

[There are few dozens of people at Cirko, with papers in their hands, gazes directed towards the papers]

Dear reader,

I am glad that you are here, and reading this. I am addressing most of the attendees personally, but wrote this letter in case that you are here and I didnt anticipate it.

[The readers breathe]

This letter is a performance.

If it is ok for you, you will become its audience, along with the rest of the readers. You receive the letter and take part in its performance by reading it.

[The readers breathe, some of them glance around]

If you consent, I hope we could read this performance together. It is easy - it goes like this, lightly, a line after another and before you know it, you have reached the end of this page. When you get there, I ask you to put the letter down for a moment and wait until everyone is at the same point[.]

This will be repeated in the end of each page.

When you are ready, you can together,
simultaneously
take the next page and continue reading.

[The readers lay down the papers. An expectant silence appears and disappears and papers are lifted again].

So.

How does art make an impact?

Or we ask first: impact on who?

If we want to impact the audience, we ask first (and you have been asking):
what is an audience?

[The air continues all the way to the ceiling of the space. It moves unnoticeably, directed by the ventilator, the lungs, gravity. When travelling through the air, light is only slightly refracted and lands on surfaces as colours.]

Wolfgang Iser, a literature and reception aesthetics scholar, proposed that we can speak on one hand of an *implied reader* of a work of literature, and on the other of its *actual readers*. The implied reader is the one which the writer imagines when writing (even if unknowingly). The text contains this implication to a specific type of recipient. Often the implied reader resembles the writer; they are equipped with the same kind of education, cultural background and so on.

Any work of art or event could be approached with this thought - for example this festival and the works in its program. What kind of audience have the authors (and the curator) implied? In what age, with what kind of education or cultural background, with what kind of identity do I fit the implication? Who are we?

[The readers ponder, evaluate, change position. One is enthusiastic, one bored, one hurries past the parentheses. The mental states of the rest are hard to figure out. But there is some sort of subtle, barely perceptible energy or presence in the room.]

And yet each audience is different. Unpredictable. A surprise. The author cannot know, what the audience will experience. The audience knows even less. They do not know the contents of the next page, or what the performance will transform them into. "Art is to be around something that I do not yet know, but can anticipate". Their task is to prepare to be unprepared. They expose themselves for an impact.

[When reaching the end of the page the readers lay the papers down again].

When exposed one might forget their opinion. One might forget identity politics and the prevailing power structures of the society. One might forget oneself. Or that self might change, become a part.

What if at the moment
of audience appearing
a new, fragile, common body is born
one rising like Prometheus above the individuals
carrying the unforeseen responsibility of its privileged position

[The body is moving in the space]

The audience body has organs and members.

It is a manyheaded, breathing, receptive, reserved, boundary-stretching
mythical creature.

A possible monster.

[The hearts of the body beat, its lungs pump the air, its fingers radiate energy. The body thinks as presence, transfers of attention, relations. The body enjoys its mortality. The body reads the situation. The body desires. The body needs to pee. The body is flesh and blood]

The audience body looks into the space through the eyes of its members. It rests below the personalities of its members, as shared force.

It is the ghost of performance.

[Forced by the words, too fast, the body differentiates into readers.
They reach the end of the page, lay down the papers].

Hmm.

The last page. Prometheus descends into a mere word on paper.

You know, the attempt to calculate impact creeps me out. During past years, within the Baltic Circle art works, I have eaten in the dark, researched the sanctity of the urban space, visited homes, had sauna and swam, read in a library and taken part in a larceny of art, a wake and a sijdsååbbar village meeting. My heart has been touched countless times. How to calculate that? Even the thought is ridiculous. I am what I am as an artist, researcher, friend, partner and father due to this festival. That is why the questions Pekka poses matter and that is why I can dislike the works on the festival if I want. I will attend nevertheless.

I want to have an impact by attending, audiencing (yes, the verb). By donating my time on following others, and what they find important.

[Pause.]

That is why I will end the letter in this thought:

The audience makes an impact by becoming an audience. It is the responsibility of the attendees to be exposed.

When the fragile audience body has arrived, art makes an impact.

[]

Yours,
Tuomas

Sources:

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