

Artistic Research Seminar with an *open keynote lecture* and *closed program for invited participants*

## The Pathic Body and the Uncanny in the Performing Arts and Research

February 28 – March 1, 2019

Theatre Academy Uniarts Helsinki

Haapaniemenkatu 6, Helsinki

The seminar explores the pathic body and the uncanny in performing arts through the perspective opened by the research project *Body and the Other* that is conducted at the Performing Arts Research Centre of the Theatre Academy, Uniarts Helsinki, Tutke. The project aims at articulating the uncanny and to advance the interconnection between performing arts, artistic research, the humanities and the sciences. Through the concepts of the uncanny and the pathic the project scrutinizes thresholds of sensory experience and the impact of the unexpected. The project aims at unearthing the ethics and aesthetics of strange experience and specifically addresses three questions: what kind of corporeal experience the strange introduces, what kind of understanding on intercorporeality the strange engenders and how art can function as a paradigm for uncanny experience. The seminar introduces the specific research themes the researchers and artists involved in the project work with. The core group includes professor Lisa Blackman, who works at the intersection of body studies, affect studies, and media and cultural theory, docent Marja-Liisa Honkasalo, who is a cultural anthropologist with a focus on the edge of experience and vulnerability, researcher Sami Santanen, whose focus is on continental philosophy, professor Leena Rouhiainen who works in the area of artistic research and the problem of embodiment as well as performance artists Irene Kajo and Teemu Päivinen. The seminar consists of lectures and workshops. The seminar is part of the *Body and the Other* project ([www.uniarts.fi/en/ruumis-jatoinen](http://www.uniarts.fi/en/ruumis-jatoinen)).

### PROGRAM

Thursday February 28, 2019

Auditorium 1

9.15 Tuija Kokkonen: Opening of the seminar.

9.15 – 10.45 OPEN LECTURE: Lisa Blackman: ***Towards new forms of morphological imagination: attuning to the weird and the strange.***

10.45 – 11.00 Break

11.00 – 11.10 Marja-Liisa Honkasalo: Introduction to the *Body and the Other* research project.

11.10 – 11.45 Introduction to the ***Phone booth – an uncanny connection*** by Teemu Päivinen & Marja-Liisa Honkasalo, and Irene Kajo & Ida Ho: ***some notions about body, touch, ethics and their relation to art.***

11.45 – 13.15 Extended lunch (own cost) with visits to the ***Phone booth*** (at Tori entrance hall).

13.15 – 14.15 Marja-Liisa Honkasalo: ***Pathic body and relationality – possession, ancestors and other beings.***

14.15 – 16.00 Coffee break and Free meeting with Lisa Blackman and the *Body and the Other* research group in room 531.



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Friday March 1  
Room 531

9.00 – 10.30 Teemu Päivinen, Ursula Hallas, Miro Mantere and Eero Yrjölä: Participatory performance ***Unfamiliar dialogues*** in room 532. (Note: the performance starts at 9.00, no late entry.)

10.30 – 10.45 Break

10.45 – 11.45 Sami Santanen: ***Perception, desire, hallucination.***

11.45 – 13.00 Lunch (own cost)

13.00 – 14.00 Conversation on the ***Phone booth – an uncanny connection, Unfamiliar dialogues*** and Ida Ho's experiences about body & other by Teemu Päivinen, Marja-Liisa Honkasalo, Ursula Hallas, Miro Mantere, Eero Yrjölä, Irene Kajo, Thomas Hamberg and Satu Mäkinen.

14.00 – 14.30 Coffee break in 531

14.30 – 16.30 Reading seminar with Lisa Blackman (material will be sent to participants beforehand).

## ABSTRACTS AND BIOS

Lisa Blackman: ***Towards new forms of morphological imagination: attuning to the weird and the strange.***

The aim of this presentation is to contextualise and explore Vivian Sobchack's calls for new forms of morphological imagination that challenge normative conceptions of bodily integrity. This call comes from an article published in the journal *Body & Society* in a special issue on Bodily Integrity where Sobchack challenges normative conceptions of bodily integrity through her own experience of losing a leg due to a cancer diagnosis, subsequent phantom limb pain and her attempts to incorporate a prosthetic limb. As a result of this process, she argues that we need to think in and through our bodily experience (what she calls phenomenological autobiography) in new ways to open to what exceeds normative conceptions of bodily integrity. This requires new imaginaries, new narratives, new practices which can address what she calls the paradoxes of embodiment and its alien, strange nature. Lisa will develop this argument within the context of her research into anomalistic experiences; those that challenge strict borders and boundaries between self and other, and that often register as weird, strange, alien and sometimes as signs and symptoms of psychopathology. She will offer some concepts and tools that might be useful for artistic research and practice in this area exploring arguments within body studies and affect studies to help shape a new commonsense for the future.

**Lisa Blackman** is Professor of Media and Cultural Studies in the Department of Media and Communications, Goldsmiths, University of London. She works at the intersection of body studies, affect studies, and media and cultural theory and is particularly interested in subjectivity, affect, the body and embodiment. She has published four books, most recently *Immaterial Bodies: Affect, Embodiment, Mediation* (2012, Sage). Her other books include *Hearing Voices: Embodiment and Experience* (2001, Free Association Books); *Mass Hysteria: Critical Psychology and Media Studies* (with Valerie Walkerdine; 2001, Palgrave); and *The Body: The Key Concepts* (2008,



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Berg). Her work in the area of embodiment and voice hearing has been recognised and commended for its innovative approach to mental health research and it has been acclaimed by the Hearing Voices Network, Intervoice, and has been taken up in professional psychiatric context. She is the co-editor of the journal, *Subjectivity* (with Valerie Walkerdine, Palgrave) and the Editor of the journal *Body & Society* (Sage). She is particularly interested in phenomena which have puzzled scientists, artists, literary writers and the popular imagination for centuries, including automatic writing, voice hearing, suggestion and automatism. Lisa is part of a Wellcome-funded project "[Hearing the Voice](#)" and will be specifically collaborating on a sub-project "Voices Beyond the Self" to run from 2017-2020.

Riikka Theresa Innanen, Antti Nykyri and Leena Rouhiainen: ***Performing with breath and air*** (cancelled)

The proposal introduces a project that explores breathing and air through a phenomenological orientation to artistic research. In so doing, it engages with features of what phenomenologist Susan Kozel has introduced as process phenomenology. Here phenomenology is considered to occur between philosophy and performance as a processual practice that performs. Kozel argues process phenomenology to be a subjective, embodied and situated but also a critical, processual and exploratory practice that "palpates the edges of what exists, and the categories already in place for understanding the matter of experience." (Kozel 2015, 56). Especially in arts research aside from writing, phenomenology "translates, transposes and even transgresses lived experience" into "drawings, murmurs" or other gestures when exploring affective and sensory embodiment (Kozel 2015, 54). Following these lines of thinking, the presented project aims at further articulating suggestibility and inter-corporeality through what relating to breath and air engender.

More concretely the project scrutinizes immediate embodied relations with environment-specific moments of breathing and being in touch with air. The sensibility these relations generate is extended by interlinking them to other written and visual views about breathing, air and the atmosphere. This is done through producing written as well as audio-visual translations with which an Internet-based artistic work is constructed. The work is meant to stimulate further generation of articulations of breath and air and extensions of inter-corporeality. The work is constructed in collaboration with choreographer and video-grapher Riikka Theresa Innanen and sound artist Antti Nykyri. The proposed presentation at the conference will introduce the artistic process and especially understanding about corporeality that the project generated. It engages with reflecting how artistic practice that interweaves choreography, sound and media art can extend and change our ways of relating to and understanding breathing, air and corporeality.

Dancer-choreographer **Leena Rouhiainen** is professor in artistic research at the Theatre Academy (Uniarts Helsinki). **Riikka Innanen** is a visual artist and choreographer with an international profile and interest in social activism ([www.riikkainnanen.com](http://www.riikkainnanen.com)). **Antti Nykyri** is a Helsinki-based sound artist with a strong record especially in the field of performing arts and experimental work ([www.linkedin.com/in/nykyri/](http://www.linkedin.com/in/nykyri/))

Thomas Hamberg, Irene Kajo and Satu Mäkinen: ***Power farm***

*Power farm* (Voimafarmi) belongs to the Idaho group. It is a fictional coaching company for fine art professionals. *Power farm* deals with misuse of power and the myth of breaking boundaries as an artist and when doing art. It also deals with violence and the culture of silence and quieting. The piece includes a website, educational videos, podcasts, field research and live performances. See: [www.voimafarmi.fi](http://www.voimafarmi.fi)

Idaho is a performance art cohort that operates at the margins of art-making. Since 2010, it has developed its own expressive language and conceptions of the world. Characteristic of the artistic practice of Idaho is the mixing of different art forms, the inclusion of research and



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philosophy and a strong visual aesthetics. The basis of working is in a multi-disciplinary and cross-artistic approach. The following members are part of the Ida ho group: visual and performance artist **Thomas Hamberg**, theatre director and pedagogue **Satu Mäkinen** (MPhil) and performance artist **Irene Kajo** (MA in Theatre). <https://idaho.fi>

Teemu Päivinen, Marja-Liisa Honkasalo and members of Suomen Moniääniset ry: ***Phone booth - an uncanny connection***

This participatory performance takes place in a phone booth for one viewer at a time. The participants make a call to hear a personal, uncanny experience from someone and maybe share an uncanny experience of their own. Teemu Päivinen and Marja-Liisa Honkasalo introduce the structure and background of the *Phone booth* before the performances begin on Thursday. On Friday Päivinen and Honkasalo facilitate a conversation on the performance and the experiences of the participants. The phone calls are recorded as research material for Teemu Päivinen and Marja-Liisa Honkasalo's research on sharing and reception of the uncanny experiences, within the Body and the Other -project.

Live Artist **Teemu Päivinen** and his working group engage in processes of community art and Live Art related to hearing voices and experiencing intercorporeality. Together the participants observe the strangeness of the uncanny in the movement between the intruding and the invited.

**Marja-Liisa Honkasalo's** research focuses on the edge of experience. She has carried out ethnographic research on pain, illness and meaning of death from the first person's viewpoints. In her most recent research project 'Mind and the Other' she studied people's uncanny experiences of voices, visions and invisible presences. The results challenge several scientific theoretical and methodological ways to understand human experience, mind and the body as exposed, vulnerable and intersubjective. This shapes an important ground for the collaboration with the arts and artistic studies. Previously she has held a Professorship at the University of Linköping, Sweden, University of Turku and visiting Professor at the Università di Roma, La Sapienza. She has been visiting scholar at Harvard and recently, at the University of Stanford.

Teemu Päivinen, Ursula Hallas, Miro Mantere and Eero Yrjölä: ***Unfamiliar dialogues***

*Unfamiliar dialogues* is a participatory Live Art performance that examines the uncanny experience in/as a social situation. *Unfamiliar dialogue* studies the possibility of producing a mental state in which the participants can safely throw themselves into the mode of associational flow. The aim of the performance is to create a shared space in which the thoughts, experiences, sensations and feelings – shared by the participants – create something new and unknown. *Unfamiliar dialogues* proposes a playful relationship with the language and its meanings.

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Marja-Liisa Honkasalo: ***Pathic body and relationality – possession, ancestors and other beings***

Thinking lived impossibilities with Waldenfels is the starting point for this paper on ancestral possession. As an anthropologist, my aim is to ask how the pathic, something highly abstract and considered universal, is shaped and 'made' in cultural contexts. The shared and embodied presence of an ancestor is, at least for western medicine and therefore modern public understanding, an example of limit experience *par excellence*. However, other ways of understanding exist across the cultures. Through an ethnographic field work in two West-African villages, a description of possession ritual and the first- person experiences of people who became possessed by ancestors, my aim is to discuss how the body is open and an intersubjective vehicle



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to the domains of experience and knowledge of other lives, consisting of “historical moments and levels of cosmos, catching them up and embodying them”, as the anthropologist Janice Boddy puts it.

To become possessed demands exposure to multimodal sensuous perception, responsiveness and intersubjective relationships in terms of movement, other people and non-humans, materiality, time and rhythm. Multiple familiar, ordinary and simultaneously divine objects and environmental settings constitute the necessary relational context of the practice. This is what is visible for the researcher. In this paper I argue that what is unseen brings about relationality, about processes which mediate between the pathic as a universal and specific condition shaped by its social and cultural contexts. In addition to knowledge, the pathic calls for capacity to and necessity of being in relation with others.

**Marja-Liisa Honkasalo**’s research focuses on the edge of experience. She has carried out ethnographic research on pain, illness and meaning of death from the first person’s viewpoints. In her most recent research project ‘Mind and the Other’ she studied people’s uncanny experiences of voices, visions and invisible presences. The results challenge several scientific theoretical and methodological ways to understand human experience, mind and the body as exposed, vulnerable and intersubjective. This shapes an important ground for the collaboration with the arts and artistic studies. Previously she has held a Professorship at the University of Linköping, Sweden, University of Turku and visiting Professor at the Università di Roma, La Sapienza. She has been visiting scholar at Harvard and recently, at the University of Stanford.

Sami Santanen: ***Perception, desire, hallucination***

In my presentation I address the phenomenon of hallucination. Traditionally, hallucinations are understood as perceptions that do not correspond to the entities of the external world – in other words, hallucination is a perception without an object. However, this kind of understanding is a debated issue. Merleau-Ponty has criticized it from the standpoint of the phenomenology of perception. Lacan takes a step further because hallucination should not be approached from the point of view of the *perceiving* subject (*percipiens*), which, according to him, is the way Merleau-Ponty proceeds. As to himself, he focuses on the *perceived* (object) (*perceptum*). The idea is to detach the thinking of hallucination this way from the problem of perception to the psychoanalytic context and to bring new elements to discussion, such as desire, *jouissance* (enjoyment) and the unconscious.

**Sami Santanen** is an independent researcher in aesthetics and philosophy in Helsinki. Since mid-1980’s he has taught aesthetics and contemporary philosophy at the University of Helsinki, University of the Arts Helsinki and the Aalto University. His interests include contemporary continental philosophy, phenomenology, German idealism, and psychoanalytic tradition. He has studied e.g. the evil, the body, space, aesthetic thinking and the concept of touch (Sami Santanen: “Dimensions of Touch” in Mika Elo & Miika Luoto (eds.) [Figures of Touch. Sense, Technics, Body](#) ).



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