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Annual Report

PUBLICS 2019

# PUBLICS

PUBLICS is a curatorial agency with a dedicated library, event space, and reading room in Vallila. The 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. PUBLICS 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.

PUBLICS has a “work together” institutional model, partnering with many other organisations, institutions and participants in the city, regionally and internationally. The current focus of PUBLICS’ program is to target, develop and nurture different publics, diverse audiences and a wide range of participants and artists through everything it does. 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.

The on-going project strands include: PUBLICS’ Library; PUBLICS Talks; PUBLICS Events and Performances; and PUBLICS Parahosting. These initiatives are organised in parallel with its longer-term curatorial programmes, PUBLICS’ Public Art Commissions.

# ACTIVITIES

The main focus in 2019 has been to recognize changes within Helsinki/regional/national art scenes and to create connections between different groups, agencies and organisations. PUBLICS has for example hosted gatherings and listening sessions where the questions of stability and continuity have been in a key role, as these structures also enable artists/curators/thinkers to further engage with critical discourses. PUBLICS has co-hosted many gatherings, readings, workshops and Parahosting events with various art practitioners, community groups, other organisations and audiences as a means of supporting and advancing discussion, awareness and diversity in art and culture. In 2019 PUBLICS commissioned

and initiated two major projects, *Public Faculty no. 13* (16– 19/6/2019) with artist Jeanne van Heeswijk and a collaborative, collective, and transdisciplinary festival *Today Is Our Tomorrow* (12–14/9/2019).



PUBLICS Library in Vallila. Photo: Noora Lehtovuori

## TIMELINE

### PUBLICS Commissions:

16–19 Jun, *Public Faculty no 13* with Jeanne van Heeswijk and collaborators Iida Nissinen, Kaisa Kukkonen, Jemina Lindholm, Fatima Usman, Vishnu Vardhani, Cáit Ní Dhuinnín (in collaboration with M-cult)

12–14 Sept, *Today Is Our Tomorrow* festival, incl. Abdullah Qureshi: *The Nightclub*; Hlynur Hallsson: *This is Finland & This is Helsinki* (in collaboration with osloBIENNALEN); Mona Marzouk: *From series Renewal and Trayvon*; Jaakko Pallasvuo: *Airplane mode* (in collaboration with Kohta Kunsthalle)

### PUBLICS Talks:

20 Feb, Binna Choi & Ruby van der Wekken

12 Mar, Sandi Hilal & Alessandro Petti

27 Mar, Tony Cokes



Performance by Rowdy SS at *Today Is Our Tomorrow*. Photo: Kush Badhwar

3 Apr, Marjolijn Dijkman

27 Jun, Kiia Beilinson, Niko Hallikainen & Pedro Marum

29 Jun, Martin Beck

4 Dec, Dave Beech & Minna Henriksson

## PUBLICS Events:

28–30 May, *Poster Take Over* with Kathrin Böhm

29 June, *Special Summer Party* with Douglas Sherman & Takaya Nagase

6 Sept, PUBLICS Stool launch with Artek, Finnish Design Shop & Studio Julia

## PUBLICS Parahosting:

9 Jan, Curators Union Finland meeting

10 Jan, *ikkööhäik – I'm ok* (Anne Naukkarinen & Maaret Mustonen)

23 Jan, Soundest 2 (Ava Grayson, Steve Maher, Marko Timlin, Petri Kuljuntausta)

6 Mar, *Polyphonic Texts & Toolkit* launch (Night Schoolers)

2 May, Curators Union Finland annual meeting

14 May, EDIT 5-year anniversary

23 May, *How to do things with performance?* (Ruukku – Studies in Artistic Research)

12 June, *WORK* (Helsinki Collegium for Advanced Studies)

5 June, *Richard Roe* (Tyler Coburn)

7 June, *The Third World Ecology Trilogy* (Rania Lee Khalil)

Throughout the year, AMPI – Academy of Moving People & Images



# PROGRAM

## PUBLICS COMMISSIONS

### PUBLIC FACULTY NO. 13

A collaboration between Jeanne van Heeswijk, Iida Nissinen, Kaisa Kukkonen, Jemina Lindholm, Fatima Usman, Vishnu Vardhani, Cáit Ní Dhuinnín and others. During May and June 2019 van Heeswijk worked in the Lauttasaari Manor Residence supported by the Kone Foundation.

During 16–19 of June a *Public Faculty no. 13* was held in Vallila. The work was commissioned and co-produced by PUBLICS with M-Cult. The project worked as a research for van Jeanne Heeswijk's new body of work called *Not Yet* focusing on collective learnings and actions we take and imagine in order to prepare ourselves for the times and futures that are not yet here. A *Public Faculty* is a local four-day event in public taking up varying forms and containing varying acts depending on the group that is involved in forming it and the specific location and communities involved in it. Each public faculty has a question or questions and includes actively engaging the public. During *Public Faculty no. 13*, together as a group and individually with strangers, care, commitment, togetherness and futures were discussed.



*Public Faculty no. 13* with Jeanne van Heeswijk. Photo: Sam Conlon

These keywords stemmed from the encounters with different communities located in Vallila: many expressed their concerns for the future and pondered around the struggles people are facing in their daily lives – from social anxiety to climate change. Public Faculty no. 13 took place on different rocks and stones around Vallila. As Helsinki is a city built upon rocks, rocks became an element with which to tie these keywords to our surroundings, environment and actual geopolitical location. This also invited in human and non-human relationships and insight to the questions about care, commitment, togetherness and future.

### Day 1, Pushing, moving the stones

Location: rocks in front of Osuuspankki, Teollisuuskatu

The focus of the first day of Public Faculty was on future and caring. People were asked about their relationship with the future and what did they care for. In addition to the questions, performative aspect was pushing and moving the stones.

### Day 2, Sitting with the stone,

Location: Hollolan puisto

The questions were: “How to be with others? How to listen to the stone? How to be with the stone? How can we connect with a rock if we can’t even connect with our bodies and mind? The presence of the group invited others in and called a need for negotiation as clearly our public was also somebody else’s private. A community is yearned, but we are very selective of with whom we want to form the community with.

### Day 3, Becoming a stone

Location: Elimäenkatu

The questions were: Can one become a stone? How to become a stone? How to embody different timescapes? What do you think about the future? When or how far is the future? What do you care for? The chosen location was not a place where people stay, hang out or linger. It was almost a non-place. The working group made it a space, a place, by becoming stones and occupying it for this art project.

### Day 4, Committing and Bonding

Location: Keuruunpuisto

The questions were: How do we commit? What do we commit with? What does the rock have to say to this? How to ask consent from a stone? As a performative act the working group tied themselves to the big rock, to test the boundaries, commitment and intimacy between them.



The second part of van Heeswijk's long-term project in Helsinki was realised in November 2019. Organised and produced by M-cult in collaboration with PUBLICS, *Maunula Staircase* brought over 20 local people to share their collaborative experiences in contexts of local democracy and open spaces, housing, urban forests, the neighbourhood food ecosystem, diversity and futures. Some of the collaborators from *Public Faculty no. 13* also continued to work with the Maunula Staircase project. The discussion was recorded and based on the talks, a special annex to the Maunulan Sanomat local newspaper 1/2020 was edited. During 6-hour-long discussion topics such as what could community, care and democracy mean for Maunula were addressed.



*Public Faculty no. 13* with Jeanne van Heeswijk. Photo: Sam Conlon

PUBLICS continues to work with van Heeswijk as the project is now part of *Open Up*, an EU funded project including eight European countries, which takes place between 2020–2023. The project explores how, in this era of division and partition, of segregation and exclusion, culture could play an active role in allowing new forms of community relations to emerge. Within this framework van Heeswijk continues to work with the so-called training program, resulting into a publication and a large-scale city-wide public art commission.

## TODAY IS OUR TOMORROW

A collaborative, collective, and transdisciplinary festival curated, commissioned, organised in collaboration with Academy of Fine Arts, Baltic Circle, Globe Art Point, IHME Helsinki, Kohta, Index Foundation, Latitudes, Latvian Centre for Contemporary Art, Live Art and Performance Studies (LAPS), Museum of Impossible Forms, and OsloBiennalen.

Initiated by PUBLICS, *Today Is Our Tomorrow* was a collaborative festival – a coming together of affinities, alliances and differences – that took place at club Kaiku and the neighbouring spaces Kieku and Stidilä during 12–14 September 2019. The festival program was produced in partnership with numerous local and international organisations, initiatives and institutions. *Today Is Our Tomorrow* included talks, workshops, installations, interventions, film screenings, live performances, DJ sets and live music intersecting with one another.

The opening day of the festival presented *Mythological Migrations: Chapter 1: The Nightclub*, a one-night multidisciplinary exhibit investigating the nightclub as method, focusing on artistic practitioners looking at queerness and Islam in a migratory context. Commissioned by PUBLICS, the project challenged exclusionary histories in European club culture that specifically target immigrants and people of color. Artists Tamara Al-Mashouk, and Zulfikar Ali Bhutto aka Faluda Islam collectively engaged in political tactics and strategies. The night also premiered *Journey to the CharBagh*, a film by Abdullah Qureshi centered around the figure of the Buraq, a winged creature with the ability to travel to heaven.



Talk by Abdullah Qureshi, Tamara Al-Mashouk and Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. XOXO by Skuja Braden in the background  
Photo: Aman Askarizad





Performance by Mercedes Azpilicueta at *Today Is Our Tomorrow*. Photo: Jonni Korhonen

On Friday, Coalition of Care, brought differing moods and perspectives to the festival. The group—Daze Aghaji, Ain Bailey, Anna Tjé, Black Obsidian Sound System (B.O.S.S.), Katarzyna Perlak, Rebecca Bellantoni, Rowdy SS, Maija Baijukya—was gathered by curator Adelaide Bannerman to embody, act and explore ideas and approaches to care and commitment. A nomadic queer club concept Karmaklubb\* were invited to take over the club on Saturday. The collaborative program included artist Tony Cokes, Karolinski, DJ Baby Dyke, the collective Konsept [X], a performance by Louis and a talk by Eva Rowson. Karmaklubb\* is about creating hybrid social spaces for conversations and meetings across categories; an open dialogue cross borders, and constructive approaches towards tolerance and differences.

Across the festival spaces there were new commissions, installations and sited works on view by Camille Auer, Leah Beeferman, Tony Cokes, Hlynur Hallsson, Basim Magdy, Marepe, Mona Marzouk, Jaakko Pallasvuo and Skuja Braden. A daily schedule of live performances included artists Mercedes Azpilicueta, Mette Edvardsen, Valentin Kimstedt, Hatz Lambo & Varia Sjöström, Lime Rickey International and Plastique Fantastique. As well as artist talks, lectures and workshops—including *And Forever And Forever* led by Emmeli Person from Index, Keep It Complex, Kate Rich and Leyya Mona Tawil—*Today Is Our Tomorrow* presented a curated programme of films with artists Camille Auer, Yael Bartana, Jonathas de Andrade, Núria Güell, Honkasalo-Niemi-Virtanen, Jaakko Pallasvuo & MSL, Chris

Kraus, Basim Magdy, The Otolith Group, Plastique Fantastique, Anni Puolakka, Sepideh Rahaa and Althea Thauberger, many of which were showing in Finland for the first time.

READ THE ARTICLE:

*Will PUBLICS make clubbers fall for art?*

## PUBLICS TALKS

Curator and director of Casco Art Institute in Utrecht Binna Choi introduced (20/2/2019) the practice of the commons within and beyond art. After the talk Choi was joined by Helsinki based member of the Global justice movement Ruby van der Wekken. The talk was part of the network project facilitated by Frame Finland on future institutional forms and values.

Artists and architects Sandi Hilal and Alessandro Petti from Decolonizing Architecture Art Residency presented (12/3/2019) their newly published book *Permanent Temporariness* combining fifteen years of research. The talk was followed an in-conversation with curator and educator Bassam El Baroni (Aalto University).

Toward Public by artist, film maker Tony Cokes (27/3/2019) examined his research methodologies by showing selected excerpts from his recent films and installation projects.

Artist Marjolijn Dijkman presented (3/4/2019) her ongoing practice on how humans perceive and experience their surroundings – the conventions which underlie humans' conceptions of the world and their determination to interfere with and to influence it. The talk was realised in collaboration with HIAP – Helsinki International Artist Programme.

In June (27/6/2019) PUBLICS brought together Kiia Beilinson (MYÖS collective), Niko Hallikainen (performer, writer) and Pedro Marum (mina collective) to share their experience and perspectives on questions of safety, oppressive behaviours, inclusivity, representations and activism in our current club culture(s). The talk was part of *Today Is Our Tomorrow* festival around safer spaces and forms of resistance within clubbing contexts, nightlife and their social structures.

Artists Dave Beech and Minna Henriksson read (4/12/2019) some of the selected books and publications from PUBLICS Library that were somehow connected to questions and subjects relating to Beech's new book *Art and Postcapitalism, value production and the economics of art*.

## PUBLICS EVENTS

In May (28–31/5/2019) artist Kathrin Böhm (Keep it Complex – Make it Clear) returned to PUBLICS to host a 3-day *Poster Take Over* production workshop. Böhm was using PUBLICS Library for her public take over and together with participants discussed the many reasons for making posters whilst making them. The theme of the workshop was on the expressing of political messages and agendas with posters as medium. The workshop was free for everyone. Böhm is a London based artist whose collaborative work focuses on the collective production and use of public space, trade as a public realm and the everyday starting point for culture.

### Tuesday 28th

2–7pm: Drop in printing and taping

### Wednesday 29th

2–4pm: Going through the Library, discussing a selection of books which address activism, poster making and political messages/campaigns made by artists

5–6pm: Böhm in conversation with PUBLICS Artistic Director Paul O'Neill

### Thursday 30th

12–4pm: Poster making

### Friday 31th

12–4pm: Outcome on display



Kathrin Böhm from Keep it Complex – Make it Clear. Photo: Aman Askarizad



In June (29/6/2019) PUBLICS hosted a Special Summer Party at the record shop and restaurant Tanner. The evening consisted of DJ-sets by NY-based Douglas Sherman & Takaya Nagase, and a film screening and conversation about the legendary Loft gatherings with artist Martin Beck. The event coincided with Helsinki Pride.

Beck's project Last Night is based on the 118 songs played by New York musical host David Mancuso on June 2 1984 at one of the last Loft party. The film shows each record played that night in sequence, from beginning to end. Since 1970 Mancuso regularly hosted dance parties at his home what came to be known as the "Loft parties" – unique in their combination of communal atmosphere and high-quality sound, centered around music and dancing.



In September (6/9/2019) PUBLICS, Artek and Finnish Design Shop celebrated the launch of PUBLICS Stool. The Stool is a special edition of the classic Alvar Aalto item especially designed by Valerio Di Lucente (studio Julia) for PUBLICS Library.

In addition to the PUBLICS stool, Finnish Design Shop provided additional items for the Library and Event space.

READ THE INTERVIEW:

*An Artek classic with a new look: The Publics stool is part of Finnish Design Shop's anniversary collection*

PUBLICS Stool designed by Valerio Di Lucente. Photo: Noora Lehtovuori

## PUBLICS PARAHOSTING

The new board of Curators Union Finland – SKY ry invited (9/1/2019) practicing curators to come together in order to share and discuss ideas, concerns, questions, and forms of action to reformulate the role of SKY in response to the current needs of the artistic field of Finland. Later in the year their annual meeting was held at PUBLICS (2/5/2019).

The launch of *ikkööhäik – I'm ok*, a site-specific project, consisting of a performance and an artist's book, by Maarit Mustonen and Anne Naukkarinen was celebrated (10/1/2019) at PUBLICS. In the event curator and editor Karin Hald (Forlaget Gestus) read from her essay and Naukkarinen and Mustonen did a performance based on their book.



Performance by Linda & Aura, EDIT five-year anniversary at PUBLICS. Photo: Noora Lehtovuori

The second issue of *SOUNDEST* zine, focusing on both sound art and sound in the arts on an international level, was launched at PUBLICS (23/1/2019). At the event the editor Ava Grayson talked about her own work as a teacher, artist, and facilitator in the field of sound, artist Steve Maher discussed social engagements through the DIY musical objects he creates, and Marko Timlin gave an artist talk and demonstration of his current work.

*The Polyphonic Texts & Toolkit*, a book gathering a collection of texts written by Night Schoolers (Giovanna Esposito Yussif, Minna L. Henriksson, Elina Juopperi, Karolina Kucia, Christine Langinauer, Lauri Antti Mattila, David Muoz, Minna Pöllänen, Martta Tuomaala, and Elina Vainio), was launched in March (6/3/2019). The book serves both as a memory and a toolkit of some of the practices Night Schoolers engaged with in 2016–2018.

In May EDIT – an online publication focusing on contemporary art and criticism – celebrated its five-year anniversary at PUBLICS (14/5/2019). Programme included a discussion about art and criticism with writers Jaakko Uoti (Mustekala), Sini Mononen (Helsingin Sanomat) and Helen Korpak (Hufvudstadsbladet), live performance by Linda & Aura and a DJ-set by Astro-Sofia.

*How to do things with performance?* -research project presented the 11th issue of Ruukku – Studies in Artistic Research (23/5/2019). Ruukku is a multidisciplinary, multilingual, peer-reviewed journal on artistic research launched in 2013. Ruukku is published and supported by the University of the Arts Helsinki, Aalto school of Arts, Design and Architecture and the Faculty of Art and Design at the University of Lapland, with a particular focus on multi-lingual publication

In June PUBLICS parahosted a discursive event with artist Tyler Coburn (5/6/2019) where *Richard Roe* published by Sternberg Press was launched. On the occasion Coburn read excerpts from the book exploring concepts of personhood from legal, psychological, and metaphysical realms.

*The Third World Ecology Trilogy* by Rania Lee Khalil was presented at PUBLICS (7/6/2019). The project traces beauty, violence and erasure across the plant and animal, mineral and human lives for which they are reserved. The performance and artistic research was supported by the Kone Foundation.

The platform workworkworkworkworkwork.com, presenting a variety of artistic and theoretical approaches regarding representations of labour in contemporary art and culture, was launched in June (12/6/2019). The project facilitated by the Helsinki Collegium for Advanced Studies was presented by the curator David Ashley Kerr. During the event the Berlin born street journal *Arts of the Working Class* was be made available in Helsinki for the first time.

## VISITORS

Commissions: 4000 / Talks: 350 / Events: 428 / Parahosting: 630 / Other: 189  
TOTAL: 5597



# COLLABORATORS

Aalto University, Academy of Fine Arts, Academy of Moving People and Images, Artek, Baltic Circle, EDIT Media, Finnish Design Shop, Frame Contemporary Art Finland, Forlaget Gestus, Globe Art Point, Hailuodon Panimo, Helsinki Collegium for Advanced Studies, HIAP – Helsinki International Artist Programme, IHME Helsinki, Index Foundation, Keep it Complex – Make it Clear, Kohta Kunsthalle, Kuudes Linja Oy, Latitudes, Latvian Centre for Contemporary Art, Live Art and Performance Studies (LAPS), M-Cult, Museum of Impossible Forms, Night Schoolers, SKY (Curators Union Finland), OsloBiennalen, SOUNDEST, Studio Julia, Tanner, University of the Arts Helsinki, Vallilan Panimo

## R & D

For much of 2019, PUBLICS financial future and its sustainable development became main priority knowing its three-year Kone Foundation grant was expiring at the end of 2019. The strategic development focused on long-term sustainability and building a network of partnerships regionally and internationally. PUBLICS focused on building a robust network of partnerships for future collaboration and organisational development. This included a cooperative institutional funding plan for its annual festival *Today Is Our Tomorrow*, and building an expansive institutional network for further collaboration. PUBLICS succeeded in receiving two collaborative research and mobility grants to assist with Baltic and Nordic networked projects for 2020–21. PUBLICS' management team focused on funding applications, and in addition to negotiating a more long-term relationship with its core funders the Kone Foundation. In the Autumn PUBLICS succeeded in being awarded a three year organisation grant to the figure of €500 000€ - with year one (2020) as a continuation of existing funding to the amount of 200 000€, and with year two (2021) and three (2022) being dependent upon matched funding up to the amount of 150 000€. PUBLICS also received an EU Cooperation Project Grant for a long-term project called *Open Up* developed in partnership with eight institutions across Europe.

In 2019 PUBLICS was kindly funded by the Kone Foundation, City of Helsinki, Arts Promotion Centre Finland and Svenska Kulturfonden. *Today Is Our Tomorrow* festival was additionally supported by the collaborators including Academy of Fine Arts, Frame Contemporary Art Finland, IHME Helsinki, Kohta, Index Foundation, Live Art and Performance Studies (LAPS), Latvian Center for Contemporary Art, OsloBiennalen and Kuudes Linja oy.

# ADMINISTRATION

The supporting association 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 2019 the board members were Bassam El Baroni, Taru Elfving (chair), Noora Geagea, Satu Herrala, Kaija Kaitavuori and Axel Straschnoy. In 2019 the board met 5 times. The Spring Meeting was held on 22/5/2019 and the Annual General Meeting on 18/12/2019.

PUBLICS had two full-time employees, Artistic Director Paul O'Neill (1/1–31/12/2019) and Program Manager Eliisa Suvanto (1/1–31/12/2019). The organisation had three interns in 2019: Noora Lehtovuori (1/1–29/5/2019), an internship through Valand Academy and Academy of Fine Arts, Helsinki; Josefine Mass (16/4–12/6/2019) an internship through University of Antwerp; and Chih Tung Lin (7–12/2019), an internship through Academy of Fine Arts, Helsinki. Throughout the year PUBLICS employed people to work for projects and commissions.

PUBLICS pays an equal standard fee for every artist/curator in 4 different categories: a talk, a workshop, an event/a performance, a newly commissioned work. All other expenses such as travel, accommodation, material and production costs are always covered.



Performance by Anna Tjé at *Today Is Our Tomorrow*. Photo: Aman Askarizad

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