

PUBLICS

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Annual Report

PUBLICS

2018

PUBLICS

PUBLICS (formerly Checkpoint Helsinki) is a curatorial agency with a dedicated library, event space and reading room in Vallila. The organisation explores a “work together” institutional model with multiple overlapping objectives, thematic strands and collaborations. The newly established space not only functions as the office, but as a space for library and its talks, events and performances in collaboration with other partners in the city, nationally and internationally. The space works as an educational platform and a critical agency where artists, students and communities are invited to engage with social issues, as well as gain and share knowledge through various discourses. These initiatives develop in parallel with longer-term curatorial projects.

The organisation collaborates and supports other art initiatives/artists who share the investment in questioning the public life of art and its relevance in Helsinki, regionally and internationally. PUBLICS is driven by the ambition to recognize changes within society and create connections between various different groups by providing an open and ethically led platform for other creative synergies. PUBLICS supports critical conversation, debate, and dialogues as ways and means of discussing art, politics and its public life, whilst engaging in (non-) academic, education and learning, and opening up discourses to wider audiences. Strengthening the audience work also contributes towards reaching the general public including different age groups, people from various backgrounds and social groups. Connecting international protagonists with the local art scene adds outside perspectives whilst insuring the discussion not fixating only upon local viewpoints.

The operative principles are:

1. PUBLICS is discursive and instigates dialogue between local, regional and international art
2. PUBLICS commissions, produces and curates durational, long-term contemporary public art
3. PUBLICS recognizes the need to identify, activate and actualize diverse publics for contemporary art
4. PUBLICS is an educational, civic and public resource
5. PUBLICS is dedicated to debating, curating, imagining and making contemporary art in, with, and in relation to its multiple publics

ACTIVITIES

In 2018 PUBLICS nurtured a large dedicated mixed publics and encouraged a wide range of participation through the PUBLICS Talks and Event program. The organisation also provided both support and resources for others by becoming a host for their public events. A “para-hosting” strategy was launched to help various other art initiatives in need of space in the city and helping to widen inclusivity across the arts and culture by bringing different audiences together. In addition to Parahosting, PUBLICS also co-hosted many gatherings, listening sessions and workshops with various art practitioners, community groups and audiences as a means of supportings and advancing discussion, awareness and diversity in art and culture. In 2018 PUBLICS commissioned four works including *The Mermaids: Mirror Worlds* by the Karrabing Film Collective in Merikerho, AO by Lucy Raven in the Finnish Science Center Heureka, PUBLICS Library by Julia in Vallila and *Eat the Rich* (PUBLICS sign) by Liam Gillick outside of PUBLICS in Sturenkatu 37-41.



Liam Gillick: *Eat the Rich* (2018). Photo: Noora Lehtovuori

TIMELINE

PUBLICS Commissions:

- 10–15 Apr, The Karrabing Film Collective: *The Mermaids: Mirror Worlds*
- 30 May, PUBLICS Library by Julia
- 30 May, *Eat the Rich* by Liam Gillick
- 18–19 Aug, *The Optics of Space*: Lucy Raven, James N. Kienitz Wilkins

PUBLICS Talks:

- 7 Feb, Jeanne van Heeswijk
- 28 Mar, Lumi Tan
- 10 Apr, The Karrabing Film Collective, Annie Fletcher, Vivian Zihlerl
- 18 Apr, Maryam Jafri
- 9 May, Eduardo Padilha & Harold Offeh
- 30 May, Gediminas Urbonas
- 13 Jun, Bassam El Baroni & Nora Sternfeld
- 24 Oct, Chris Kraus
- 20 Nov, Barbara Holub

PUBLICS Events:

- 14 May, *Intervention In Urban Space* book launch
- 8–11 May, Eduardo Padilha & Harold Offeh
- 23–26 May, *Space Invaders VI – Living Together*
- 30 May, Publics Library launch (Kathrin Böhm, Liam Gillick, Julia, Rab-Rab)
- 31 May, *ALTERNATIVE AI'S* (Jussi Parikka and Shannon Mattern with Samir Bhowmik, Tuomas A. Laitinen & Jenna Sutela)
- 6 Jun, Russian Bar: *Why Relocate?* (Ilya Budraitskis & Sezgin Boynik)
- 15 Jun, Bonaventure (Soraya Lutangu)
- 25–28 Oct, Chris Kraus: *What I Couldn't Write (Films from 1982–1995)*

PUBLICS Parahosting:

- 17–21 Sept, WASTED (Roy Boswell, Laura Jantunen, Sonya Lindfors, Pauliina Sjöberg, Kristian Palmu, Anni Puolakka)
- 27 Sept, ANTI Live Art Prize talk (All The Queens Men, Nic Green, Jeanne van Heeswijk, Sonya Lindfors)
- 17 Oct, *The Midden* book launch
- 21 Nov, *Prison Outside #2* seminar
- 23–25 Nov, Bookies book fair and two-day public lecture series
- 5 Dec, *S'lim Helsinki* issue launch

Other Activities:

- 5 Mar, Lecture for Aalto University MA students
- 13 Mar, Lecture for Aalto University CuMMA students
- 24 Apr, Lecture for Academy of Fine Art MA students (Public art commissions by HUS)
- 25 Apr, Listening Session #1: for Helsinki based artists and curators
- 26 Apr, Lecture for Aalto University & Academy of Fine Arts MA students
- 30 May, Listening Session #2: for Helsinki based artists and curators
- 14 Sept, Open Studios, Helsinki Design Week
- 9 Oct, Lecture for Academy of Fine Art MA students (As an Artist in Society)
- 18 Oct, Aalto University MA students (Contemporary Art and its Social Context)
- 25 Oct, Chris Kraus: Masterclass in Personal & Critical Writing

PROGRAM

PUBLICS COMMISSIONS

THE KARRABING FILM COLLECTIVE

In collaboration with Van Abbemuseum, I.M.A Brisbane and Frontiers Imaginaries

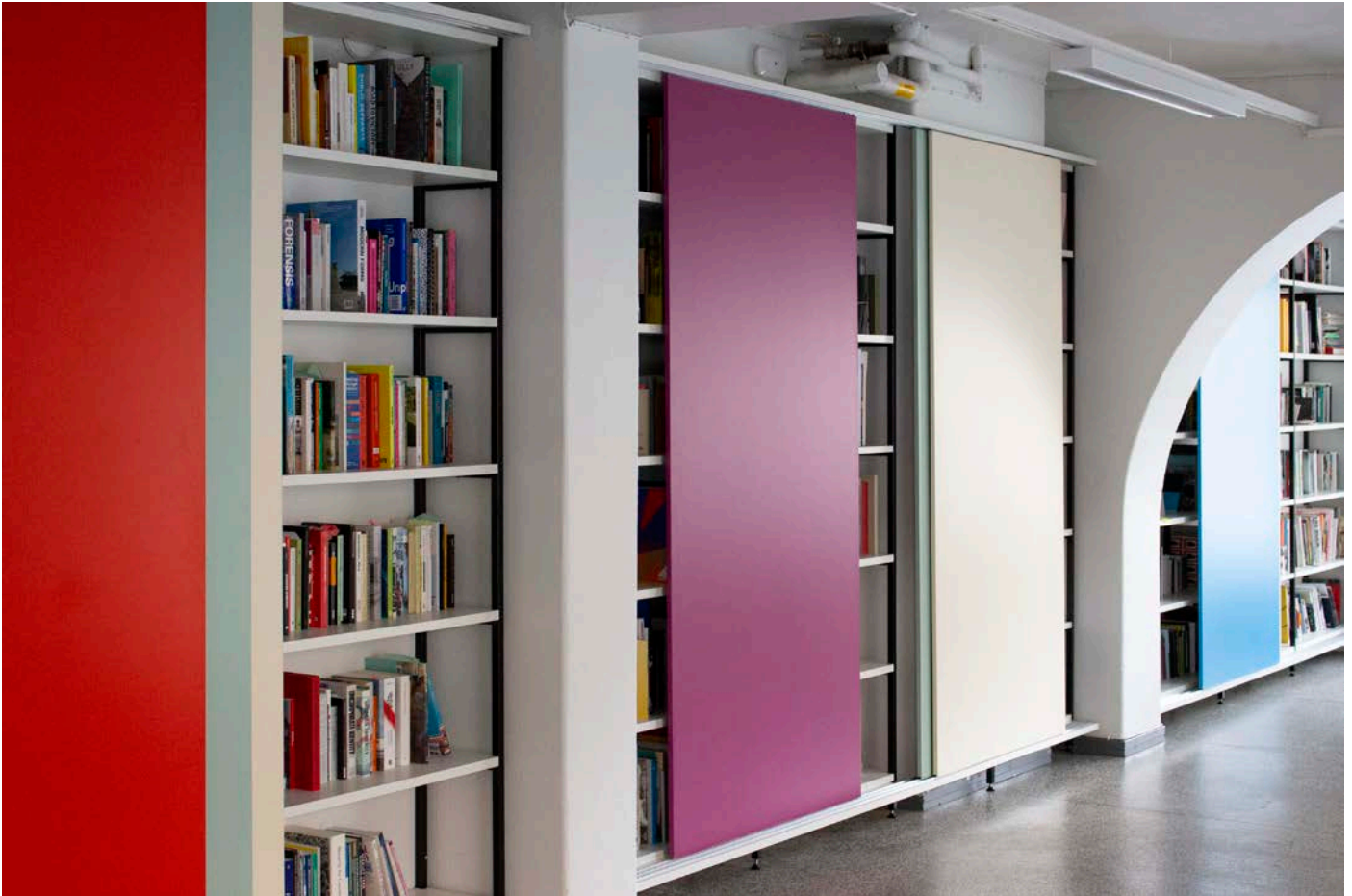
Program consisted of an installation of *The Mermaids: Mirror Worlds* held in Merikerho (10–15/4/2018), a screening of *Night Time Go*, *The Jealous One* and *Wutharr, Saltwater Dreams* (10–15/4/2018), and a talk by The Karrabing Film Collective together with writer and Franz Boas Professor Elizabeth A. Povinelli, and commissioning curators Annie Fletcher & Vivian Zihel (10/4/2018) at PUBLICS.

In April 2018 PUBLICS presented a new multi-screen work *Mermaids, Mirror Worlds* by the Karrabing Film Collective—a group of indigenous artists from Australia’s Top End. This was the collective’s first new work following their screening survey at the TATE Modern in London, and their presentation at the Centre Pompidou in Paris. PUBLICS commissioned the work together with Frontier Imaginaries (Amsterdam), the Institute of Modern Art (Brisbane), and Van Abbemuseum (Eindhoven). In addition to the newly commissioned work situated in Merikerho—a ship, which transported cargo from Åland to the Finnish mainland



The Karrabing Film Collective: *The Mermaids: Mirror Worlds*. Photo: Lauri Hannus

until 2015 and prior to that was sailing in Dutch coast and canals—PUBLICS hosted a screening consisting three short films by the collective, and a talk by anthropologist and activist Elizabeth A. Povinelli, other members of the collective (Gavin Bienamu, Aiden Sing, Rex Sing, Shannan Sing), and Annie Fletcher from Van Abbemuseum and Vivian Ziherl from Frontiers Imaginaries.



PUBLICS Library by Julia. Photo: Valerio di Lucente

PUBLICS LIBRARY & EAT THE RICH

The opening of the PUBLICS Library (30/5/2018) consisted of a talk by Gediminas Urbonas, the director of the MIT Program in Art, Culture and Technology, associate professor in the Massachusetts Institute of Technology Department of Architecture; a poster based commentary by artist Kathrin Böhm, a library intervention by *Rab-Rab: Journal for Political and Formal Inquiries in Art*, and unveiling of *Eat the Rich* by artist Liam Gillick

The long awaited PUBLICS Library designed by internationally renowned collective design studio Julia was launched in May. The opening coincided with the unveiling of *Eat the Rich*, a new outdoor sign specifically produced and donated to PUBLICS by the artist Liam Gillick. Gillick's work is often sited in public places. They are also artist' editions entering into divergent institutions, private houses, schools and libraries. As such, Gillick's graphic work can be understood as a continuous intervention into both the public realm, and the semi-private

sphere—interjecting his work to expose and invite spectators (both those seeking out his work and the disinterested passersby) to participate in a mixture of play, resistance, potential and critique. Artist Kathrin Böhm realized *Thinking Things in the Making*, an ongoing series of commentary posters based on her selection of titles from the library, and *Rab-Rab: Journal for Political and Formal Inquiries in Art* produced an intervention into the content, form and structure of the library.

PUBLICS Library is a public research space dedicated to critical social thinking, learning and education – a place for coming together, discussing, reading and thinking about contemporary art and its many publics. The library is dedicated to representing and challenging the many concepts, theories and practices of curating contemporary art and publicness. It will be open to the public every Tuesday and by appointment. Books are available to read, to study and to browse on site. The Library's bibliography will continue to be catalogued, indexed and made available online for reference. The Library is one of the most comprehensive, focused and detailed art organisation libraries in the world dedicated to themes of publicness; public art and activism; socially-engaged practices; radical education; critical curatorial practices; and their exhibition histories and theories since the 1960s onwards.

THE OPTICS OF SPACE

Co-commissioned with The Finnish Cultural Institute in New York's MOBIUS Fellowship Program, curated by Aily Nash

Program consisted *AO* by Lucy Raven and *The Dynamic Range* by James N. Kienitz Wilkins screened in Heureka Science Center (18/8/2018–19/8/2018) and a conversation with the curator and the artists (16/8/2018)

In August, two newly commissioned moving image works by Lucy Raven and James N. Kienitz Wilkins produced for the planetarium format were screened in the Heureka Science Center. The planetarium context presented highly specific viewing conditions that distinguish it from other cinematic experiences and exhibitions in science museums. *The Optics of Space* explored the intervention that artworks can make into pre-existing systems of meaning, and questioned how the spectatorial position of the viewer might be altered if the works presented in the planetarium are authored by practitioners invested in questions surrounding image production. Can the visual and narrative conventions of this context be opened up? Both Raven and Kienitz Wilkins engaged a discourse around the spectatorial conditions of the planetarium context. The works were made present by optical apparatus and brought the spectator into the technological mechanisms that enhance a particular way of seeing, proposing alternative approaches to vision.



The Optics of Space premiere. Photo: Leena Ylä-Lyly

PUBLICS TALKS

Imagination: A Collective Exercise of Care by artist Jeanne van Heeswijk (7/2/2018), questioned how the investigative and explorative qualities of art can initiate a durational process from which we can learn collectively. Raising a question of how to engage and act upon the world in order to renegotiate the very condition of our existence.

Lumi Tan was a guest speaker in the *Curating in Context* lecture series hosted by Frame Finland (28/3/2018). Tan reflected on the shifting role of small-scale non-profit organisations in the ecosystem and used The Kitchen (NY) as an example to examine what constitutes support for artists in the current landscape through the lens of interdisciplinarity as well as to look at the institution as a site of production.

The Karrabing Film Collective (10/4/2018) discussed together with writer Elizabeth A. Povinelli, and curators Annie Fletcher and Vivian Zihlerl, about their practice as a grassroots Indigenous based group who use their aesthetic practices as means of self-organisation and social analysis. As their works represent their lives, the way they create bonds with their land, how they intervene in global images of Indigeneity, and how they allow audiences to understand new forms of collective Indigenous agencies.

Artist Maryam Jafri presented a lecture-performance (18/4/2018) called *Maryam Jafri vs Mariam Jafri*, a work focused on a photograph of Jafri's sculpture *Anxiety*, that has been turned into a stock photo for licensing by a well known photo agency without the artist's prior knowledge or permission.

Eduardo Padilha & Harold Offeh (9/5/2018) presented a dialogical talk combining their artistic practice and collaboration under BalinHouseProjects – an artist-run, non-profit space run by Padilha at his flat. It provided space for exhibitions, dialogue and platform for connection. It also created an opportunity for residents to experience contemporary art of a professional and international standard, locally and in a familiar environment.

Gediminas Urbonas's talk *The Pro-test Lab case: Organizational Aesthetics and Emotional Infrastructure* (30/5/2018) presented his recently edited book *Public Space? Lost and Found*, which brings together artists, planners, theorists and art historians in an examination of the complex interrelations between the creation and uses of public space and the roles that public art plays therein.

A conversation between curator-educators Bassam El Baroni and Nora Sternfeld (13/6/2018) engaged with issues relating to art, politics and the practice of publicness. In bringing their two unique perspectives together, the event considered the different ways the educational and the curatorial intersect with multiple publics.



PUBLICS Talk *Kelly Lake Store* by Chris Kraus. Photo: Eliisa Suvanto

In *Kelly Lake Store* talk (24/10/2018), writer and artist Chris Kraus talked about the facts and possibilities of artistic work in off-the-grid locales, outside of metropolitan centers. Like everything else, art will always be transactional. The program included the launch of Kraus's new book *Social Practices*.

Artist and Urbanist Barbara Holub presented (20/11/2018) her artistic strategies based on her research project *Planning Unplanned* and showed recent art projects engaging in creating situations for returning the responsibility to local people for taking action. The talk was co-hosted together with Academy of Fine Arts and supported by Saastamoinen Foundation.

PUBLICS EVENTS

Intervention In Urban Space book was launched in collaboration with Aalto University (14/5/2018). The launch presented three different perspectives on intervention art through projects done by the authors Anna Jensen, Denise Ziegler and Taina Rajanti as well as a collective introduction that considered the concept and background of intervention art.

During their Helsinki visit (8–11/5/2018) Eduardo Padilha hosted artists, curators, other cultural workers and art organisations and shared information of BalinHouseProjects, where as Harold Offeh first invited a group of people to read a transcript of discussion between Rachel Dolezal —the transracial academic and activist— and a group of panellist from a US talk show called *The Real* in the Museum of Impossible Forms. PUBLICS hosted two performances: *Choreograph Me* in which Offeh invited the audience to use his body as a material for the production of a series of performative gestures, and *Covers live*; an ongoing series of unique performances transforming 70's and 80's music album covers into durational events. One of the highlights of the week was an intimate discursive lunch in the spirit of BHP, where artists and curators were brought together to share food and to talk about current topics within the fields of contemporary art. The lunch was held in Taidekoti Kirpilä run by by the Finnish Cultural Foundation. Guests included artists, Ramiro Camelo, Minna Henriksson, Suzanne Mooney, Egle Oddo, curators Jussi Koitela and Marianne Niemelä, an artist and a board member Diego Bruno, Paul O'Neill and Eliisa Suvanto on behalf of PUBLICS.

Space Invaders VI – Living Together was realized (23–26/5/2018) in Kyläsaari area, which could be seen as a non-place right next to the lively city space, demanding development and new activities. In the sixth edition of SI artists were exploring Uusix recycling center and how the city of Helsinki is coping with leftover materials to be recycled. The program consisted of site-specific artworks, live performances and talks. The artists included Alina Autio, Alina Belishkina, Andrea

Coyotzi Borja, Erno-Erik Raitanen, Lotta Esko, Maria Mastola, Mira Simon, Nelli Ruotsalainen, nynnyt, Parsa Kamehkhosh, Silja Eriksson, Valeria Nekhaeva, Vappu Jalonen. Participants for Speakers Corner were Aino Lintunen (SIC Space), Ali Akbar Mehta (Museum of Impossible Forms), Bassam El Baroni (Aalto University), Nelli Ruotsalainen, and Anna Kankila (Työstäkieltäytyjäliitto). The opening evening continued at PUBLICS where Liina Kuittinen and to kosie performed. Space Invaders was executed in collaboration with Aalto University, Academy of Fine Arts – University of the Arts Helsinki, PUBLICS and Uusix-Verstaat (City of Helsinki). The exhibition and program was curated by Anna Jensen and Eliisa Suvanto.

The Finnish Cultural Institute in New York hosted (30/5/2018) a conversation between curators Jussi Parikka and Shannon Mattern, and artists Samir Bhowmik, Tuomas A. Laitinen and Jenna Sutela about their collaboration for the new Helsinki Central Library Oodi. *ALTERNATIVE AI'S* examined the many "AIs" of the library and contemporary culture: artificial intelligence, architectural intelligence, animal intelligence and artistic intelligence.

St Petersburg-based curatorial duo TOK launched (6/6/2018) their new project *The Russian Bar: Why Relocate?* New approach to neighborliness and interchange. Driven by the curators' intention to analyze the dynamics of migration processes fueled by the political turbulence of the past and current decades, and find new languages and ways to articulate the changes they bring for local and global professional communities. The project opened with a discussion between the historian, curator and activist Ilya Budraitskis and writer and artist Sezgin Boynik.

Bonaventure (Soraya Lutangu), known for her sonic weaponry designed to confront oppressive power structures, performed at PUBLICS' season ending party (15/6/2018). In an intimate set up she used music and words as an identity research tool along with practical and speculative initiatives to connect her African and European roots and investigate human relationships. After the performance Bonaventure played a full DJ set in Club Kaiku.

PUBLICS co-organised a Baltic tour of the entire selection of Chris Kraus's films made between 1982–1995, materializing from the meeting of desire and contingency, where the personal, political and practical contend with one another. The films were on view at PUBLICS (24–28/10/2018) and then toured to Latvian Center for Contemporary Art (LCCA), Riga & Index, Stockholm. *What I couldn't write: Chris Kraus' Films from 1982–1995* on tour was organised in collaboration with gallery Château Shatto, Los Angeles.



WASTED working at PUBLICS. Photo: Liina Aalto-Setälä

PUBLICS PARAHOSTING

WASTED was a durational collective performance taking labour as its framework; as idea; as practice and as a focus. The collective worked (27/8–21/9/2018) closely together to script, develop and prepare a newly made work about work. At the end the group realized a participatory performance. The working group included Roy Boswell, Laura Jantunen, Sonya Lindfors, Pauliina Sjöberg, Kristian Palmu, Anni Puolakka, and producer Riikka Thitz.

While the 17th edition of ANTI - Contemporary Art Festival took place in Kuopio, PUBLICS para-hosted (27/9/2018) the shortlisted artists for the *ANTI Festival International Prize for Live Art*. In 2018 the shortlisted artists were All The Queens Men, Nic Green, Jeanne van Heeswijk and Sonya Lindfors who all presented their practices.

The Midden – Critical Dictionary of Ecology book was launched (17/10/2018) with two of the editors, Jenni Nurmenniemi and Tracey Warr, and one of the essayists, Antti Salminen. The evening followed by a collective reading session with live ambient soundscape by Myriagon. *The Midden* draws on the *Frontiers in Retreat* project (2013–2018, co-ordinated by Helsinki International Artist Programme) which acted as a base for multidisciplinary forms of research and production.

Prison Outside #2 (21/11/2018) was a cross-disciplinary discussion on artistic projects in and around prison. The program included presentations, round table discussions, film screenings, and workshops looking into artistic practices in prison, and their effect on rehabilitation, understanding the histories of incarceration, and encouraging communication between people of different walks of life. *Prison Outside* is an independent project by Anastasia Artemeva and the working group includes Sonny Nyman, Arlene Tucker and Lintu Lindfors.

Bookies, an independent art book fair dedicated to publishing as form of artistic practice, was organised (23–25/11/2018) by Rooftop Press in collaboration with SIC Space and PUBLICS. The event consisted of a temporary book shop and presentations by Indrek Sirkel & Ott Kagovere (Lugemik), Ann-Kristin Stølan (Pamflett), Alexis Zavialoff (Motto Distribution), David Blamey (Open Editions), Björn Engberg & Hanna Andersson (Moon Space Books), Kate Morrell (Pleats), Hugh Frost & Leon Sadler (Landfill Editions), Flemming Bech & Johan Rosenmunthe (Lodret Vandret), and a discussion with Iina Esko (Khaos Publishing), Anna Niskanen (Kosminen), Sezgin Boynik (Rab–Rab Press) and Tuukka Kaila (Rooftop Press).

In the launch party of *S'lim Helsinki* issue (5/12/2018), the audience joined for a presentation consisting of an early evening screening and a Q&A with designer and editor Emery Lane Norton. *S'lim* is a zine published by Selim Projects and provides a platform for editorial, curatorial, cultural, visual and spatial projects in the margins of architecture and design, founded by Mika Savela & Henrik Drufva.



Bookies 2018. Photo: Noora Lehtovuori

VISITORS

Commissions: 758

Talks: 970

Events: 1200

Parahosting: 450

Other: 840

TOTAL: 4218

ADMINISTRATION

The supporting organisation behind PUBLICS is Checkpoint Helsingin Tukiyhdistys ry, whose board develops and approves the mission and vision, monitors the strategy, as well as oversees and supports the programming policy. In 2018 the board members were Diego Bruno, Noora Geagea (chair), Satu Herrala, Kaija Kaitavuori, Tellervo Kalleinen, Satu Oksanen (vice-chair) and Nestori Syrjälä. In 2018 the board met 6 times (one meeting took place via email). The Spring meeting was held on 22/5/2018 and the Annual General meeting on 3/12/2018.

Publics had two full-time employees, artistic director Paul O'Neill (1/1–31/12/2018) and program manager Eliisa Suvanto (1/1–31/12/2018). The organisation had four interns throughout the year: Mariliis Rebane (1/1–22/4/2018), an internship through Finnish Academy of Fine Arts; Alina Belishkina (19/3–25/7/2018), an internship through Aalto University; Roope Laukkanen (26/6–28/8/2018), and Noora Lehtovuori (1/9–31/12/2018), an internship through Valand Academy.

FUNDING

In 2018 PUBLICS was funded by the Kone Foundation, which is an independent and unaffiliated organisation awarding grants to promote academic research, culture and art.

MEDIA COVERAGE

Media hits according to the months:

January	1
February	2
April	2
June	1
August	1
October	1
November	1

Checkpoint Helsinki Receives Makeover, Kunstkritikk, 19/1/2018 –
<https://kunstkritikk.com/checkpoint-helsinki-receives-makeover/>

Protestipaigast diskursiivseks ruumiks, Sirp, 9/2/2018 –
<http://www.sirp.ee/s1-artiklid/c6-kunst/protestipaigast-diskursiivseks-ruumiks/>

Nämä näyttelyt tänä viikonloppuna kannattaa nähdä, Helsingin Sanomat, 6/4/2018 – <https://www.hs.fi/kulttuuri/art-2000005631653.html>

Rahtilaivaan rakennetulla helsinkiläisklubilla pyörii videoteos, jossa aboriginaalit käyvät selviytymistaistelua ja kaivosyhtiö hehkuttaa saavutuksiaan, Helsingin Sanomat, 11/4/2018 – <https://www.hs.fi/kulttuuri/art-2000005637788.html>

“Kuka pääsee esille, se on positiivinen ongelma” - nämä ihmiset päättävät, mitä taidetta me näemme museoissa ja gallerioissa, Kulttuuriykkönen, 26/6/2018 – <https://areena.yle.fi/1-4429870>

Review: The Mermaids: Mirror Worlds, ArtsHub Australia, 2/08/2018 – <https://visual.artshub.com.au/news-article/reviews/visual-arts/sally...eview-the-mermaids-mirror-worlds-and-triple-vita-nestings-ima-256178>

Ensin I Love Dick -kirjaa ei lukenut kukaan, ja sitten siitä tuli kaksi miljoonaa kappaletta myynyt kansainvälinen ilmiö – nyt sen kirjoittaja viettää syksyn Mynämäellä, Helsingin Sanomat, 27/10/2018 – <https://www.hs.fi/kulttuuri/art-2000005877924.html>

20 vuotta vanhan skandaalin varjossa – Tapasimme hittikirjailija Chris Krausin, Ylioppilaslehti, 21/11/2018 – <https://ylioppilaslehti.fi/2018/11/20-vuotta-vanhan-skandaalin-varjossa-tapasimme-hittikirjailija-chris-krausin/>

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