</sup> Besides, a woman writing a letter is part of the repertoire of any genre painter who is to be taken seriously; it is high time to take up the subject.

The train of thought described above is a good example of what my relationship with writing is like. Not even the writing of the introduction to my thesis can succeed without it turning into an aesthetic or conceptual project! Form and content have to be one.

So, it is worth approaching the written component of my study in the same way as its visual side. These texts are not reports, but literary experiments. When making each of them, I have asked myself: "Can one write like this? Is this acceptable in the research community?" Because my texts have been published and pre-examined along the way, the research community has also been able to have its say.

The texts in my thesis are also experiments in the sense that in them I explore various genres of writing. In the first essay "Tango Lesson – Study on the encounter of empirical science and art" the research focusses on scientific texts, even if the end result is in fact, largely conceptual art, playing with science. In the second essay ("What does silence sound like?") I practise drama writing, in the third ("Delicate wash 40 degrees") I keep a diary, and in the fourth ("A videowork as a genre picture") I review literary means with the aid of my writer guest.

The last, or fifth, text ("An archive of consolation") is the most radical of my experiments, since in it I imagine that an essay is a house in which there are different rooms, and I ask: Could a research text be constructed in the same way as a picture? Irrespective of whether the experiment is a success,



I consider the essay – or at least the question that it embodies – to be one of the end results of my research.

In qualitative-research circles corresponding experiments have been made especially by autoethnographers, whose texts may take the form of a poem, a short story, a play or a performance. Also, when their writings represent non-fiction prose, they often contain diary extracts or other autobiographical elements.<sup>14</sup> In the third essay in my thesis I actually compare my own methods with autoethnographic methods, and explore the Australian Karen Scott-Hoy's ethnographic description of the process of creating a work of art.<sup>15</sup>

Autoethnographers are, nevertheless, only one group that has set about looking for alternative ways of writing. In *Tutkija kertojana – tunteet, tutkimusprosessi ja kirjoittaminen*<sup>16</sup> (2004) Johanna Latvala, Eeva Peltonen and Tuija Saresma say there are dissident writers in several different fields of science, and the phenomenon is not even a new one; experimental research writing has been practised at least since the 1980s. Alongside humanists and social scientists, the writers mention postgraduate students at art universities who write doctoral dissertations (*väitöskirja*) about their own work.<sup>17</sup>

My thesis is not a scientific one, and I do not refer to it as a dissertation, but am I nevertheless a part of the same phenomenon?

At least it has been important for me to know that the spectrum of research writing is a wide one, and that artistic experiments are being done in the academic world, too.

Instead of experimental research writing what I write can, of course, be linked to the essay tradition. As we know, an essay literally means an experiment, and it is seen as being a genre that is more freeform than traditional research articles.<sup>18</sup> My favourite essayist, the Finnish literature researcher Merete Mazzarella, has said that the essay is also a more dialogical genre than the research article: where the authors of scientific articles seek to crush their opponents, the essayist simply wants to have a conversation.<sup>19</sup>

My texts can also be characterized as *work stories* (*verkberättelser*) in the manner of the Swede Magnus Bärtås. This concept accentuates the narrative character of my research, since a work story is "...a written or oral narrative about the forming of materials, immaterial units, situations, relations, and social practices that constitutes, or leads to, an artwork."<sup>20</sup> Bärtås, in fact, thinks that work stories have a lot in common with life stories. In both the writer tries to clarify who they are, where they come from and where they are going.<sup>21</sup>

Another distinct category is formed by the collective, polyphonic writings that I have produced with my guests, two of which have taken the form of videoworks. Of these *Reflections in a window pane* is an *ekphrasis*, i.e. a verbal translation of a pictorial rendition.<sup>22</sup> The object of the translation is the video *Two rooms and a kitchen*, and together these works form a diptych, whose parts mirror each other. *Voices of Consolation*, for its part, comes close to being a video essay, at least if we start from Bärtås's definition: "The making of a video essay means talking and listening to images."<sup>23</sup>

As I understand it, by "listening to images" Bärtås means the same as I do at the start of this letter – listening to your own sensations – but sometimes the images also answer back, quite literally. I recently experienced this at a symposium on feminist writing,<sup>24</sup> where I presented *Voices of Consolation* as an example of a collective text. After the video, I asked people to put themselves in the place of the woman dressed in black and to respond to the words of consolation with her voice, albeit in writing. As might be expected, at this event the woman spoke with a highly emancipated voice, but she also turned out to have a great understanding of art:

*From ephemeral, erased woman*  
*To transformative woman*  
*This is historical knowledge*  
*Resonant, empathetic, embodied knowledge*<sup>25</sup>

Could there be a more beautiful proof of the relevance of art in the field of research?

## The publication

As a whole my thesis can be compared to a diary that has been kept for eleven years. Each page has been filled at a certain point in that time interval, with that moment's understanding, and without knowing how the story will end. As in a diary, here, too, there are some repetitions, since I have not been able to assume that the readers of my articles have seen my previous texts.

Diaries and article-based theses, nevertheless, have one beguiling feature: you can observe the writer's development in them. This is not always immediately visible, but, as you read on and things start to be repeated, you realize that, suddenly, you are at a different point. Often, this is revealed by a detail, in my case the term "research question", which takes on various meanings and written forms in my essays.

In the first essay the written form of the term complies with the norm, and its meaning is reminiscent of the research questions asked by the medical scientists that I quote: What do the sounds of a dance studio sound like when transmitted to the womb, and what is a foetus's soundworld like in general? At the end of the text I even say that I should have gone further in my research and taken into account the effect of bone as a conductor on the foetus's hearing! Nevertheless, my most important question was how to stir the audience's imagination, how to get people to think about the heartbeat and the murmur of the blood circulation, and instead of scientific instruments what was needed for that was a drum and a vacuum cleaner.

In the second essay my research question is actually already more poetic (What does silence sound like?), and in the third I put the term in quotation marks, at the same time as I take ever greater freedoms as a writer. As my research has progressed, my approach to the research question (and to artistic research) has, thus, become more autonomous. I do not take scientific-research models literally, but I apply them freely, with a twinkle in my eye.

I hope that the diary analogy also helps you, dear reader, to accept the homespun appearance of my two articles. Here I am referring to the articles "A videowork as a genre picture" and "Lohdutusten arkisto" (the Finnish version of "An archive of consolation"), which appeared in *Ruukku* a few years ago, and for which I did the layout on my own, without a graphic designer's eye. I could, of course, have redone the layout for the texts for this publication, but it felt more honest to put in links to the original articles and make the passage of time visible.<sup>26</sup> Even when my essays have originally appeared in print, I have tried to preserve their history: "Delicate wash 40 degrees", published in *Lähikuva* magazine,<sup>27</sup> can be read as a digital replica, and on the "Tango Lesson" page there is a copy of a booklet that was shown in my exhibition at The Finnish Museum of Photography.

The publication platform for my thesis, *Research Catalogue*, is an international database of artistic research, where, in principle, anyone can publish their own articles or "expositions", as it says in RC. Added to that, under the auspices of RC there are three peer-reviewed online journals (*Journal for Artistic Research*, *Ruukku* and *Journal of Sonic Studies*), plus a number of other portals. One of these is the University of the Arts Helsinki's portal where three doctoral theses have been published prior to this one.

For me RC's most important feature is that it is possible to publish videos as well as texts there. Thus, the relationship between image, word and sound is an equal one and the reading experience becomes multisensory. I had my

own experience of this only recently, when I tested the video *Two rooms and a kitchen* at the same time as I was proofreading the related text. How different the text felt when the whirr of the washing machine began to emerge from the speakers and there was a child asleep in the corner of the screen! This is exactly how I would want my thesis to be read, using all the sensory channels.

## Results and finds

A moment ago, I said that one of the end results of my work is the essay “An archive of consolation”, or at least the question: Can a research text be constructed like a picture? The question is, of course, bound up with a broader consideration about how to write as a visual artist and, alongside the end result, this can be considered a follow-up question that requires further clarification. It is fascinating to think that we artists could be developing experimental research writing alongside humanists and social scientists. In some issues we might have a lot to give; after all, we are used to scrutinizing ourselves as informants.

Another end result in its own right is the video that goes with “An archive of consolation”. Certainly, the other works are also outcomes – not data or source material – but I see them as some kinds of interim statements of account, while *Voices of Consolation* is the sum total of all my research, the genre painter’s equivalent of the journeyman’s demonstration work.

If we think of the end results as finds, then there are more of them. As my research has gone on, I have, for instance, discovered new visual themes, such as windows and extremely slowly changing dissolves.

In art history windows are, of course, nothing new, but sometimes a well-worn visual motif can come across as fresh. This happened to me when one of the visitors to my research, the Dane Ellen Friis, saw the window that recurs in *Two rooms and a kitchen* as an hourglass.<sup>28</sup> What a great idea, a real find! Although, as I write this, I have begun to see another glass object in place of the hourglass – the nostalgic snow globe. This, too, is a find, a new addition to the iconography of windows.

Dissolves are nothing new, either, but a standard way of marking the passage of time in film narrative. I myself considered dissolves mostly to be cheap effects, until I realized that, if the fade is sufficiently long, they turn into double-exposures. For example, in *Two rooms and a kitchen* a leisurely transition from the window to the living room causes interior and exterior to mingle so that the Christmas tree combines with the branches of the tree seen from the

window and snow falls on the floor. As my research has progressed, I have thus begun to see dissolves in a new light, as a spatial element.

Along with the windows and dissolves the poetics of my research includes vacuum cleaners and other household appliances. Even my camera has become a kind of domestic appliance, one that has its own fixed place in the kitchen doorway, and which I click on as effortlessly as the coffee machine.

Recently, however, the camera has been in the cleaning cupboard, since I have got hooked on Internet picture archives. It began with Hammershøi and got worse when I began looking for old photographs for the epilogue to my thesis. The last discovery in my research is, in fact, the Finnish village photographer Frans Viljamaa (1888–1983), who photographed in Mäntsälä in the 1910s and 1920s. More than 1,600 of his glass negatives are still extant, and among them are some superbly double-exposed plates.<sup>29</sup>

## Afterpiece

The epilogue to my thesis is thus not a postscript, but an afterpiece, an eleven-minute video in which I return to the visual themes of my research. The title of the work is *Transparencies from the past*, but like a proper epilogue the piece also refers to the future, to my dreams of continuing to work on artistic research and historical materials.

In the video eight family photographs taken by Viljamaa have been combined with a window that I have filmed in an empty house constructed in the 1920s. Not all the pictures are double-exposed, but because they change in half-minute dissolves, the window is almost constantly visible beneath them. And since there is also a thin net curtain in front of the window, through which we can see an overgrown garden, the image track is multiply translucent.

The work's soundtrack is also multi-layered. The first level is formed by the sounds of nature, which were taped on the spot where the window was filmed. The second level is based on archive material, on old reel-to-reel tapes, on which the Mäntsälä resident Osmo Viljanen (1919–1999) interviews local people at the turn of the 1960s and 1970s.<sup>30</sup>

I got to use the tapes when I enquired from the Mäntsälä museum whether there were voices from the region that suited Viljamaa's photographs. Nevertheless, it was clear to me right from the start that I would not use the recordings as they were, but that I would create a buzz of conversation out of them; a *verbal chiaroscuro*, as the French composer and philosopher Michel Chion would say.<sup>31</sup> I initially thought of doing this by having several different people



talk over each other, but in the end only one person was chosen for my work: Toini Palkkimäki, born in 1899, who Viljanen interviewed about the 1918 Civil War. This subject had been on my mind ever since the graphic designer Jorma Hinkka used the word “wound” about the cracks in photographs.

The verbal chiaroscuro of my epilogue has thus been formed by overlaying speech by one and the same person. Because the interviewer’s questions have been cut, the voice can be thought of as an internal hum of conversation. Finnish speakers will make out some of it, but to those who speak no Finnish the end result is totally abstract.

Thanks to Tatu Virtamo, there is a further third level on the soundtrack, the church bells. It was when we were listening to Palkkimäki speak that Virtamo actually began talking about the funeral bells that he had recorded the previous autumn, when bells were tolled around the world in response to the bombing of Aleppo.<sup>32</sup> I remembered what a great impact that sound had had on me, when I first heard it in Helsinki in the middle of the afternoon rush hour, and cold shivers ran up and down my back. Thus, a small reference to today’s civil wars was built into my epilogue.

Before the funeral bells we tried out other sounds in the background, even the whirr of a film projector, since I saw the window as a projection screen and thought that the photographs would thus constitute a ‘movie’. Filmmaking is not that simple, and not even the sound made the images come to life, but I soon found a new metaphor for the work – the magic-lantern displays that were the predecessor of film. These used images painted on glass plates, while some magic lanterns even had a mechanism that made cross-dissolves possible.<sup>33</sup>

Finding the right metaphor is important, since it is good to know what you are making – a film, a genre painting or a magic-lantern display. To the viewer that metaphor is a guide to reading that at best is already contained in the title of the work. When I began calling my epilogue *Transparencies*, I was thinking of magic-lantern slides, but I did not know that the word is also used for transparent tapestries. In retrospect, I think the double meaning is wonderful, especially since those tapestries are often hung in windows.

Apart from translucent objects, in my epilogue I return to the theme of the family. On this occasion, however, this is not my own family, but a group of anonymous people from a hundred years ago. I feel this puts my own pictures in a new perspective, as part of a generational continuum. Perhaps it makes them even more like genre paintings, which do not portray recognizable people – me and my children – but mothers and children in general.

The theme of the family is further combined with the theme of class, which, by the way, can already be seen in my first videowork *Pure*. Because of their black-and-white images the works also resemble each other visually. It seems that the circle is completed, and I have returned to the wellsprings of my research. Nevertheless, we should not make the mistake of thinking of the transparencies projected onto the window as being a summing up of my thesis. No, the word “epilogue” does not mean a summary, but rather it is something quite different, a scene in which the protagonist stands on a station platform, suitcase in hand... Or perhaps the epilogue could be compared to an afterimage, which is left vibrating on the retina after a visual perception.

*Best wishes,  
Elinor*

PS.

If you want to reply to my letter, it's easy. Just touch the top margin of the page and select the word “comments” from the alternatives that pop up. This opens another new window, a new little rectangle, on which you can write your message.<sup>34</sup>

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Translation: Michael Garner

## Notes

- 1 The first part of my thesis (the videowork *Tango Lesson* and essay “Tango Lesson – *Study on the encounter of empirical science and art*”) was shown in the Project space at the Finnish Museum of Photography 10.6–30.8.2009. The second part (“What does silence sound like?”) was published in the launch issue of *Journal for Artistic Research (JAR)* 0 in spring 2011. The videowork *Room* that goes with the article was also shown in the Studio at Kunsthalle Helsinki 6.–31.3.2010. The third part of my thesis is formed by the works *Two rooms and a kitchen* and *Reflections in a window pane* plus the essay “Delicate wash 40 degrees”. The essay appeared in the artistic-research issue of *Läbikuva* magazine (3/2013), and the videos were once again shown in the Studio at Kunsthalle Helsinki (28.4–3.6.2012). The last two parts of the study (“Videowork as a genre picture” and “An archive of consolation”) have been published in their entirety in the online artistic-research journal *Ruukku* (issues 2 and 4). The videowork *Morning* contained in the fourth article has also been shown at the Aboa Vetus & Ars Nova museum in Turku (Turku Biennial 2013/ Idyll).
- 2 The picture shows Hammershøi’s painting *Open Doors, Strandgade 30*, from 1905.
- 3 The term “genre painting” comes from the French word *genre* (kind, type, sort) and has been used since the 18th century. Initially, artists specializing in painting flowers and animals were also called genre painters, but in the 19th century genre painting was limited to paintings of everyday life. At the same time, the comic depictions of ordinary people and middle-class home interiors of the 17th century Netherlands began to be thought of as the basic types of genre paintings. Genre painting was popular until the end of the 19th century and also spread to Finland via the Düsseldorf Academy. (*Taiteen pikkujättiläinen* 1995, 362–363.)
- 4 *Taiteellinen kokeellisuus/ kokeellinen taiteellisuus tutkimuksena* (Sibelius Academy 5.5.2012). The theme of the event was experiment in art and research.
- 5 The comment was made by artist-researcher Piia Rossi.
- 6 The stage for this was Nordic Summer University’s winter symposium in Aarhus 31.1–2.2.2011.
- 7 Elo 2013. Mika Elo was the pre-examiner for my research in 2009–2013.
- 8 Katajavuori, Riina (2013) “The Secret of Breakfast”. In the exhibition catalogue Silja Lehtonen (ed.) *Turku Biennial 2013/ Idyll*, 90–93. Turku: Aboa Vetus & Ars Nova.
- 9 The Nordic Summer University (Nordisk sommaruniversitet, NSU) is a Nordic network founded in 1950, consisting of study circles in different disciplines. I have belonged to the artistic-research study circle since 2010.
- 10 I use the term “lab work” as I have heard it used in everyday speech, as a synonym for experimenting together. In theatre history the term takes our thoughts to the Laboratory Theatre of the Pole Jerzy Grotowski (1933–1999) and to other experimental groups whose primary aim was not to produce performances, but to explore the actor’s work (Schino 2009, 7–11).
- 11 Kantonen 2017, 13.

- 12 My pen-friend is the English Myna Trustram, whose voice can be heard in *Reflections in a window pane*. The essay based on our correspondence, “Windows – a correspondence between Elina Saloranta and Myna Trustram”, will be published in the anthology edited by Trustram, Luisa Greenfield and Eduardo Abrantes, *Being There: Exploring the local through artistic research*, in winter 2018 (NSU Press).
- 13 Scientific publications had their beginnings in the correspondence between scholars in the 17th century (Bazerman 2000, 24). In artistic research the letter form has been used, for instance, by the Israeli Itay Ziv in his doctoral thesis *Disabled Art – Escapism as Artistic Tactic* (University of the Arts Helsinki, Academy of Fine Arts 2016).
- 14 Autoethnography is an approach in which social phenomena are investigated through the life of the researcher (Latvala, Peltonen & Saresma 2004, 25–26). To get an idea of autoethnographers’ literary experiments, see, e.g. the collection of articles edited by Arthur Bochner and Carolyn Ellis *Ethnographically Speaking: Autoethnography, Literature and Aesthetics* (Altamira Press 2002).
- 15 Scott-Hoy, Karen (2003) Form Carries Experience: A Story of the Art and Form of Knowledge. *Qualitative Inquiry* 9:2, 268–280.
- 16 The book’s title *Tutkija kertojana – tunteet, tutkimusprosessi ja kirjoittaminen* could be translated as “The researcher as narrator – emotions, the research process and writing”.
- 17 Latvala, Peltonen & Saresma 2004, 13–16.
- 18 The word “essay” comes from the French *essai*, which means an attempt, experiment or test. At the start of the 20th century the word *koelma* [a structured trial or test] was suggested as a Finnish counterpart to “essay”. (Riikonen 1990, 17.)
- 19 Mazzarella 1992, 173.
- 20 Bärtås 2010, 7.
- 21 Bärtås 2010, 12–13.
- 22 The word *ekphrasis* comes from the Greek *ek* (out) and *frazein* (to tell, declare or utter). The classic example of *ekphrasis* is Homer’s description of Achilles’s shield in the *Iliad*. In the 18th century, *ekphrasis* was limited to verbal descriptions of visual art, but, recently, the concept has again been expanded so that we can talk, for instance, about an ekphrastic rendering of a film or dance. (Mikkonen 2005, 262–266.)
- 23 Bärtås 2010, 14. Bärtås borrows the idea from the German Harun Farocki (1944–2014), who in his videowork *Schnittstelle* (1995) relates how he learned to write voice-overs: “I spoke to the images and heard things from them.” (Bärtås 2010, 77–78.)
- 24 *Feminist Writings*, University of Helsinki 26.–27.5.2017.
- 25 The text was anonymous. The original Finnish said: “*Katoavasta, poispyyhitystä naisesta transformatiiviseksi naiseksi/ Tämä on historiallista tietoa / Välittyvää, välittävää, ruumiillista tietoa.*”
- 26 The layout for the English version of “Lohdutusten arkisto” (“An archive of consolation”) has, nevertheless, been done later on, since the text was only published in Finnish in *Ruukku*. For the same reason, the Finnish article does not have an “English” link, which all the other pages have.



- 27 *Lähikuva* (close-up) is an academic journal focussing on film and media culture. My essay was published in issue 3/2013, which took as its theme artistic research.
- 28 See the section “Snow in an hourglass” in the essay “Delicate wash 40 degrees” (in the *Lähikuva* magazine layout, page 66).
- 29 Here “village photographer” means someone who lived in the countryside and practised photography as a sideline, photographing their own home district, mostly people and buildings. The first village photographers appeared in Finland in the 1890s, but their golden age was the 1920s and 1930s. (Sinisalo 1995, 62–64.) Frans Viljamaa was a farmer from Mäntsälä, who began taking photographs in the 1910s and carried on until the end of the 1920s (*Kuka kuvasi? Suomalaiset valokuvaajat 1842–1950*). After Viljamaa’s death his relatives donated his negatives to Mäntsälä museum, which digitized the pictures and published them in the Finna ([www.finna.fi](http://www.finna.fi)) and Muistaja ([www.muistaja.fi](http://www.muistaja.fi)) databases. I got onto Viljamaa’s trail when I did a search with the word *tuplavalottunut* (double-exposed) in Finna.
- 30 I think Osmo Viljanen used the reel-to-reel tape recorder in the same way as village photographers used the camera, recording the life of their own home regions. Viljanen’s tapes are now in the possession of the Mäntsälä Society (Mäntsälä-Seura).
- 31 Chion borrows the word *chiaroscuro* from painting, and by *verbal chiaroscuro* he means “an image of human speech, in which at one moment we understand what is said, and at another we understand less, and at times nothing at all” (Chion 1992, 106).
- 32 October 12, 2016, Kallio Church in Helsinki began playing funeral bells for the victims of the bombing of Aleppo every day at 17:00. The campaign got the name *Bells For Aleppo*, spread around the world, and carried on until UN Day, October 24. Tatu Virtamo recorded the bells October 20 in the tower of the Church of The Cross in Lahti.
- 33 Huhtamo 2000, 28.
- 34 Writing and reading comments requires registration with the Research Catalogue (<https://www.researchcatalogue.net/portal/register>).