



*Future Futures:*  
**Reaching Out**  
*(2023–2026)*

**Open-access  
project publication  
of texts and other  
contributions**

PRAKSIS TEEN ADVISORY BOARD  
INDEX TEEN ADVISORY BOARD  
PUBLICS YOUTH ADVISORY BOARD

# Publication Material from *Future Futures:* *Reaching Out*

## Open-access project version of texts and contributions

This document gathers copy-edited texts, conversations and contributions developed during the third year of Future Futures: Reaching Out, a project co-funded by the European Union and Erasmus+ Ungdom. This open-access project version has been prepared to make material generated through the project available online, free of charge.

The material presented here formed the basis for the printed publication *Reaching Out: A Book about Agency, Care, Identity and...*, published by Rooftop Press. This document is separate from that book edition. It does not reproduce the design, layout, cover treatment or material form of the printed publication, but makes publication content accessible as project documentation and learning material.

The texts, conversations and visual contributions included here were developed with and by Index Teen Advisory Board, PRAKSIS Teen Advisory Board and PUBLICS Youth Advisory Board, together with invited artists, writers, curators, publishers and contributors. Across the material, publishing is approached not only as a final format, but as a way of working: a means of shaping relations, testing forms of publicness and asking how institutions might listen, collaborate and make space for other voices.

The print publication *Reaching Out: A Book about Agency, Care, Identity and...* offers insights into how young practitioners approach publishing as a field of relations. It gathers interviews and conversations, individual reflections and visual contributions that examine the act of making something public. By extension, it also offers propositions for how art institutions might use the tactics and strategies deployed to produce this book to connect with wider communities, different voices and new publics. In their respective contexts, the young people who have

developed the content of this publication have met with artists, writers, curators and publishers to discuss questions of authorship, voice and visibility.

This volume has been produced as part of *Future Futures: Reaching Out*, a three-year collaboration between PRAKSIS (Oslo), Index Foundation (Stockholm) and PUBLICS (Helsinki). Each organisation works with a group of young people who act as advisers and collaborators in shaping their institutional practice over the course of an entire year. Through a series of workshops, Index Teen Advisory Board (ITAB), PRAKSIS Teen Advisory Board (PTAB) and PUBLICS Youth Advisory Board (PYAB) have reflected on how printed matter continues to hold relevance in a world in which digital means of communication have become overwhelmingly prevalent. They have considered how books, zines and other formats continue to act as meeting points between people and ideas across time and space.



PRAKSIS

PUBLICS

Index Foundation

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## Prelude

This publication has been developed in the context of “Future Futures: Reaching Out”, a three-year-long collaboration between PRAKSIS (Oslo), Index Foundation (Stockholm) and PUBLICS (Helsinki). The project examines how art institutions use long-established modes of communication to reach new audiences, and how youth participation can influence what such institutions communicate and how they do so. Each year, the boards focus on a specific medium: the first year they explored audio, the second they considered moving images, while they engaged with the opportunities and challenges of publishing this year.

Each of the three organisations works with a group of young people who act as advisers and collaborators in shaping their institutional practice over the course of an entire year. The Teen Advisory Boards (TABs) offer paid positions for participants aged between 16 and 21 and bring together individuals with varied experiences and support their exploration of art and culture today. Through meetings, workshops and shared projects, the boards contribute critical and reflective perspectives that inform the host institutions’ ways of working. The boards are therefore not simply audience groups of a certain age but are critical interrogators and co-thinkers. They question the relevance and accessibility of contemporary art institutions and propose suggestions for change. This publication can offer insights into the questions that matter to this particular section of our publics and can therefore be seen as a kind of handbook for how organisations and institutions might work more closely with young people.

“Future Futures” builds on several years of collaboration between the institutions. Index launched its Teen Advisory Board in 2016 and after an initial year of exchange and knowledge-sharing with Index, PRAKSIS followed in 2019. PUBLICS joined the network in 2020, establishing its Youth Board the following year. Together, the three organisations now form a long-term platform for artistic learning and youth-centred institutional research, meeting

annually for a joint conference in either Stockholm, Oslo or Helsinki. These gatherings function as small symposiums during which the boards meet experts, share work, compare institutional contexts and develop collaborative methods.

The boards' recent work has focused on considering how publishing can function as a social and artistic practice to speak to new audiences. Through a series of workshops, the boards have met with artists, writers, curators and publishers to discuss questions of authorship, voice and visibility. They have reflected on how printed matter continues to hold relevance in a world in which digital environments are increasingly present, and how books, zines and other formats might act as meeting points between people and ideas across time and space.

Three overlapping themes have shaped these investigations: Agency, Care and Identity. Each has been defined and interpreted by the boards themselves. Index's contributions explore the possible futures of publishing and how printed matter can challenge ideas of ownership and distribution. In this section, the boundaries between board contributions and pieces commissioned from artists blur, leak and seep into one another, offering concrete examples of the very concept – Agency – that the board set out to explore. PRAKSIS's section on Care reflects on attention, collaboration and the social dimensions of producing publications. In PUBLICS's section, the board has interrogated ideas around Identity in ways that open up to its relationality, fluidity and multiplicity, moving beyond established categories and stereotypical labels that many institutions continue to uphold, which flatten Identity into something simple to administer rather than something lived, negotiated and continually reshaped in its complexity.

Together these approaches have led to this book, titled *Reaching Out: A Book about Agency, Care and Identity*, which offers insights into how young practitioners approach publishing as a field of relations. It gathers interviews and conversations, individual reflections and visual contributions that examine the act of making something public and considers how art

**institutions might use the tactics and strategies deployed to produce this book to connect with wider communities, different voices and new publics.**

## Perambulation

“Future Futures: Reaching Out” has always been a project about time; about the time institutions take, the time young people give and the time it takes to shift how an organisation speaks to, listens to and imagines its publics. This publication marks the formal end of a three-year-long collaboration between PRAKSIS, Index and PUBLICS. Yet endings in institutional life are rarely definitive. What you hold in your hands is both a record of what happened and an invitation to consider what comes next. Although the project concludes here, the questions it raises will ripple outwards, asking to be taken up again by others.

The book gathers the traces of a working process that unfolded across Stockholm, Oslo and Helsinki, shaped by the Teen Advisory Boards who met, discussed, tested and reconfigured how art institutions communicate. Much of this work was ephemeral and involved conversations in various spaces, shared online annotations, half-formed proposals and moments of uncertainty or friction that revealed where institutional habits are deeply ingrained. Publishing here is the medium through which these fleeting exchanges acquire a material form — something that can travel beyond the physical walls within and the digital platforms through which these encounters took place.

Three themes – Agency, Care and Identity – run through the book, not as tidy categories but as fields of tension. *Agency* emerges in the friction between institutional frameworks and the desires of board participants, showing how authorship, decision-making and visibility shift when young people claim space as producers of knowledge rather than being treated as its presumed recipients. *Care* appears here not as a softening gesture, but as a form of institutional and individual responsibility: the care of listening without predetermining what a young person should say, the care of developing processes that can withstand disagreement, and the care of making public in ways that do not cause or reproduce harm. And *Identity* is here explored as less about categorisation and more about relation – in how individuals move within and against institutional narratives that too easily flatten the complexity of lived experiences.

This book is shaped by the understanding that the most meaningful transformations often happen slowly, almost imperceptibly. It functions as an archive that extends the lifespan of the work undertaken and is offered as a tool that other institutions can adapt, (mis)use, challenge or build upon; as a reference point that can be returned to – not for definitive answers but for methodological potential. It is also a reminder that involving young people in institutional life

should neither be approached as a symbolic gesture nor as an afterthought – it is an ongoing practice that requires attentiveness, humility and the willingness to be changed.

“Future Futures: Reaching Out” may end here, but the work of thinking together does not. If anything, this book casts the project forward, opening up time: for the next group of young people who will not have been part of the process but may recognise its echoes, and for the institutions searching for new ways to communicate, and for the audiences that remain, always, in the making.

## Theme Introductions: Agency, Care and Identity

Tony Karlsson Savci, Kristian Schröder and Bilge Hasdemir

### Agency

Over the past year, Index Teen Advisory Board (ITAB) has moved through a constellation of encounters, workshops, conversations and experiments that shaped the contributions gathered in this publication. What began as an open question about how young people might claim space became an enquiry into how we act together – how we speak, how we make decisions and how we ‘practise’ or claim agency.

Our first site visit was to Munnen, a community space in Bagarmossen where publishing is treated not as an industry but as a way of living together. Surrounded by zines and books and the persistent question *can a soup be published?*, we considered our roles as readers, makers and decision-makers. We discussed the tensions around AI in creative work, exchanged references and mapped out what sparks our curiosity. These mind maps became the first traces of a shared methodology: thinking collectively, making associations and letting interests emerge from shared curiosity rather than being predetermined.

Our conversations turned towards the future, specifically the year 2125, a century from now. Considering the long shadow of printed matter, we asked what a book might become, who might write it and what kinds of knowledge it could carry. We imagined books as bodies and rituals, as archives that remember long after their readers forget. We envisioned books grown rather than printed, encoded in breath or folded into skin, authored by beings who are at once oracle, coder and healer. These speculations were ways of asking what publishing allows for and what forms of agency we might want to reclaim from systems that assume, flatten or commercialise our voices.

The search for alternative vocabularies brought us to the studio of graphic designer and artist Sara Kaaman. Her practice, which moves through performance, pedagogy and printed matter, offered new ways to consider the book as a performative body. In her role play *Oraklets ark* we stepped into a cave and let go of linear time to meet an oracle shaped by gestures, markings and offerings. The session shifted our sense of authorship once again, suggesting that agency can be found not only in asserting control but also in releasing it, allowing stories to emerge through relation, ritual and vulnerability.

Our exploration continued with artist and writer Ruby Nilsson, who guided us through two exercises in the transformation of text. The first rearranged Marinetti's *Futurist Manifesto* into its own counter-spell, using his words to unravel his ideology. The second invited the group to write collectively in response to a shared scenario. Both methods asked us to confront and challenge the structures we inherit. It asked how much of what we write is already written for us, and how cutting, remixing and collective authoring can become forms of resistance.

By September the year's explorations had crystallised into decisions. We returned to our guiding questions: *what are the futures of publishing? How do young people practise agency in systems shaped by institutional gatekeeping, commercial and extractivist interests, and uneven access to visibility? How might publications travel across borders, or even dimensions?*

From these conversations, the final contributions emerged. Interviews with *Shoebox Magazine* and *Offensiv* position ITAB's enquiry within interconnected ecosystems – one an international art journal and the other grounded in worker-led socialist organising. A cut-up piece simulates the mutating logic of generative AI through analogue means. The script for the mind's-eye role play by Sara Kaaman, along with board members' parallel story woven into it, treats authorship as an ongoing negotiation rather than a fixed role. falk's illustrated comic, developed from a script written by others board members influenced by one of Ruby Nilsson's workshop, demonstrates how ideas travel between voices and take shape through collaboration.

Throughout this publication, boundaries between ITAB's work and the commissioned pieces remain deliberately fluid. This porousness is a principle rather than a flaw. Agency here is not about speaking the loudest but about shaping conditions for participation, allowing multiple forms of knowledge to coexist and trusting the unpredictable process of collective making.

Each contribution carries traces of every workshop, disagreement, moment of uncertainty, burst of laughter and not entirely crystallised ideas. And like the imagined books of 2125, this book asks to be read as a living object that expands what publishing can become when young people claim the tools, the time and the space to shape it on their own terms.

## Care

This year's work of the PRASKIS Teen Advisory Board (PTAB) began with a simple question: *what do young people think a publication can be today?* We wondered whether printed modes

of publishing might feel outdated and if the group would prefer digital formats, quicker or more immediate ways of communicating. Instead, the conversations moved in the opposite direction. The group kept returning to the texture, pacing and physical presence of printed matter. At a time when almost everything feels accelerated, especially for young people, the material slowness of print became something of value. This set the tone for the months that followed.

PTAB is made up of nine young people who did not know each other beforehand. They come from different backgrounds, have different interests and habits, and naturally work at different speeds. Much of the year was spent figuring out how to collaborate across these differences. Some meetings were energetic, others quiet; at times the work moved quickly and at others it stalled. The process of finding a shared rhythm – and adjusting it when needed – shaped the group as much as any workshop or task.

The board spent a lot of time moving through the city together – visiting bookshops, libraries, exhibitions and publishing spaces... – where the fact this it was a collective exploring was important. The impressions that these visits left made their way back into discussions about what a publication can do and what it means to spend time with something rather than scroll past it.

Workshops added structure to the explorations. Early in the year, a session with João Doria de Souza focused on help and support, and how acts of support and small gestures between people can be made visible. The group kept returning to this throughout the process, using it as a way to think about how they work with and for each other. Through The Young Curators Mentorship – a collaboration between PRAKSIS and Nitja, supported by Sparebankstiftelsen DNB – Jessica Williams highlighted how artistic decisions, materials and values intersect and how little it takes to create something that can be considered an artist book. A workshop with Amelia and Adam Greenhall at ANEMONE Studio opened up to the practicalities of independent publishing, while time at Torpedo Press and the Deichman Library put the wider infrastructures around printed matter in perspective. Each encounter helped shape the group's sense of what publishing can be and enable.

Out of this mixture of visits, conversations and slow adjustments, the year's contributions gradually took shape. The group tried collective writing, interview exercises, reference gathering and podcast recording, testing what each format allowed. In the following sections you will find the outcome of this trajectory, of nine people learning how to work together,

finding a rhythm and approaching publishing as something built through time, attention and the care of making space for others.

### Identity

Throughout this past year, PUBLICS Youth Advisory Board (PYAB) has traced the many layers of publishing – as process, infrastructure, artistic practice, curatorial process, act of community building and way of being and working together. This project has become a shared learning space, where publishing is understood as building connections, imagining otherwise and nurturing collaborative ways of working. Through workshops, visits and ongoing conversations, the group has moved through Helsinki's independent publishing scene and into wider worlds of publishing. Along the way, they have met practitioners whose work engages with publishing and printed matter from many different angles, reflecting the many positions and possibilities that publishing holds. Their conversations included writer, editor, and Rab-Rab Press co-founder Sezgin Boynik; artist and printmaker Jan Konsin; text artist and designer Arja Karhumaa and artist Maarit Bäu Mustonen of Multipöly; writer and Text Laboratory coordinator Heidi Backström; artist, poet and Translibrary co-founder Iona Carmine Roisin; visual artist and art worker Minna Henrikkson; and curator, writer and educator Paul O'Neill.

These encounters aimed to deepen the group's understanding of the multiplicity of practices that constitute publishing today, the connections that shape and sustain artistic landscapes in their locality, and the tangible, relational and procedural aspects of producing printed matter. The conversations also included exchanges on publishing's micropolitics, what publishing practices can enable, and they have raised questions of representation, access and agency that shape who gets to speak, who finds a voice, who is listened to and who is granted visibility. These reflections have led to a collective enquiry into how this book might open up as a space for voices to gather, to tell their own stories and echo in their own cadence.

Working with Gerrie van Noord – editor, curator and educator – and with Tuukka Kaila – artist, educator and publisher – has been a significant part of the process; they have accompanied the youth with generosity and attentiveness, helping the publication grow into a form the boards feel connected to.

As their work developed, questions of identity – always in the plural, continually negotiated and reshaped – kept resurfacing in conversations, workshops and through the group's mapping, which became both a method and a record of their shared learning process. These

mappings helped trace connections between ideas, showing where they overlapped, diverged or circled back. Responding to this unfolding enquiry, PUBLICS Youth decided to use Identity as a lens through which to engage with and think alongside the overarching “Future Futures: Reaching Out” project and the making of this book.

For their first contribution, the group decided that each member would write from their own perspective, as they sought to sustain a multiplicity of voices rather than merge them into one. These distinct yet interconnected pieces show how identities take shape through relation, experience and the acts of negotiation in a world in flux. The interview was chosen as the approach for developing the board’s second contribution. While not everyone had the capacity, interest or time to participate, the questions were shaped collectively within the wider group, while the logistical decisions were handled by a smaller team in self-organised meetings.

In their work together, board members seem to have carried forward the principles first set out when they built their group agreements. From the very beginning, they have been practising how to make space for difference, to listen without judgement and to let go of perfectionism. Paying attention to one another, even in small ways, has shaped how they have developed this process. Everyone has brought their own perspectives, ways of thinking and working methods, and finding out how these align and move together has been part of an ongoing learning process. Conversations have taken time, ideas have shifted, where not every decision has come easily. Yet these moments of negotiation and difference have also opened up to new perspectives and connections. Collaboration has shown itself not just as a method but as a practice of care, patience and trust – one that continues to shape how they work and think together.

This is also how the interviews took shape: through mutual respect and trust in others’ contributions. Supporting each other, board members formed a smaller group to enter into dialogues around notions of identity with young and/or emerging artists and cultural practitioners, acknowledging that these terms carry different meanings and implications. The interviews were carried out with visual artist Pepe Sivunen, musician Rami Alwhithawi, dance artist Eme Tähtinen, dancer and choreographer Angela Eldips and poet Sofia Koivuneva. The conversations also explored how identities are negotiated within and against institutions, how self-definition shapes the ways people find alignment, step away from or push against them, and how organisations shape the conditions for whose work is recognised and supported. Perhaps this is why one of PUBLICS Youth’s wishes for the book is to find its way into other

arts institutions; to open up a space for what has been overlooked and for voices that have yet to be recognised.

Through the mind maps that accompanied many of the meetings, the focus for the commissions was identified, although that continued to evolve as different factors came into play. The group ultimately arrived at two points of departure: the idea of Nordic exceptionalism and local publishing infrastructures, which were developed into two distinct contributions, one by artist Mia Wennerstrand and the other by artist and founder of Temporary Book Shelf Hikari Nishida.

Much has been learned and unlearned along the way, with ideas negotiated, reworked and redirected as the process has unfolded; what it has come to be, hopefully, is a publication that holds the voices and intentions of all who contributed.

## Revolutionary Publishing?

The introduction and two interviews that follow consider agency through the lens of two magazines. The question mark in the overarching title, *Revolutionary Publishing?*, suggests that the act of making public by way of the production of periodically printed matter is not necessarily by definition revolutionary as such. The two conversations demonstrate that the potential of being revolutionary is in both cases the outcome of a consciously situated approach in which different forms of agency are at play.

## Revolutionary Publishing?

Dylan Murray and Vilhelm Rosenström Domeij

The following two interviews function as a kind of ouroboros, a snake eating its own tail, or a möbius strip, a loop that folds back on itself. These forms become metaphors for the processes at hand: the production of a publication about producing publications within an institutional framework. They point towards the recursive logic of publishing practices that simultaneously resist and reproduce the conditions from which they emerge.

We spoke with two differently positioned yet interconnected initiatives: *Shoebox Magazine*, a global arts journal connecting writers and artists in cities in different countries, and *Offensiv*, the newspaper of Socialistiskt Alternativ, grounded in a tradition of worker-led publishing and international solidarity.

Both publications share elements we find inspiring: their experimental approaches to DIY production, a commitment to accessible modes of distribution and their willingness to expand the aims of what a publication can be. Operating outside the dominant capitalist incentive structures that shape how most mainstream publishers operate, they occupy a space that today's media landscape rarely supports – precisely because their work runs counter to the need to make a profit and therefore attracts little external investment from those who benefit from the dominant system.

Given the opportunity, we wanted to explore, learn from and platform their perspectives here.

## Shoebox Magazine

An interview with Dennis Farnsworth by Dylan Murray

Dylan Murray: *Shoebox Magazine* is a publication that started operating out of Cairo, Egypt, in 2023 and explores true inclusivity and the destruction of elitist structures. What's your idea of revolutionising publishing?

Dennis Farnsworth: We used to operate out of Cairo but right now we're in The Netherlands. The project has in many ways been an extension of myself and my own practice and research. The goal has always been to reach beyond that and to open it up as a platform beyond the specific likes and dislikes of the editor(s), but that's difficult to do.

I don't know if *Shoebox* is a revolutionary publication, but we are, I am, constantly trying to find the balance between 'homeliness' and accessibility, while still letting it evolve into something new or more professional – for lack of a better word. One thing that is super inspiring is looking at other historical publications and what they've done and aimed for. Often, they've focused on a specific movement or thought. But *Shoebox* is not really trying to do that; it's a bit of everything and that's the whole point. The idea is to be as transparent as possible, and that's also been the attempt with the editor's introduction that I've written to each issue. What excites me with *Shoebox* is that there are no clear boundaries yet.

DM: As a young unestablished writer myself I'm always on the lookout for publications to which I can contribute. The publication landscape today is broad but at the same time I find very few examples to which I feel welcomed and that I am interested in. What was your aim with starting *Shoebox Magazine* and adding a new publication to this world?

DF: I had the exact same feeling – still do – and decided enough was enough. When studying fine art, the one thing you're taught is that if you want to do something, or actually get an education for yourself, you just have to start doing it. At the art academies

I've attended, no one has ever told me what to do and no deadlines were set by anyone else besides myself. It's been a good education, and since I've often felt quite lost in the so-called art world and magazines and what have you, I decided to try and create the space I was looking for myself.

DM: One of my own presumptions about exclusivity and curating is that it's necessary for something to have a clear direction on what it's trying to do. But somehow *Shoebox* proves me wrong, specifically *Shoebox*#3, which includes all the submissions from the open call but still somehow manages to touch upon something. How do you think *Shoebox* navigates ideas of selection and inclusion?

DF: It's a difficult one because you have to realise that you're handling someone else's hard work and commitment. It's not always easy, especially with *Shoebox* not being like many other magazines around. That's also why we suggest in the open calls that contributors take a look at the previous issues to get an idea of what we do. In essence, we are/I am not trying to do more than let the pieces stand on their own. A poem gets a page, an essay gets the pages it needs, an artwork, etc. The curation of each issue is about trying to make each submission speak for itself.

With the many different pieces in each issue, it's a matter of trying to take things down a notch. Sometimes I feel that art is put on a very high pedestal, which is fair in some cases, but *Shoebox* isn't interested in doing that. What's important is that there's always *something* that a reader can relate to. As a whole, then, these different submissions and people are having a conversation within the magazine.

However, it's also not a utopian "let's all be friends" type of situation. I like to think of it as a way of grasping and holding on to the many different ways that people have of seeing and engaging with the world within a magazine.

DM: Making the magazine freely accessible via PDFs on the website is one of its most revolutionising components. Thinking about how DIY projects deserve funding and so on, where did this idea of accessible information stem from and how has that played out in the real world?

DF: Since the magazine has travelled a lot and continues to do so, it is important that the information is out there beyond the individual bookstores or libraries that may have physical copies. It's also a way of documenting, because so often when reaching out to people they want to know what the magazine is about. Like I said previously, about taking things down a notch, *Shoebox* doesn't aim to gatekeep anything. We're putting in real work but also want to keep the unassuming nature of it – this is it; this is *Shoebox*.

So many times you try and manoeuvre across various spaces and you feel excluded for some reason. You're not cool enough or whatever the case may be. It's difficult to understand these things if you're on the inside of a group but we're trying to tackle it as best we can. One way of doing that is through transparency and in one of the editorial introductions I wrote about that: if *Shoebox* is an extension of a privileged white man's education in art academies and through fellowships, can it really be that inclusive?

DM: The magazine manages to include contributions from teens all over the world – from Stockholm (Sweden), Amsterdam (The Netherlands), Cairo (Egypt), for example – and invites people to write in whatever language they feel most comfortable. That manages to demonstrate this really cool revolutionising approach. What role do you think cross-border inclusion plays in *Shoebox*?

DF: It's important to keep it open, but I try not to advertise *Shoebox* as a magazine for cross-cultural inclusion because saying that puts a lot of weight on it. However, it's important. If we're trying to create an accessible space yet only accept submissions in English, for example, it closes a lot of other things off. The question is how to reach beyond that, which is what we're trying to do. Again, it's the transparency and constant striving to

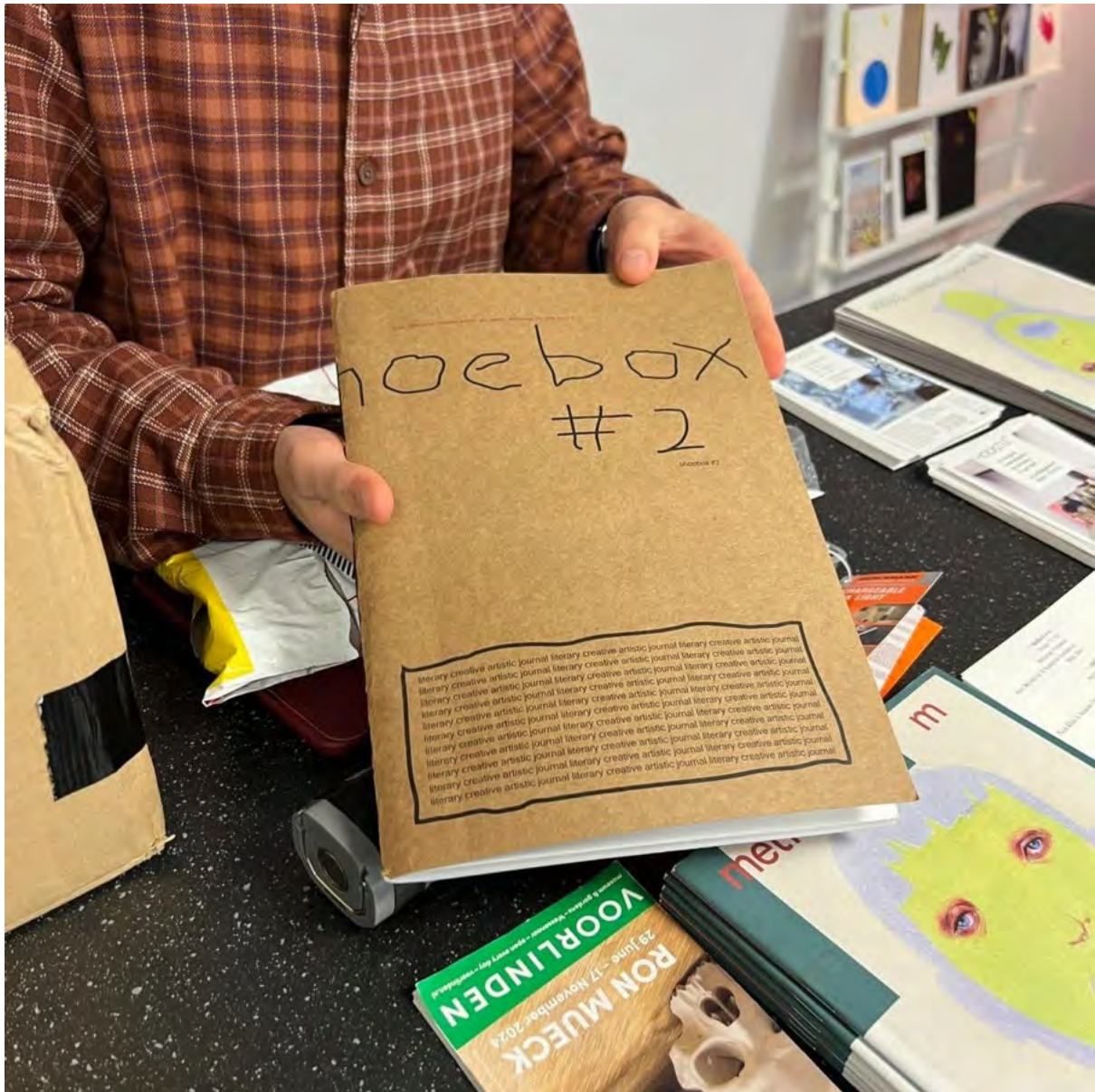
develop and grow the magazine together with everyone who is involved. *Shoebox* is operating in a certain context, but when new elements from different contexts become part of it, something super interesting happens. I was working in a library in Jordan this summer and suddenly I found a book in Swedish. I felt happy, excited: *Wow! How did this get here? What's the story behind it?* We're trying to enable that in *Shoebox*.

DM: In the introduction for the magazine you usually highlight the fluidity of the project, that you don't always know what direction it's going in, and you're good at letting it be what it is. I'm curious why you're exploring this specifically through a paper/PDF format magazine. What can be unlocked through this kind of publication compared to other media?

DF: I find that publications are special because you tend to not throw them away. I've always loved books – holding them, smelling them, looking at them, reading them – so making a physical publication is closer to my heart than anything else. The PDF is there on a very matter-of-fact level because of printing costs. We're running on a low, self-funded budget, so having it in PDF form is also a way of putting it out there when that isn't possible with physical copies.

DM: Currently you're in the process of working on your fifth issue of *Shoebox Magazine*, what's on the horizon? In which way do you think the elements and logistics of the magazine can still be fine-tuned?

DF: I think we'll just have to wait and see. We're still taking submissions, and the issue will take its form once they're in. Maybe the magazine will take a different shape soon, and that would be fine. To be honest, the logistics of making *Shoebox* are quite difficult, especially with a small team and having it self-funded and DIY. But again, that's the point. It's a constant process, and as long as we stay open and true to ourselves something new and exciting will happen. That's the core of it.



## Offensiv by Socialist Alternative

An interview with Vilgot Karlson by Vilhelm Rosenström Domeij

The group Socialist Alternative has produced the newspaper *Offensiv* since 1973. The following is an interview with Vilgot Karlson, who currently writes for the paper.

Vilhelm Rosenström Domeij: I would suggest that there is a general attitude in society that print is dead, that physical media doesn't have much of a role anymore in the age of social media. How do you see the future of physical papers and publications like *Offensiv*, and what advantages are there in printing a physical paper for contemporary political activism?

Vilgot Karlson: For the last circa 25 years, the paper has been partially funded by state subsidies intended to assist smaller papers. Although we haven't taken this support for granted, it has given us more freedom to print a weekly paper. However, due to changing criteria for receiving this money, and less money for all papers to share between them, we have to focus more on self-financing. The short-term future is likely a thicker monthly paper combined with weekly digital newsletters.

The advantage of a printed paper is that it won't be affected by a server error or if the platform provider decides to get rid of our voice on the Internet. A physical paper can be archived, you can use it as a poster, cut out important articles or pictures, and it is more likely that someone will read a physical paper they bought on the street rather than when they doomscroll on an app or website. Interviewing workers on strike, then coming back next week with a printed paper including that interview and photos is a solid way to show support. Many put those articles in their break room.

VRD: In addition to writing for the paper, many of you also participate in selling it, you put it out on the street quite literally. What kind of reactions do you get from the people you interact with, and do you think there is a market for these kinds of radical publications in our current media landscape?

VK: Selling the paper on the street is a good way to check the political temperature and mood in society. Sometimes a headline or slogan won't resonate with the general public at first, but then it can shift, such as with the Palestine movement against the war and genocide. At first, some people would argue in support of Israel's right to self-defence, but this became less common when the horrors in Gaza were put right in their faces for over two years.

VRD: The word propaganda has for most people a negative connotation, but within radical leftist circles the word seems to have a different resonance, with a distinction between 'bad' and 'good' propaganda. What do you think of the word propaganda and its use?

VK: When 90% of the editorial pages in Swedish papers are on the right, it means that we are going against the mainstream. Bourgeois media is propaganda, but so is our left-wing paper. The difference lies in the analysis and the intent. They maintain the system; we want to show an alternative.

VRD: While the revolutionary nature of the organisation behind *Offensiv* is a selling point for some people, including myself, a possible criticism of publications of explicitly political organisations is that it is easy to miss the other side of the argument. Do you think there is such a thing as unbiased journalism, and if so, should we always try to offer both sides a voice?

VK: No journalism is unbiased. There is always a choice in what to write, and what to exclude. The same paper can report on the same issue but have completely different perspectives and conclusions. Left-wing voices and explanation models are underrepresented in mainstream media, so we are not the ones who need to bring up both sides or amplify right-wing perspectives on our platforms. Rather it's the opposite

VRD: What do you think of working for an organisation that has a more explicit agenda? Do you think the things you write would be different if you were writing for a more politically neutral organisation?

VK: Yes, I think the reporting would be different, since we focus on what is important for the struggle, to raise consciousness and show good examples of how we can fight and win. We sometimes cover events, such as protests, that have zero national mainstream coverage, but we do so when it is an important cause to shine a light on – for our organisation and for the movements we write about.

# offensiv

Nº 1 1973  
Pris 1 kr

MARXISTISK TIDNING  
INOM ARBETARRÖRELSEN



## **VALET :**

med socialdemokratin  
för ett socialistiskt  
program !

## **SSU:are SVARTLISTAD!**

## **SKOGS- ARBETARNA:**

förstatliga bolags-  
skogarna!

## **the author is A double-edged Digital GashGirl**

Cut-up by Tiffany Olafson and Dylan Murray

*A Book Knot Book* (2024) – Sara Kaaman

pp. 41, 45, 79

*Midcareer Writing: Selected Essays* (2024) – Federico Sargentone

pp. 23, 8, 9, 13, 14, 15, 17, 18, 19, 20, 80, 81

*Nova Express* (1964) – William S. Burroughs

pp. 4, 5, 14, 21, 33, 69, 74

*Philosophy for Spiders: On the Low Theory of Kathy Acker* (2021) – McKenzie Wark

pp. 58, 59, 60, 145, 150–53, 156–60

*Cyberfeminism Index* (2022) – Mindy Seu

pp. 49, 54, 75, 120, 396

*The Death of the Author* (1967) – Roland Barthes

pp. 1–6

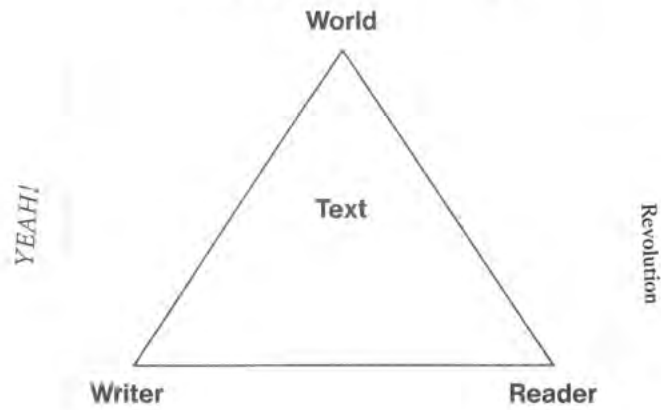
*Simulations* (1983) – Jean Baudrillard

pp. 96, 115, 142, back cover

the author is A double-edged Digital GashGirl

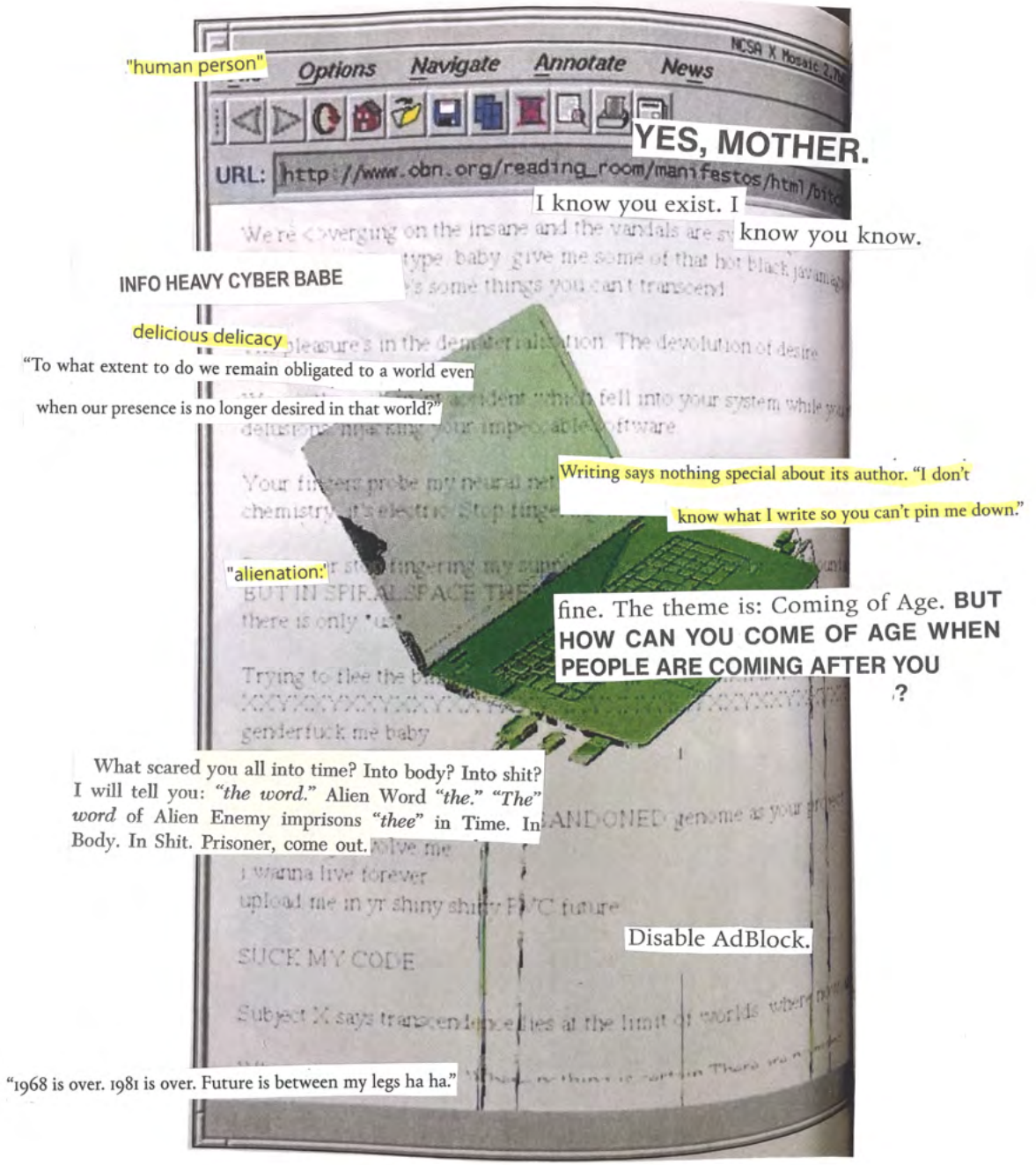
simple—This is machine strategy and the machine can be redirected—Record for ten minutes on a tape recorder—Now run the tape back without playing and cut in other words at random—Where you have cut in and re-recorded words are wiped off the tape and new words in their place—You have turned time back ten minutes and wiped electromagnetic word patterns off the tape and substituted other patterns—

meaning



words

Rewrite the narrative that's written for you—and for your generation.



'Operation Total Disposal.' All right you board bastards, we'll by God show you 'Operation Total Exposure.' For all to see. In Times Square. In Piccadilly."

THE

**CURRENCY OF YOUTH IS TRADED TO INVESTORS AND SHAREHOLDERS THROUGH EQUITY STAKES—MEANING: IF YOU BUY INTO IT, YOU'RE PART OF IT.**

How long could you hold that spot, you 'board members'? About thirty seconds I think with all your guard dogs. And you thought to channel my energies for 'operation total disposal'? Your 'operations' there or here this or that come and go and are no more. *Give my name back.* That name must be paid for. You have not paid. My name is not yours to use. Henceforth I think about thirty seconds is written."

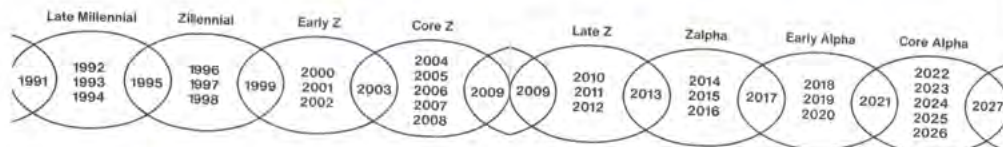
Generation Z. The internal value creation of this particular generation relies on authenticity and related set of behaviors such as political action, ecological awareness, and a strong sense of civic ethics.

"Bring together state of news—Inquire onward from state to doer—Who monopolized Immortality? Who monopolized Cosmic Consciousness? Who monopolized Love Sex and Dream? Who monopolized Life Time and Fortune? Who took from you what is yours? Now they will give it all back? Did they ever give anything away for nothing? Did they ever give any more than they had to give? Did they not always take back what they gave when possible and it always was? *Listen:* Their Garden Of Delights is a terminal sewer—

like a survival tactic worth recalling from past information wars. Dwell in the void of the noise.

How to be a writer who actually writes for their own times and not as if the nineteenth century machinery of the novel still had a world with which to engage?

entrusting to the hand the responsibility of writing as fast as possible what the head itself ignores



Is it universal wisdom? or romantic psychology?

Who got to be owners of the works they created?

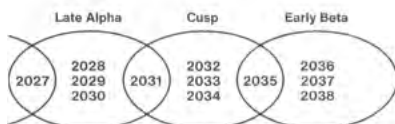
there might be a lot of ways to be a whore. It might and might not mean *sex worker*. Whoring might include a lot of other transactions, including those of artists.

the Author is supposed to feed the book — that is, he pre-exists it, thinks, suffers, lives for it; he maintains with his work the same relation of antecedence a father maintains with his child. And yet a writer is also a whore, renting or selling a capacity of the body,

the writer can only imitate a gesture forever anterior, never original; his only power is to combine the different kinds of writing, to make people disagree, or at least think.

Writing today means producing immaterial objects: we roleplay "literary"

BOOM!



I'M ROLAND BARTHES.

Desire..4..thA..World...2...  
 Read..My'Bookas...  
 TECHnological..J"TECH"..  
 would..mean..Iwas.."Modern"  
 Right?..

"I'd like to say that everything I do, every way I've seemed to feel, however I've seemed to grasp at you, are war tactics." (BG 127) Tactics can change.

In all this, I am an observer, and sometimes a witness or a participant—but never the main character. I have tried to weave my *hallucinatory resemblance of the real with itself*. To exist from the crisis of representation, you have to lock the real up in pure repetition.

(LM 232) "What I'm doing is

## UNMA(R)KING THE WORLD

reality is merely a secondary fragment, **sources of culture.**

language is always beyond me, me me me.

Writing is just another thing in the world, not the language of its essence.

It restores meaning to a world which hardship and suffering have revealed as chaotic and senseless." (BW 100) This is what writing can do for those who are beasts, slaves, or women.

—Even so there is a devious underground operating through telepathic misdirection and camouflage—The partisans make recordings ahead in time and leave the recordings to be picked up by control stations while they are free for a few seconds to organize underground activities—Largely the underground is made up of adventurers who intend to outthink and displace the present heads—There has been one revolution in the

[...] combined ... utopic vision of corrupting patriarchy with an unbounded enthusiasm for the new tools of technology. It embraced gender and identity politics, allowing fluid and non-gendered identities to flourish through the digital medium. The post-corporeal female would be an online frontier woman, creating our own virtual worlds and colonizing the amorphous world of cyberspace.

This first version of **show business** was a flame, a moment, a spam which became hip. It was an impulse which became a commodity. [...]

(this was automatic

“Now we must find a worthy vessel,” he said and we  
flush out this old goof ball artist  
| come to life.

“We Have Proven That Communication Is Impossible.”

**MORE**

**CONTENT**

**THAN**

**CONTEXT**

much of it copied but  
not even properly copied. A theory where object and subject are vague  
pulsations, haphazard events, but where even the relation between them  
has no definite quality, either of dialectic or difference.

“Emily in Paris” but it’s “Emily on Heroin.”

nipulated,

Crab Nebula

## Oraklets ark

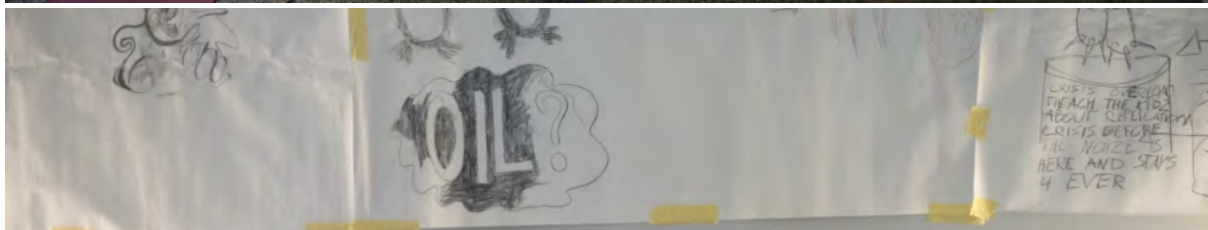
Written and developed by Sara Kaaman,  
together with Index's Curator of Learning Tony Karlsson Savci.

Read by Sara Kaaman and Tony Karlsson Savci on 16 August 2025 at Sara's studio in Bagarmossen, Stockholm, Sweden.

Read by Michaela Yarmol-Matusiak and Tony Karlsson Savci on 10 October 2025 at the "Future Futures" conference in Helsinki, Finland, and live-streamed via the Index, Praksis and PUBLICS Instagram feeds.

*Oraklets ark* is a roleplay of the imagination set in the year 2125. The work invites participants into a future shaped by shared knowledge and material remembrance – a social landscape without mobile devices, where new languages, gestures, and forms have emerged. Kaaman's script serves as a guide into this speculative world: through an encounter with an oracle, a descent into a cave and a slow, spiral passage that drifts between memory and space.

Within this unfolding narrative, participants are encouraged to collectively imagine, recount and reshape stories of what another world might be. The work becomes both a site of future projection and a communal act of world-making, where imagination operates as a method for attending to what has been, what remains and what could still come.



## Oraklets Ark

### 1. *THRESHOLD*

We are about to enter a different time and place, a future time and place. In a 100 years, in 2125, a different world awaits us, and the oracle awaits us.

Before we go on this journey, you have to leave a few things behind.

Take off your shoes – the ground you’re walking into doesn’t belong to this time, it needs the sensitivity of your feet.

Leave your phone in this present time, it won’t work in the future.

Leave your language and your assumptions behind – they won’t make sense where we’re going.

Bring your object with you – something of personal meaning relating to communication, connection and relation. What memories, emotions and energy does it hold? The object and your story around it will work as a protection, memory and a key.

Bring your blanket and your pillow – you’ll need comfort where we’re going, even if the world looks different.

When you are ready, get ready to travel. Welcome to enter.

## 2. *ENTER THE CAVE*

When you enter this new time, spread out and find a place to put your blanket and lie down.

This journey begins in silence, in stillness, in the letting go of this world. Close your eyes when you're ready.

Let the year 2125 rise up around you.

### 3. *BODY*

Let your breath move in and out, just as it does.

There is nothing to do.

Just listen. Just feel.

We begin.

Notice the air touching your whiskers, maybe they twitch a little.

If you have antennae, can you feel the tiny messages they're picking up?

Your ears, wherever they are, feel them adjust, rotate, settle.

Maybe they catch distant sounds.

Maybe they fold back to rest.

Feel your wings.

Let them fold gently,

No need to fly right now.

Front limbs: arms, paws, claws.

Do they ache? Tingle?

Let them relax.

Bring attention to your chest

Feel the breath move in and out.

Rise and fall, or hum, vibrate.

Let it move however it wants,

Let your belly breathe.

From your neck down to the base.

Let it stretch.

Let it rest.

Feel the weight of your hips. Heavy.

Tail, stinger, whatever is here, say to it: you're allowed to rest.

Feel your back legs, however many legs you have.

Notice their weight. Let them soften.

Your feet. Soft and padded, clawed or stick-like suction cups.

Let them spread. Let go.

Now zoom out  
Feel your whole body,  
You are here  
You are resting.

Take a deep breath,  
from the tips of your whiskers  
to the ends of your tail.  
And exhale.

#### 4. *THE CAVE*

Welcome searchers.

You are in a cave. The year 2125 is rising up around you.

What is this world? Where are you? All around you lie relics of tools for community, for rebellion, for connection. Do you remember them? Do you remember how you used to use them? How they used to use you?

This world is so different.

You're in this cave to find rest, and to meet the oracle. This is her cave.

She is waiting for you.

She can perhaps tell you about this world, and about other worlds to come.

Thirty thousand years ago, someone placed their hand against the walls of this cave and sprayed pigment over it. This created a coloured halo around the hand. When she did this, her hand transformed from a tool into an image. Even though the moment of this action took place thousands of years ago, it still exists.

But what is this world?

If you would peek out through the opening of this cave you would see fields of love. You would see a world where power doesn't belong to the power hungry, it belongs to the people. Truly. In 2025 "power to the people" was a clichéd utopia, a slogan used to sell things. The people in power were laughing at the idea of justice, of peace, of liberation, of food and housing for all. They were dancing around fires made of money and petrol.

I know you. I remember you. I remember that you were some of those dreamers, some of those who looked and searched for other ways of living, of being. The world was in deep pain; you could feel its pain in your bones.

Where you are now, the world is at peace. Can you believe that? Can you imagine a world without wars? Sure, there are conflicts, but there are no weapons. None. There are no ways of killing other human beings. It's really impossible.

Did you think money would still be here? I hope you didn't bring any, cards or cash, it would be useless. You could give it to the children to play with, to draw on.

Borders, we left them in 2067. All are welcome to go where they wish here. The land is tended to by all. The people grow vegetables, community, share housing. We dig for carrots, not gold, not oil, not minerals.

How did we get here, how did this kind of world come into being? It's easy – and you know it. People came together! All the people who saw that only love will build a lasting world. That punishment and violence will breed further punishment and violence. Simply coming together and struggling. Of course it was a struggle. It was hard, hard work. But it was worth it. There were enormous amounts of hope and trust. Hope and trust, in that it was possible. Not impossible, which the people in power were trying to tell you.

The most powerful tool you have is your imagination. The most powerful tool they had was their imagination. These people, your sons, your daughters, your no-gendered and all-gendered children, they put fertiliser on their imagination and it grew into a powerful beast. A beast of a million people believing in a world built on love. On interdependence, the fact that we are all carefully woven together, we belong together, whether it feels like that or not.

## 5. *CHARACTER SHEET*

The oracle has been waiting for you here.

She wants to know you, she wants to understand you.

Who are you in this world?

You left your old self in 2025, and this is now.

Who are you in a world of peace, of freedom, of community?

What's your name? Which dreams do you bring with you?

When you are ready, develop your character sheet in the water and place it on the wall of this cave.

## 6. *THE ORACLE*

Sit down in a circle.

You are ready to meet the oracle now.

She is here as a collection of sheets of paper sheets in front of us.

In your world, wisdom was made from paper. You cut down trees to spread knowledge. Wild forests, mosses, lichen were made into industrial fields of forest factories.

In this world, we spread knowledge in other ways, but we have kept your trust in paper as a keeper of wisdom. We have saved scraps of paper from your time and they now belong to the oracle. These sheets can tell us about our pasts and presents and futures.

As usual, the oracle is blank when we meet her. She needs us to build dreams, hallucinations, landscapes of new worlds. She needs our stories, our memories, our voices. She needs your offerings.

When we light this candle, the oracle is awakened and you are invited, one by one, to share your offering with the oracle.

You will share your offering by telling the oracle the story about the object you brought. When you have told your story, you will draw the outlines of your object onto the oracle sheet.

As witnesses to the oracle and the offering, we are important. We hold our attention on the offering, on the story.

The oracle has heard you.

She has taken your stories, your objects, your memories into her folds. Your offerings have become part of her.

Now, another part of this journey begins.

You will carry what has happened – what you felt, what you saw, what you heard – to the walls of this cave.

Follow the tripadvisor on a journey through the spiral path to the walls of this cave.

Do you remember how, 30,000 years ago, someone placed their hand against this cave wall and sprayed pigment over it? Now it's your turn.

This is where your imprints are made. Not of your object this time, but of your meeting.

What has happened here? What should be saved for the future or for the past? What signs and traces?

Like skin, these walls wait for your touch.

In your time, the first stories were not written. They were carved. Stamped. Smearred. A hand pressed to stone, surrounded by pigment – not a sentence, but a presence.

Now you will follow that same path. The oracle has heard you and now she asks you to echo back onto the walls.

Choose a place on these walls and leave your marks. Let your body speak what language cannot and paint the echo of the offerings. Trace what remains in you. Shapes? Letters? Blurs? Questions?

There is no right way, only your way. And as you, dreamers, searchers and hoppers, imprint alongside each other, we stay close to silence. We listen to each other's movements. We hold the space for each other – as we leave our marks, together, in the oracle's cave. We are not alone. We are a forest of gestures. A memory and a future spreading across the stone.

The cave holds your imprints now. The oracle has received your stories. She has listened in silence. She will carry what you gave her – through time, shadow, memory, dream.

Now it's time to let her rest.

In your world, you blew out candles for wishes. For birthdays. For silence. For endings. In this world, too, breath is a gift. Breath is what begins and ends all things.

So now together, we offer one last breath in this world, a shared breath and a breath that closes this moment.

On the count of three, we will blow out the flame. Gently. Together. Let the darkness be soft.

One...

Two...

Three.

The flame is out, the oracle is sleeping, the cave is quiet, her sheet is full.

Something has changed and you carry it in your breath, your hands, your chest. A trace of a question. A glimmer of a world that might be. A memory from a time not yet.

When you are ready, gather your things and leave this world.

## Oraklets ark / Welcome

Written and developed by Sara Kaaman,  
together with Index's Curator of Learning Tony Karlsson Savci.

Intervention by Moa Zhang  
Illustration by Diane Nozynska  
Epilogue by Mila Frances



1. *THRESHOLD / WELCOME*

Two people, two stories and two different mindsets are soon going to change and mend. Will they miss the people they were before? Maybe they will, maybe they won't.

The night swallows you whole, a young woman walks towards the cave. The world around echoes her quiet. She has come to find what she's looking for.

A voice, a soul, an existence appears.

To enter the cave.

Introduction to the tale.

Leave materialism.

Bring only comfort and importance.

Find a place to rest.

Time to teleport.

We are about to enter a different time and place, a future time and place. In a 100 years, in 2125, a different world awaits us, and the oracle awaits us.

A different time and place, she has to know what the world becomes. The bitter hopeless thoughts are too much to bear, she doesn't want to believe that humans are truly fated to ruin.

She moves cautiously, placing one foot by the line that leads to the other side, questioning again if this would be a clever choice. It is the only way to find out. She takes the leap. However, rejected, she tumbles onto the floor. The voice speaks again.

Before we go on this journey, you have to leave a few things behind.

Tension builds.

Take off your shoes – the ground you're walking into doesn't belong to this time, it needs the sensitivity of your feet.

Her heartbeat quickens and cold sweat glistens on her forehead. It's not often you're asked to be sensitive. She's having difficulty with what that means.

Leave your phone in this present time, it won't work in the future.

Frustration beckons. If she can't document proof, it will be as valuable as a fever dream.

Wait. She is doing this for herself, right?

Maybe we're inherently doing everything for someone else...

Leave your language and your assumptions behind – they won't make sense where we're going.

Reassured that the future isn't there to judge her, she listens again. Though a quick realisation arrives; that assumptions are programmed into her morals, behaviour and way of being. Trying to let go doesn't happen that easily.

Bring your object with you – something of personal meaning relating to communication, connection and relation. What memories, emotions and energy does it hold? The object and your story around it will work as a protection, memory and a key.

She holds her object in front, hidden away in the hoodie's pocket, close to her intestines, keeping it hers.

Bring your blanket and your pillow – you'll need comfort where we're going, even if the world looks different.

She has herself. There's no need for anything else.

When you are ready, get ready to travel. Welcome to enter.

Another young woman appears as she crosses the line.

## 2. *ENTER THE CAVE / TO*

When you enter this new time, spread out and find a place to put your blanket and lie down.

The two young women stare at each other. So opposite they are. One has curly hair and the other one straight. One wears baggy clothes, the other wears a dress.

Mara sits down on a stone, she's not here to make friends. *Dress* sits down on the floor, pulls her knees up to her chin and rests leaning her back onto Mara's legs. She looks up and smiles. Mara nods.

"What's your name?"

"Mara." Now they have greeted each other, no need for more.

"Dulcie."

This journey begins in silence, in stillness, in the letting go of this world. Close your eyes when you're ready.

The instructor's identity remains hidden as they both listen blindly and close their eyes. They realise how much rest their eyelids had longed for.

In our world there's so much to take in, you have to either be watching each other or be watching yourselves. The eyes stay closed and they let their thoughts land on the ground. The two strangers feel some sort of connection with each other. Why? Stays a mystery.

Let the year 2125 rise up around you.

Then it does. The year 2125 feels like death and birth combined with everything they've yearned for.

### 3. *BODY/THE*

Let your breath move in and out, just as it does. Feel grateful.

There is nothing to do.

Just listen. Just feel. *just.*

We begin. towards nothing.

Notice the air touching your whiskers, maybe they twitch a little.

Almost as if the voice knows. Mara's whiskers twitch. She can sense every indent, every stone, every particle of the cave – it scares her.

If you have antennae, can you feel the tiny messages they're picking up?

Dulcie, half asleep, reacts. Her antennae now sense weird vibrations; she stands up and tries to calm herself. She can't. A piercing scream exits her.

"The images, the nightmares, the fear," she mutters, as she falls onto the floor.

As she gets up again, Mara glances at Dulcie with distaste.

Your ears, wherever they are, feel them adjust, rotate, settle.

Maybe they catch distant sounds.

Maybe they fold back to rest.

The two girls don't have ears. Sounds break your ability to think clearly.

Feel your wings.

Let them fold gently, The girl with wings gathers them around herself, almost like a shield.

They fold hastily, true vulnerability doesn't come as easy.

No need to fly right now. neither from problems, nor existence.

Front limbs: arms, paws, claws.

Do they ache? Tingle?

Let them relax.

Holding her object still in front of her, Mara's arms ache. She aches all over, she aches for the answer.

Dulcie hides her object in her clenched fist, she aches too, from upholding image and happiness. Relaxation has a cost that neither of them is ready to pay.

Bring attention to your chest. **See.**

Feel the breath move in and out. Rise and fall, or hum, vibrate.

**The one with the hoodie feels a sudden impulse to hold her breath and never take one again. Wouldn't that be quite the beautiful death?**

Let it move however it wants,  
Let your belly breathe.

From your neck down to the base.  
Let it stretch.  
Let it rest.

**The dimly lit cave doesn't feel that scary anymore. They have accepted it and could sense the cave's every indent accepting them back. The small cave seemed to have also grown bigger.**

Feel the weight of your hips. Heavy.

**As heavy as a friend's death.**

Tail, stinger, whatever is here, say to it: you're allowed to rest.

**Am I? Do I deserve rest? Both their thoughts intertwined.**

Feel your back legs, however many legs you have.  
Notice their weight. Let them soften.  
**How? How do you feel soft?**

Your feet. Soft and padded, clawed or stick-like suction cups.  
Let them spread. Let go.  
**How? How does one let go?**

Now zoom out  
Feel your whole body  
You are here  
You are resting.

**I'm not.**

Take a deep breath,  
from the tips of your whiskers  
to the ends of your tail.

And exhale.

**Mara does.**

**Dulcie has neither of the traits.**

#### 4. *THE CAVE/FUTURE*

Welcome searchers.

Seemingly, the word searcher felt fair, the label secure. Since we all are. Searching.

You are in a cave. The year 2125 is rising up around you.

What is this world? Where are you? All around you lie relics of tools for community, for rebellion, for connection. Do you remember them? Do you remember how you used to use them? How they used to use you?

Of course they do. And all of a sudden, the mighty screens felt so pathetic. Letting something that small hold the entirety of you and all your connections. No wonder people became so sad. The one with straight hair laughs.

This world is so different.

So much better.

You're in this cave to find rest, and to meet the oracle. This is her cave. She is waiting for you.

"She?" They assumed the narrator was the Oracle. Yet again, curiosity rises up: will the Oracle be kind or be cruel? What will the Oracle look like?

She can perhaps tell you about this world, and about other worlds to come.

Mara waited excitedly. Finally, she'll know the truth.

Thirty thousand years ago, someone placed their hand against the walls of this cave and sprayed pigment over it. This created a coloured halo around the hand.

Honouring the hand, appreciating a physical part of ourselves.

When she did this, her hand transformed from a tool into an image. Even though the moment of this action took place thousands of years ago, it still exists.

The two girls felt this was now almost becoming a lesson. They didn't quite realise what they were supposed to learn.

But what is this world?

Unknown.

If you would peek out through the opening of this cave you would see fields of love.

Fields of love didn't sit right with Mara. Love is to be treasured, since there's not enough for everyone. Now they're fields?

You would see a world where power doesn't belong to the power hungry, it belongs to the people.

Mara takes another step back. How can that be?

Truly. In 2025 "power to the people" was a clichéd utopia, a slogan used to sell things. The people in power were laughing at the idea of justice, of peace, of liberation, of food and housing for all. They were dancing around fires made of money and petrol.

Exactly. So this can't be right.

I know you. I remember you. I remember that you were some of those dreamers, some of those who looked and searched for other ways of living, of being. The world was in deep pain; you could feel its pain in your bones.

Mara slides down from her stone and lies on the floor. She's defeated. She's understood.

Where you are now, the world is at peace. Can you believe that? Can you imagine a world without wars? Sure, there are conflicts, but there are no weapons. None. There are no ways of killing other human beings. It's really impossible.

Everything she has hoped to hear; tears stream down her face.

Did you think money would still be here? I hope you didn't bring any, cards or cash, it would be useless. You could give it to the children to play with, to draw on.

Mara laughs out of pure joy. Money, useless! She can't believe it.

Borders, we left them in 2067. All are welcome to go where they wish here. The land is tended to by all. The people grow vegetables, community, share housing. We dig for carrots, not gold, not oil, not minerals.

**Mara revels in pure bliss. Humanity. Humanity had somehow succeeded in looking past its greed!**

How did we get here, how did this kind of world come into being?

**Mara closes her eyes. The truth soothes her. Let's hear the solution. It feels too good to be true.**

It's easy – and you know it. People came together! All the people who saw that only love will build a lasting world. That punishment and violence will breed further punishment and violence. Simply coming together and struggling. Of course it was a struggle. It was hard, hard work. But it was worth it. There were enormous amounts of hope and trust. Hope and trust, in that it was possible. Not impossible, which the people in power were trying to tell you.

**Wait. That has to be it, it's too good to be true.**

The most powerful tool you have is your imagination. The most powerful tool they had was their imagination. These people, your sons, your daughters, your no-gendered and all-gendered children, they put fertiliser on their imagination and it grew into a powerful beast. A beast of a million people believing in a world built on love. On interdependence, the fact that we are all carefully woven together, we belong together, whether it feels like that or not.

Woken up from her dream-like feeling, Mara thinks again. That can't be. All humans moving together for one cause. It's as likely as... It's as likely as world peace. The realisation hits her. Still, her bitterness won't believe it. Pride consumes her. She's right. The cave lies. Turns around to see Dulcie's reaction. She looks no different from before.

## 5. *CHARACTER SHEET / BITTER*

The oracle has been waiting for you here.  
She wants to know you, she wants to understand you.  
Who are you in this world?

**I'm no one, Mara writes.**

**I'm Mara, Dulcie writes.**

You left your old self in 2025, and this is now.  
Who are you in a world of peace, of freedom, of community?

**I'm no one, Mara writes yet again.**

**I'm Dulcie.**

What's your name? Which dreams do you bring with you?

**I'm Mara. I want the truth to soothe my bitterness.**

**I'm Dulcie, I want to once again know the joy of pain.**

When you are ready, develop your character sheet in the water and place it on the wall of this cave.

Side by side, they read each other's dreams. They have yet to realise they're each other's answer.

## 6. *THE ORACLE/SWEET*

Sit down in a circle.

Mara sits down, Dulcie opposite her.

You are ready to meet the oracle now.

Mara doesn't know what to expect. She doesn't even know if the Oracle is a person, or not.

She is here as a collection of paper sheets in front of us.

Confused, Mara looks at the paper. This. The paper. Is the Oracle? But it's of no power, she had been played. She rises to exit the cave. A shiver runs down her spine as she gets pulled onto the floor and can't move at all.

The voice continues, now with a more humoured tone.

In your world, wisdom was made from paper. You cut down trees to spread knowledge. Wild forests, mosses, lichen were made into industrial fields of forest factories.

In this world, we spread knowledge in other ways, but we have kept your trust in paper as a keeper of wisdom. We have saved scraps of paper from your time and they now belong to the oracle. These sheets can tell us about our pasts and presents and futures.

Mara fights the invisible power but can't seem to make a sound. Something as fragile as paper. Is the whole world Oracle? How can paper tell the past, presents and futures? It's paper. It's empty and bland. Dulcie looks bored.

As usual, the oracle is blank when we meet her. The voice seemingly read Mara's mind. She needs us to build dreams, hallucinations, landscapes of new worlds. She needs our stories, our memories, our voices. She needs your offerings.

Neither of the two young women had ever liked writing. Everything on paper feels so permanent. As if you leave a mark. As if you leave a part of yourself.

When we light this candle, the oracle is awakened and you are invited to, one by one, share your offering with the oracle.

Dulcie and Mara step forward.

You will share your offering by telling the oracle the story about the object you brought. When you have told your story, you will draw the outlines of your object onto the oracle sheet.

As witnesses to the oracle and the offering, we are important. We hold our attention on the offering, on the story.

Dulcie begins. She places a white cube on the sheet. Traces its sides and corners.

“I believe sweetness brings happiness. I offer a piece of joy.” The outlines of the sugar cube suddenly light up, then fade just as quickly.

Mara steps forward. From her hood’s pocket she brings out a bitter melon.

“I believe bitterness brings truth. I offer reality as it is harsh.” The outlines of the bitter melon begin bending themselves. The lines dance on the paper as they meld into one.

They blink. The paper disappears.

The oracle has heard you.

She has taken your stories, your objects, your memories into her folds. Your offerings have become part of her.

**With each moment passing Mara becomes more scared. The cave, the voice, the Oracle all control her. She notices Dulcie staring at her, with jealousy?**

Now, another part of this journey begins.

**Mara wishes for it to end.**

You will carry what has happened – what you felt, what you saw, what you heard – to the walls of this cave.

Follow the tripadvisor on a journey through the spiral path to the walls of this cave.

**Mara feels her reluctant body move by itself.**

**Dulcie flies beside her.**

Do you remember how, 30,000 years ago, someone placed their hand against this cave wall and sprayed pigment over it? Now it's your turn.

This is where your imprints are made. Not of your object this time, but of your meeting.

What has happened here? What should be saved for the future or for the past? What signs and traces?

Like skin, these walls wait for your touch.

**Wait like skin. For touch.**

In your time, the first stories were not written. They were carved. Stamped. Smearred. A hand pressed to stone, surrounded by pigment – not a sentence, but a presence.

Now you will follow that same path. The oracle has heard you and now she asks you to echo back onto the walls.

Choose a place on these walls and leave your marks. Let your body speak what language cannot and paint the echo of the offerings. Trace what remains in you. Shapes? Letters? Blurs? Questions?

**Dulcie and Mara draw upon each other's drawings. Handprint on handprint. Their drawings merging into one.**

There is no right way, only your way. And as you, dreamers, searchers and hoppers, imprint alongside each other, we stay close to silence. We listen to each other's movements. We hold the space for each other – as we leave our marks, together, in the oracle's cave. We are not alone. We are a forest of gestures. A memory and a future spreading across the stone.

The cave holds your imprints now. The oracle has received your stories. She has listened in silence. She will carry what you gave her – through time, shadow, memory, dream.

Now it's time to let her rest.

In your world, you blew out candles for wishes. For birthdays. For silence. For endings. In this world, too, breath is a gift. Breath is what begins and ends all things.

**Mara and Dulcie both breathe in.**

So now together, we offer one last breath in this world, a shared breath and a breath that closes this moment.

On the count of three, we will blow out the flame. Gently. Together. Let the darkness be soft.

One...

Two...

Three.

**Mara and Dulcie breathe out.**

The flame is out, the oracle is sleeping, the cave is quiet, her sheet is full.

Something has changed and you carry it in your breath, your hands, your chest. A trace of a question. A glimmer of a world that might be. A memory from a time not yet.

When you are ready, gather your things and leave this world.

**Two people, two stories and two different mindsets, have changed and mended.**

**One from the future, one from the past.**

**Bitter becomes bittersweet, unable to accept the truth that does not align with hers.**

**Someone happy is doomed to always look back.**

**You can't remove your old self.**

**Jealousy grows its roots.**

**Sweet becomes bittersweet too.**

## **somewhere on the timeline**

Mila Frances

You are ready to ask a million questions. They know the only way to get you to quieten down is by way of the television. They don't mind what you watch. They just need to breathe for a few minutes.

You are ready to ask a million questions, but you are too afraid. You just pretend you understand instead.

You are supposed to think of a question to find the answer to and write it down. Your head hurts.

Your head won't stop hurting, there is too much inside it. You want to empty it, but you are distracted before you have time to release everything inside it. Now you feel something decomposing deep in there.

There is a slight smell of rot... Best to ignore it.

The storm has been going on for months now. The wind and the lightning will not stop. The rain has flooded all the rubbish bins and waste is floating around in the streets. Grandma can't see all the way down there from the window. She asks if they're brightly coloured fish, swimming on the road. The storm seemed to come out of nowhere. Why did the world suddenly turn on itself? The news says we can all go outside again for another 30 days. Most people have lost track of how many days the chaos has been going on for and what day of the week it is. Nothing else is being broadcast anymore, just the news, and the news feels like nothing new when all it does is repeat itself.

You reach a new depth of boredom, a slow dreary feeling that cannot be chased away but has to be washed out and cleansed thoroughly. You decide to kill time by going through the boxes in the attic. You haven't gone up there in a long time. There are spiders, and there is barely any light. After sweeping away the layers of grey dust that have gathered over it with time, you open the first box. You look down and staring back at you are endless sheets of yellowing paper, interspersed with coloured pieces of cardboard keeping the mess of words both separated and held together.

The descriptions of the world hurt your eyes, the conversation tugs at your heart. The imaginations that applied then are gone now, visible only through the lack of them. You wish you had something to write with. Instead you begin to rip the book's pages out in chunks. You fold them into patterns, you weave them until a small, square raft lies before you on the carpet.

You open the window and sail out.

The Oracle is patient, she will listen to what matters to you. She will let you take your time. She will let you be what you wish to be, or what you don't, or what others want you to be. But what if you could no longer speak to her in a raging and fleeting world, all as a distraction from the grief that accompanies the possibility that it is dying much sooner than you think? There are many ways to speak to her. There are many ways to fail to do so. Our capability to create, to express ourselves is unlikely ever going to be taken away from us. But we can lose our tools to hold on to it.

“Tragedy is, therefore, an imitation of a noble and complete action [...] which through compassion [...] produces purification of the passions.”

—Aristotle, *Poetics*

I would like to think that this goes for almost any story, even non-fiction books. *Learning* could produce a kind of purification of passions. Not only purification, but also expansion. It is about engagement in meaning. This is the very last thing that we can afford to give up on in our current society. If reading printed matter, especially books, is a mental and emotional process, scrolling on a screen instead of turning a page is much more a chemical one, present in the wires of our brains, in the hormones in our blood, rather than at the core of it all – the head or the heart. Companies now profit from meaninglessness, when what we really need is something to restore our hope, a thread to hold on to, an anchor and a rope, a connection.

What action in a story can be complete if we lose the beginning, middle and end of it? If that happens, what action can be complete? The Oracle can help us find meaning, help us tie things together. We need to solidify, to share our point of view.

The solidity of a physical publication could be considered more important now than ever, since it is immune to so many issues of our online consumption. Platform decay, echo chambers, censorship – which is doing both too much and not enough to protect certain people – and so many other such problems are reduced or disappear completely with a physical format. Once you own a book, it is yours and it can be modified only by those with direct access to it.

In a world without competition for personal gain, where we don't scramble for attention, money or, above all, power, we can create a language wide enough to hold all of us.

## **Books Are Magic**

By falk

The idea for this comic was developed after a workshop held by artist and dramaturg Ruby Nilson together with ITAB in August 2025. The artist and graphic designer falk was commissioned to create a comic as part of ITAB's contributions to this book. Together with board members Kiara Eifert and Elin Karlsson, falk developed a comic outline. In turn, Kiara and Elin developed this outline into a full script.



it's 3005.

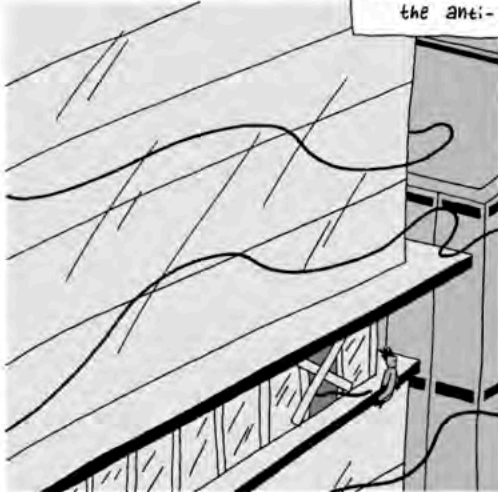
Page

I



50 years ago, everyone's consciousnesses were uploaded to \* [the singularity].

you escaped, and now live in a hideout at the edge of a city in the physical world, together with other members of the anti-\*-collective.



One day, when you are on a scouting mission,

you happen upon an old building that you haven't seen before.



a sign hangs over the entrance,

but in \*, you never learned how to read.

there was no need for it.



curious, you start to explore.

Your boss would probably not like that you're doing this on your own.

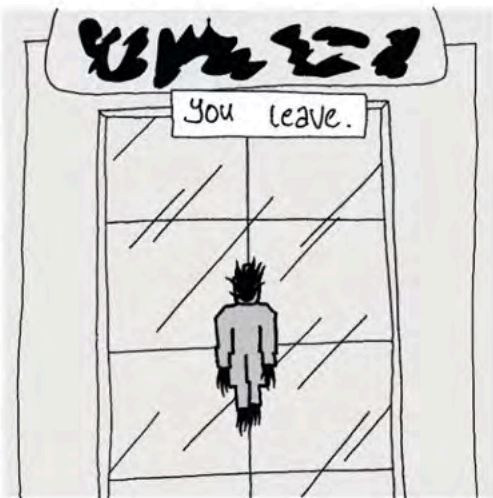
but right now, you don't care.

the shelves seem to be filled with books, relics from a distant past.



now you have to decide.  
do you...

- > OPEN the book.  
[go to page 100.]
- > PUT the book back.  
[keep reading.]



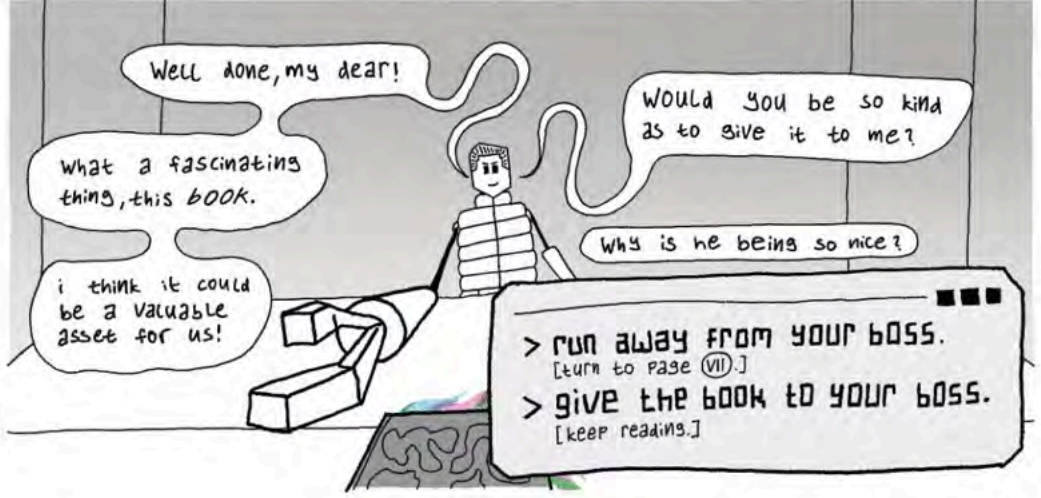
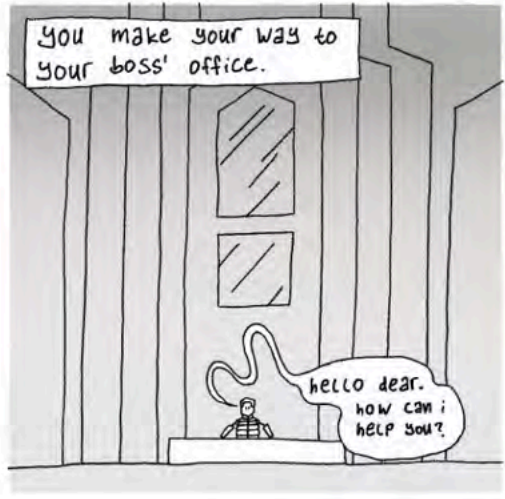
> OPEN the book.

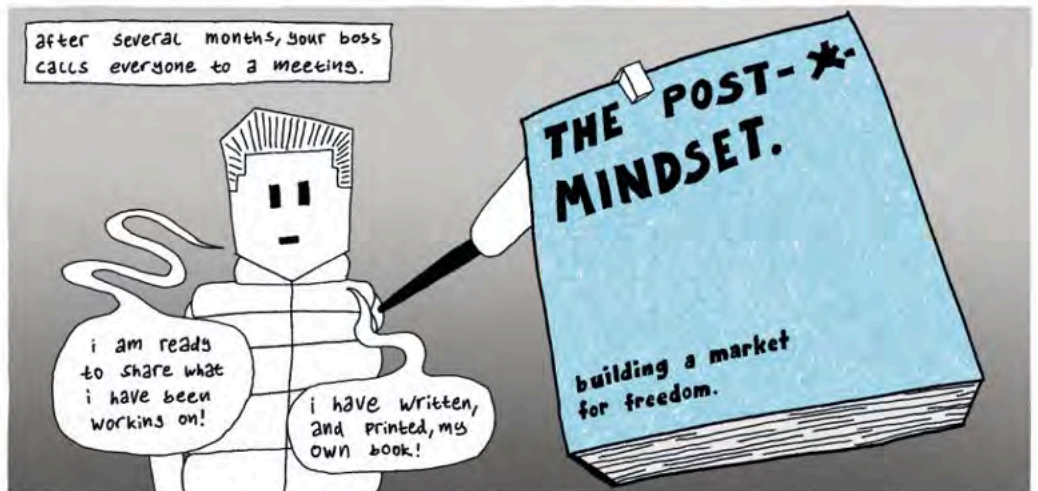
curiosity takes over.

III

What an unusual artefact!

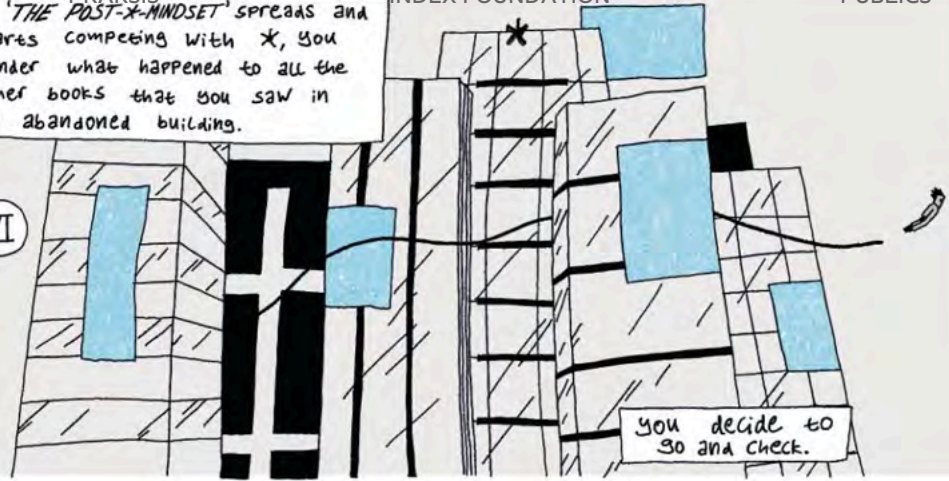






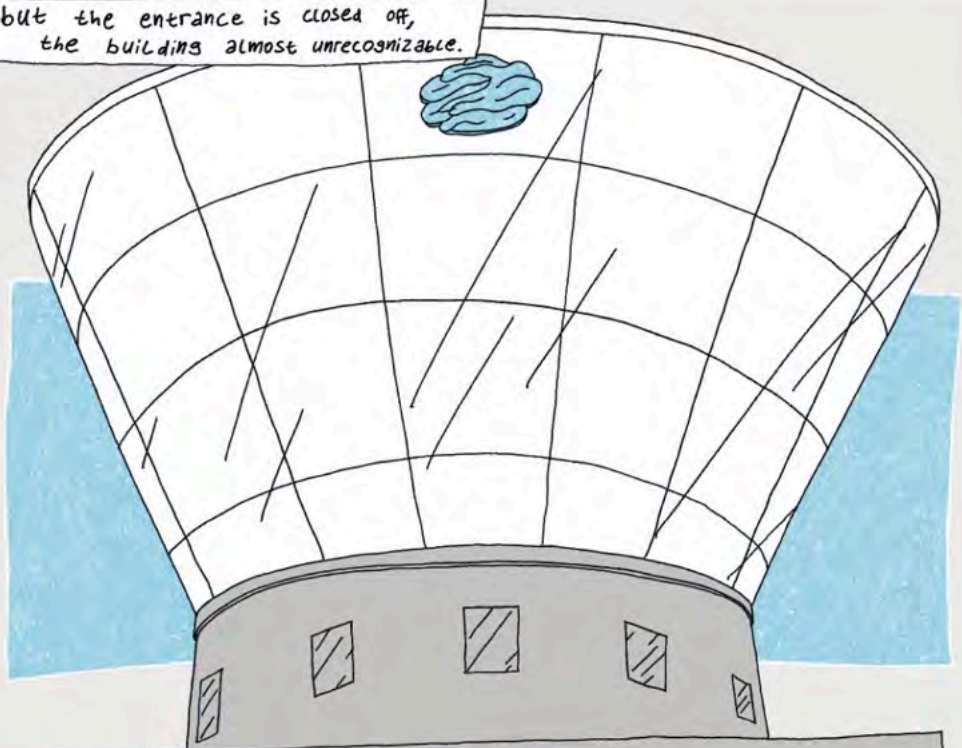
as 'THE POST-X-MINDSET' spreads and starts competing with X, you wonder what happened to all the other books that you saw in the abandoned building.

VI



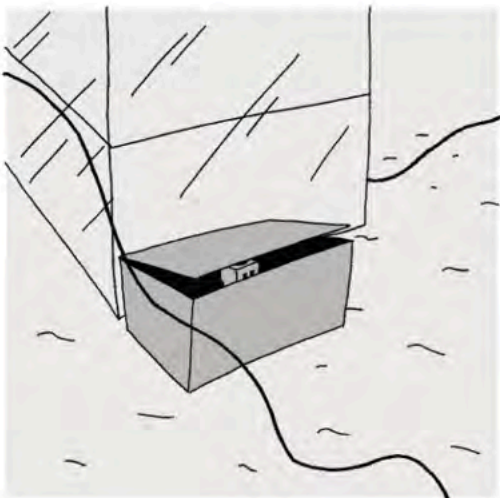
you decide to go and check.

but the entrance is closed off, the building almost unrecognizable.



you don't know exactly what, but you know something's important got lost.

the end.



Who... what are you?!

i have been waiting for you.

i am the oracle.

VIII

What do you want from me?

for centuries, i have been here, watching over this space. i am the soul of the books in these shelves. but i have been abandoned and forgotten. i have waited for someone to return, to pass on my gift.

i have been waiting for you.

Pass on what gift?

the ability to read.

You feel something change.

I would go so far as to say that natural, fitting shape of the novel might be that of a sack, a bag. A book holds words. Words hold things. The

it is amazing!

You need to share this with everybody! join me and teach my friends!

i'm afraid my work here is done. return to this library when you have spread your knowledge.

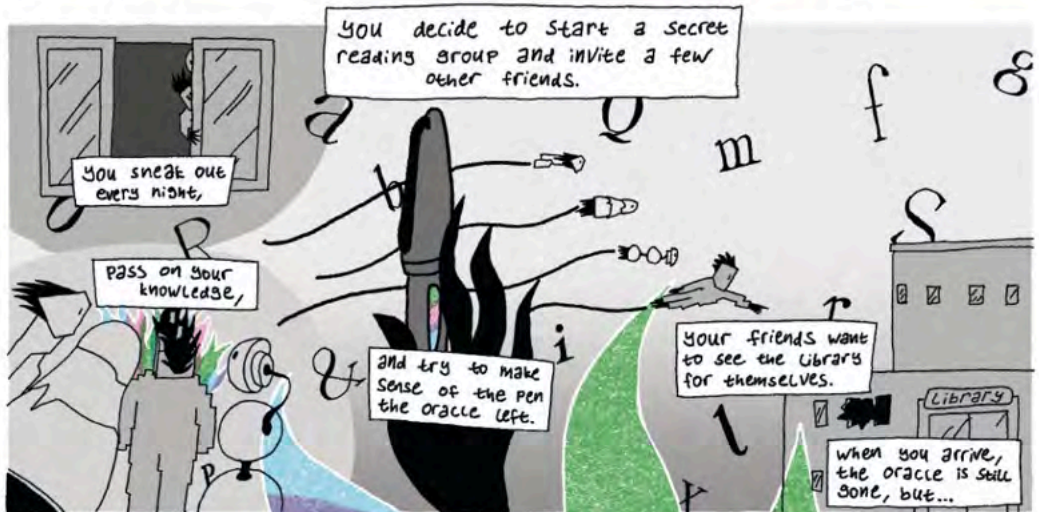
Library?

With that, the oracle disappears, leaving behind one last gift:



a Pen.







## Singularity

By Kiara Eifert and Elin Karlsson with falk

The idea for the *Books Are Magic* comic was developed after a workshop led by artist and dramaturg Ruby Nilson with ITAB in August 2025. With comic artist and graphic designer falk, Kiara Eifert and Elin Karlsson developed an outline for the comic, titled *Singularity*. Kiara and Elin then developed the outline into a full script, titled *Light-Beam Blaster*. Between them, the comic, the outline and the script explore the translation and mediation of ideas as they move across different configurations of text and image.

# LIGHT-BEAM BLASTER

The year is 3005. You grew up without material things. First, everything was moved to the Cloud, then, overnight, that became the Singularity. You were all uploaded to the Singularity 50 years ago, without your consent. But now, as part of the counter-movement – the anti-Singularity initiative – you’ve managed to surreptitiously escape. Together with the rebel forces you live in a community on the outskirts of a city that belongs to the ‘real’ world.

During one of your expeditions to find materials that could connect you to the lives of humans who came before you, you stumble upon a building. You’ve never seen one quite like this before. Large letters hover above the entrance, but you can’t quite understand why they’re there. Since being uploaded to the Singularity you’ve had no need and thus no ability to read; you simply consume.

*What could this be?*, you think to yourself as you apprehensively approach the building. You step inside its darkness. Small bits of light seep through the window-cracks, the antenna on your head being the only other source of light. That is until you near the shelves. Suddenly you are surrounded by glowing squares. *What are these things? Boxes? Relics?* Curious, you slide one of them out and feel its weight in your hands. Black shapes speckle the cover.

You

- a) Open the book
- b) Put the book down

## A) OPEN THE BOOK

You stare at this object in wonder. Even though you barely have any understanding or previous knowledge of it, you feel drawn to it. It feels (and looks) magical. You find yourself moving between other shelves and books, not letting go of the first one you found, as you go deeper into the library. You lose track of time, but a light shining through the otherwise pitch-black library brings you back to the here and now. You’re afraid. *What could that be?*, you whisper to yourself. You quickly reach for your light-beam blaster!

You

- c) Go towards the light
- d) Run away

## C) GO TOWARDS THE LIGHT

Your intuition tells you to go forward, so you do. The light doesn't move, nor does it dim – it stays in one spot, growing bigger and bigger until you reach its source in the depths of the library. Your hands are shaking and you feel sweat gathering on your forehead as you near the light. There, a glowing figure sits peacefully, surrounded by books and floating shimmering letters of different colours. You consider attacking the creature as you walk nearer, but as you begin to lift your hand a voice echoes around you.

*“I have been waiting for you,”* it says

*“Wh-w-who are you?”* you stammer, still shaking and sweating, clutching the first book you picked – close to your heart, as if it were your most prized possession.

*“I am the Oracle,”* it replies in a soothing voice, *“and I have been waiting for you,”* it repeats. You wonder in confusion what that means, *why you?* And as if the Oracle read your mind it answers:

*“For centuries I have watched over this space, seen it flourish and decay. As time went by visitors became fewer and sparser, so my physical form emerged from the books. I tried to plead with someone, anyone – to turn back to this precious physical knowledge. But I was met with fear each time I revealed myself. So instead, I waited, for those who would be curious enough to once again explore this building. It seems that person is you.”*

*“Wh-w-what are you?”* you ask, still in shock because of what you are seeing, hearing and experiencing.

*“I am the Oracle, my child, and I am here because you chose to open your mind instead of running away in fear.”*

*“What do you want from me?”* you ask, fear slowly leaving your body.

*“I wish to give you a gift that will open your eyes to what is in books.”*

*“To read?”* you mutter under your breath. You quickly open the book again and leaf through its pages and then look at the shelves surrounding you. To understand all this knowledge, to understand the lives of your ancestors... the answer is clear!

*“I'll accept your gift... but please, don't just share it with me. Everyone deserves this knowledge.”*

A laugh echoes through the library.

*“I am glad it was you who found me, but I can only give YOU the gift. However, who you then choose to share the gift with is completely up to you. The knowledge in these books is precious, and I must warn you that you should only share it with the right people... Your rebel-group leader is corrupt and will try and capitalise this knowledge instead of making it accessible to all. So go back and share as much as you can with one goal in mind, to give a voice to all.”*

The Oracle reaches out to you and utters one last sentence.

*“My work here is complete.”*

Its light seems to expand, enveloping the whole space before becoming a small orb and disappearing, leaving behind one thing – a pen. You pick it up and quickly open your book as the shock wears off. To your immense delight you can now read and understand every word. Hurriedly you pick up another one, scanning its pages, then gleefully open your bag and pile in one book after another.

Just then you receive a message from your group saying they are heading back. You do so too, but with a newfound passion; to bring books back into this world. You race to your dorms, afraid someone will catch you. Now you can finally pour over your book, your newfound knowledge. You lose yourself as soon as you start at the beginning, only looking up from the pages when you hear the sound of the door opening.

*“Hi!”* says your best friend’s voice and you jump while still holding the book in your hands. You look at them with surprise and relief, happy that it was them who caught you and not someone else.

*“Oh... hey, did you enjoy the expedition?”* you ask sheepishly, trying to avoid a conversation about what you had been up to.

*“Don’t even try,”* your friend responds, followed by *“what is that?”*

*“Well... I need you to trust me with this...,”* you begin, hesitating to reveal your newfound gift. You begin to explain, from the beginning, your journey through the library, finding the book, seeing a light, meeting an Oracle, and finally this pen.

Your long monologue has you out of breath by the time you finish. You end by simply saying, *“I just need you to trust me.”*

*“It may take some time,”* your friend responds, *“but I would be honoured if you shared this gift with me.”*

Tears well up as you throw yourself at your friend, intertwine in sheer happiness.

*“Thank you,”* you whisper in their ear.

*“Always,”* they respond.

[Time lapse montage of teaching your friend to read. Later growing your audience from the inside of your rebel group; going to the library for lessons and recruiting other members of the anti-Singularity in silence. Word travels quickly and before long you have a pretty large group. Those who learn how to read become teachers to others and so the cycle continues. Together you secretly work against the evil forces of the corrupt anti-Singularity leader. Before long you are finally ready to finalise your dream.]

You have to be quiet, as you and the group are finally breaking out tonight. You grab your materials. You are shaking, sweaty. How far you have come since your first meeting with the Oracle. You put its pen in your pocket and head outside to the garden, where the first group of escapees are waiting.

You creep out of the community gates and make your way to the library; you have something to show the group. As you make your way inside, you stop everyone from settling down and lead them into the depths, to where you first met the Oracle, the beginning. However, there is no longer the Oracle, but multiple printing presses! Your best friend screams in delight, giving you a small hug before rushing forward to look at them.

*“We can finally do it, we can finally share creativity with everyone. This is exactly what we needed.”* And that’s what you do; it takes a while but before long the library is transformed into a print house. Along with your friends, you start a new era – one in which books are accepted for what they are; vessels of magical knowledge to be shared with everyone, carrying voices that should be heard by all and stories that anyone can write.

## D) RUN AWAY

You reach into your pocket for your light-beam blaster and take a step closer to the light, but the closer you come the more scared you are. You let fear overtake you. Your shaky hands make you drop the weapon. It’s deadly quiet except for the sound of metal hitting the ground. You run – straight for home, for comfort, for what you know and understand, away from all the unknown. It is only when you get back to your group hideout and sit down in the garden, still panting, sweat dripping from every part of you, that you realise you are still holding something close to your chest – the book. You touch it as if it might be part of a dream, scared it could disappear at any moment. Its faint-coloured glow lights up the space around you.

*What can I even do with this?*, you think to yourself.

When you hear the shuffling of feet, you quickly hide the book and head back to the dorm before anyone sees you. Back at your shared quarters you lose yourself in thought, only looking up when you hear the sound of the door opening.

You look up and lock eyes with your best friend. You tell them everything that has happened – the library, the books and the light that you ran away from. They look at you confused.

*“I’m glad you made a run for it. God knows what could have happened to you, but you can forget about it and move on now.”*

*“But I can’t,”* you respond, *“I don’t think it’ll ever leave my mind, especially when I have this.”* You pull out the book, and they stare at it in shock.

*“What is that...? What are you going to do with it?”* they ask.

*“I was hoping you would know,”* you respond.

*“The best I can think of is that you hand it to the boss,”* they say before reaching out to you.

Your hand retracts a bit, as if your body is telling you to protect the book, and your friend gives you a stern look.

*“Look, I know it seems scary because you kinda ditched our group back there and you really shouldn’t have gone off by yourself, but boss won’t be mad. Just give it to them and say what you*

*told me, I'm sure they'll understand.*" They look at you with pleading eyes and you understand; it's either give it to the boss or your friend will.

"*You're right,*" you respond, unable to shake the feeling of unease, but you get up and begin to walk out of the room.

"*I can come with you if you want?,"* your friend offers but you politely decline and make your way to the headquarters. You walk through the hallway, your heart racing faster as your hand reaches for the doorhandle. You don't know how the boss will react; this is the first human artefact anyone has found, the fact that a library lasted this long is beyond surprising. You open the door slowly, and standing there, facing a window, is the boss. They turn and smile at you.

"*Hello dear one!,*" they say, in a calm tone.

*Welcoming, as always,* you think, your body relaxing just a bit.

You begin talking to the boss.

*"I don't want you to be upset but... on today's group mission I got a bit carried away and found myself on the outskirts of town, where I saw a building ... a library."*

The boss's face shows a small look of surprise, but they quickly cover it up with a smile.

"*How very interesting,*" they reply, the tone still warm.

"*I went inside and I found this,*" and you slowly pull the book from your pocket.

"*I know it's dangerous and stupid, but I brought it back because, well, it was the first real thing we've found connected to our ancestors, and I saw this thing and..."*

The boss cuts you off.

"*Well done my dear!,*" they exclaim while walking towards you. Their demeanour is slightly different, and something about their tone feels off to you. They were always happy, but this happiness seemed different, staged.

They walk towards you with light, joyful steps, almost skipping while reaching out their hand.

"*Give it to me my dear,*" they say, suddenly more threatening than warm.

You

e) Give the boss the book

f) Run away from the boss

## **E) GIVE THE BOOK TO THE BOSS**

They take it in their hands and stare at it with what could only be described as lust.

"*Why do you think I'd be mad at you? This is brilliant! Our group will flourish, maybe even finally overcome the Singularity and its harsh rules on humanity."*

They hesitate when they're about to open the book though, and the boss's mood seems to become gloomier.

"*Did you tell anyone about this?"*

"*No...?,"* you respond a bit confused, defensive too.

*“Not that it would be a problem...,”* they begin, turning back into their neutral self.

*“It’s just, you never know what could happen if you are in possession of something like this. A book hasn’t been seen for centuries and in the wrong hands it could be taken serious advantage of,”* they explain.

*“Oh... I understand,”* you respond, still confused.

If your anti-Singularity group was united, how could it fall into any wrong hands? But you don’t question the boss. They seem to understand the material better than you do and they said it themselves – you have uncovered something of great value. They seemed to know what to do, so you decide to take it as a win and smile back.

*“I’m glad I could help, if that was all...,”* you say while slowly making your way to the door.

*“Before you go, please do show me where the library is. I will send for you when the time is right,”* they respond gleefully.

*“Alright! Thank you, I am always glad to help.”*

You open the door and leave with nothing but relief in your heart.

When the door closes, the boss is seen opening the book and flipping through the pages with manic delight.

*“I have it! The power, the control, it’s mine! With this, the Singularity will never have power over me, and I will have the money to achieve all I’ve wanted!”*

They begin to read, chuckling at the book and dreaming about their eventual takeover of the world.

[Montage of selected people from the rebel group being called on by the boss, beginning with you. You show them the library during your meeting and the day after a group is sent to explore and live there. Meanwhile the other ‘chosen ones’ are taught how to read ONLY for publishing purposes. You watch the boss open the library, including a publishing house and beginning to sell books on a small scale. What were once explorer groups joined to collect data of past humans, now become workers who must sell products they don’t even understand. You are one of them. Ironic, how you were the beginning of all this and now just watch it change from afar. As the business grows you see it spread across the whole city, then further and soon the boss has a monopoly over the better part of the country. You see their power grow while you all stay in a small community, unable to break free because of the lack of knowledge about these books, of what you once thought was magic.]

You still think of the light you saw every day, and you wonder what became of it when that small library became a looming corporate building. You never saw it again and you wonder if anyone else ever did. But you will always remember and that memory will continue to raise a small feeling of guilt, of regret, for giving that book to the boss. Of sacrificing something that could’ve been used for good for everyone.

## **F) RUN AWAY FROM THE BOSS**

You look at the boss, then the book, and back at the boss again. You know you don’t know why but something keeps you attached to it. Another look back and forth and your heart starts racing as you

decide on what to do. You look at them, and take one step back, then run for the door. The boss immediately chases after you as you sprint down the hall.

*“Catch them friends!” they yell while running, “they are a traitor supporting the Singularity.”*

The chase continues all the way to the edge of your anti-Singularity commune. At the gates you look to your side and see your best friend staring at you with shock and pain in their eyes. You feel tears well up, but you know you cannot stop here. You run beyond the outskirts, retracing your steps back towards the library, your chasers still trailing behind. You hide in a rubbish bin along the way, and there you wait. It feels like an eternity, but your fear of getting caught keeps you wide awake until you see the sun break and the moon slowly disappear. When it’s finally safe to head out you go straight to the library. You find your body leading you towards where you first began and you hold the book in your hands for the last time. You open it and flip through the pages in front of you. Something about the feeling of these thin, stained sheets between your fingers, and these dark, bold patterns holds your attention.

You have no clue what it all means. Looking down the hall, you see what looks like thousands more of these objects. Overwhelmed you close this one and return it to its place on the shelf. You feel a weight lift off your shoulders and turn around, leaving what could have been behind you.

The further away you get from the library, back into the city, the more you feel a quiet calm rush through your body, happy to finally put this behind you. You almost begin walking towards the commune before remembering your recent excommunication. So you turn back and enter the outside world again, the Singularity. You fall back into your old ways, completely reliant on the chip feeding information into your brain, abandoning the glimpse of how information came to people in the past. But the thought stays with you, and no matter how hard you try, you cannot help but continue to wonder what that object could have been and what life it could have had with your help.

[Section ends with a still image of the library standing, then leading into it, showing the empty halls with a small light glowing at the end, waiting for someone curious enough to approach it.]

## **B) PUT THE BOOK DOWN**

You stare at the book, flip through it, the printed symbols still looking like gibberish. Despite not understanding what they mean you keep browsing as if looking for something, anything, to understand it. It is almost as if you want an excuse to hold onto this object. It feels important but you cannot begin to fathom why. You look ahead for a moment, at the glowing shelves in front of you.

*So many... too many, you think to yourself.*

*This seems important but far too complex for me to understand, you conclude at last.*

You give the box-like object one last look, one last stroke, before putting it down and turning away.

*“I am waiting for you,”* someone whispers, it feels as if they are right behind you, so you quickly spin around, your heart beating quickly. You look around but all you are met with is the darkness of the library. What once seemed comforting now seems ominous, so you start for the door again, this time at a quick pace, and once at the door you run. Back to your anti-Singularity group. When you reach the entrance and come into the garden you feel a weight lifting from your shoulders. You are safe. You are home. You lie down in one of the fields and close your eyes, catching your breath. The silence is calming and you begin to feel relaxed, breathing in the familiar scents of your surroundings – the trees, the flowers, the dew on the grass. This peace only lasts for a few second for at that very moment you begin to hear voices and footsteps.

*The others from the group!*, you think, suddenly excited to see your best friend. You open your eyes and get up, still a bit woozy, and you decide there and then to tell no one of your adventures. You watch the group file into the garden and catch sight of your best friend.

You run up to them and pretend everything is normal.

*“Hi,”* you exclaim.

*“Where have you been?”* they respond with a sense of worry and a hint of annoyance in their voice.

*“I lost my way, so I came back here. I’ve just been lying in the garden. It was a bit scary out there, so I wanted to come home,”* you respond sheepishly.

*“Oh my God, are you OK?? Did something happen?”* they respond, suddenly grabbing your shoulders, then examining your face and arms to find out if you are hurt.

*“No,”* you laugh, *“Just had a taste of my own adventure, I guess... nothing serious... don’t worry,”*

You smile and they return the gesture before your rumbling stomach breaks the tension.

*“Hahaha... I guess your adventure was pretty tiring, come on, let’s go get something to eat.”*

And so the two of you walk back to the group to get some well-deserved food and the memories from earlier fade, as if it was just a bad dream.

[Section ends with a still image of the library, then leading into it and showing the empty halls with a small light glowing at the end, waiting for someone curious enough to approach it.]

# THE END

## Light-Beam Blaster

By Kiara Eifert and Elin Karlsson

The idea for the *Books Are Magic* comic was developed after a workshop led by artist and dramaturg Ruby Nilson with ITAB in August 2025. With comic artist and graphic designer falk, Kiara Eifert and Elin Karlsson developed an outline for the comic, titled *Singularity*. Kiara and Elin then developed the outline into a full script, titled *Light-Beam Blaster*. Between them, the comic, the outline and the script explore the translation and mediation of ideas as they move across different configurations of text and image.

## Reflections on Care

PTAB

### Introduction

“Future Futures” is a project that asks how art institutions can use publications to reach new audiences. The question is a practical one but also extends to how relationships are formed through artistic and editorial processes. What kinds of connections can a publication provide and what kinds of attention does it generate?

For the PRAKSIS Teen Advisory Board (PTAB), writing about *Care* has been a way to test these questions through practice. Collecting, writing, editing and printing words (and images) is itself a small-scale institutional experiment: of how to work collectively, of how to listen and of how to let distinct voices coexist without merging them into one.

The section on care is a compilation of contributions in different genres and tones, produced by a varied group of young people from Oslo: it includes interviews with artists and writers and a zine-in-the-book with poems and images, as well as two commissions, each made by artist-publishers in close collaboration with PTAB. Each piece works differently, but all examine how care between people, media and formats can be translated and articulated. The various contributions could be considered to connect through the tension between material and immaterial forms, and through writing that explores how ideas move from one to the other.

In talking about care as a form of exposure, the group also recognised a similarity with publishing itself. Making something public means showing what moves you and what you stand for. For institutions as well as individuals, the process of revealing can be uncomfortable, but it is also what allows new connections to emerge. Publishing, like care, can be a way of letting yourself be known and – as one member pointed out – of listening outwards as well as speaking.

Early in the process, each board member wrote a short text. These texts are not printed here in full, but through combining fragments from each they offer a good impression and demonstrate a shared concern with how ideas, experiences and emotions translate to the printed page. They also became the foundation from which, instead of looking for a single strategy, the group has treated publishing as a field of relations in which form, voice, articulation and dissemination become questions of care.

### Voices

Since childhood, PTAB member Assol Sokolova has understood care through music. “My earliest memory of music comes from my mother, who loved to sing. She often went to

karaoke and performed in theatre productions. Watching her enjoy music made me curious, and during my early teenage years I realised that I also wanted to sing.”

For her, singing became a way to stay connected. Learning to sing was also a way of learning to pay attention to tone, breath and emotion. “Singing is not only a hobby for me; it is a way to grow, to heal and to share a part of myself with others.”

Anahita Mollazehi begins elsewhere: “What I care about most is the people around me. Human connection matters. Sometimes I feel silly pointing that out, because it seems so obvious. But in the middle of everything happening in the world, it’s surprisingly easy to forget that.”

So, care is not a concept but a process of negotiation. Anahita describes wanting to contribute to something larger while feeling unsure how. The wish to help sits alongside fatigue, which itself says something about the difficulty of caring in an age of constant exposure.

Noah Visted reflected on this double movement of care, outwards and inwards. To care is also a way of communicating your values, to be clear and honest, to signal what you stand for. But it is equally about listening to yourself, of recognising when to speak up and when to hold back. “Care lives in the quiet act of listening,” he wrote, “the moment we let another voice, or our own, be heard.”

Sofia Orellana Gamboa comes at it from a different angle and suggests that “care is what drives all human beings. It’s the fuel that drives us further. If you look around you, you’ll see that everything around you is about care.” We can’t escape caring! It is built into how we live together, whether in families, friendships or society as a whole. “Even politics is all about care, and something that surrounds you all the time.”

### **Between the Self and the World**

“To care is not an obligation, nor is it a duty,” is how Ingrid Hesledalen opens her text. She continues: “Caring is an act of empathy, or sometimes simply an act of presence.”

The need to be persistently present recurs throughout these writings. Care happens in remaining attentive over time. Auguste Karsokaite lists a set of descriptive terms: “Trying our best, not losing hope and motivation. Collective well-being, relationality, interconnectedness.” She adds that activism plays a strong role in how people can work together. “We are influenced by many people. Even though our lives are our lives, to speak as a collective is an act of caring.”

Small gestures and scattered experiences somehow become central. A friend running through snow to offer comfort, a stranger’s smile on a bus, the remembered details of a meal. The scale

of care often seems to be small – which is perhaps a problem for art institutions. “To show you care is to be vulnerable, because it means opening yourself up to disappointment.” That vulnerability is also a quiet undercurrent throughout this section: care is a dangerous game, because it can be exposing.

Hibo Nora Abbi brings care back to the body’s relation with its surroundings. “I often wander around outside to rest; fresh air and movement give my head more space.” Noticing the small things, “the way the light changes on the pavement” or “footsteps printed in the snow” paradoxically reminds her that “the world is always bigger than me.” Care means paying attention to the smallest rhythms, to traces left by others and shifts in oneself.

Care also has a tempo that seems to run contrary to contemporary life. “By existing online, we are non-consensually exposed to the fast-paced and mechanised rhythm society wants us to follow.”

The most digital generation is sceptical of its own world. What forms of attention can survive its acceleration? Helen Ibrahimian refers to Oliver Burkeman’s *Four Thousand Weeks* (2021), noting that even rest is now shaped by productivity. Again, slowness is described as a form of presence, not escape.

Across the writings there is a shared understanding that care extends beyond the private. It is “a moral imperative” and concerns “challenging norms that privilege individualism.” Care can be a form of ethics as well as critique.

“To show solidarity brings so much positivity and meaning. Standing up for others, even though it does not benefit one, strengthens my meaning of life and who I am,” writes Auguste.

### **Publishing as Practice**

Bringing these disparate materials together has been a matter of collaboration and gathering as much as editing. There are positions that overlap and sometimes contradict each other. This plurality is intentional and demonstrates that care, like publishing (and reading), is a process of mediation between voices and formats, and that it happens at a slow pace.

For institutions, what they choose to publish – and who they publish with – becomes part of how they are recognised. In that sense, publishing is also an act of self-definition through networks of relation. As Noah points out: “Caring reveals who you are... what you choose to care about tells a story about you.” A publication can be a space of self-definition, but also redefinition: by inviting new contributors, it reshapes the institution’s own identity in different (and hopefully new) publics.

If “Future Futures” asks how publications can reach people, PRAKSIS Teen Advisory Board could perhaps offer one possible response. A book can create conditions for slower reading and reciprocal presence. It can host dialogue between forms that do not usually meet. And it can show that making something public, on paper, still matters as a way of making connections tangible.

## Reflections on Care

PRAKSIS Teen Advisory Board (PTAB)

In the process of developing and commissioning material in relation to PTAB's chosen theme, *Care*, board members each wrote an individual text in which they reflected on what care meant to them and what they care about. In the end they chose not to publish their own writings but instead look for commonalities and resonances across them, which are highlighted through a series of selective quotes.

## **Interviews and Conversations as Method**

PRAKSIS Teen Advisory Board (PTAB)

Having individually reflected on what care means for them and what they care about, PTAB members decided to use interviews and conversations as means to explore how care manifests itself in a range of creative practitioners' practice. Together they offer an insight into how the idea of care can resonate in very different ways. They also show how personal interests can grow into a shared enquiry, connecting wider artistic and cultural practices to individual concerns.

## Interviews and Conversations as Method

The contributions in this section, four interviews, were not planned as a series. They came out of individual interests – who we wanted to talk to and what we wanted to understand better. Some names appeared in workshops, others through friends or social media. Sometimes we reached out to someone simply because we liked their work and wanted to know how they think.

Each of us prepared and edited our interviews differently. Some are very focused, others more like open conversations that move between personal experience and the interviewee's artistic practice. We decided not to make them all sound the same, but to try and maintain their individual rhythm and way of speaking.

Together, they show that care can be expressed in many forms: through making, through writing, through listening, through publishing. The interviews are joined by a few other pieces, including short texts and a zine.

The interview with Aryana Arian (by Helen Ibrahimian) is a long and generous conversation with the founder of *Perediza*. She expands on why independent publishing matters and what it takes to build a small platform. The talk connects to Helen's own writing by focusing on care as persistence, through editing and everyday labour.

The interview with Aurora Passero (by Sofia Orellana Gamboa, Bror Høgåsen-Hallesby and Assol Sokolova) is a discussion with an artist who often uses books in her studio as tools, materials and sources of inspiration. This interview links care to her material practice and explores the larger question of how books can hold knowledge differently.

To Listen & Care (by Noah Visted, Hibo Nora Abbi and Ingrid Hesledalen) is a zine-like piece combining short texts and images. It looks at music as a language of connection and sits among several interviews as a quieter interlude with listening as an expression of care.

The conversation with Madihe Gharibi (by Anahita Mollazehi) meanders across art, migration and education. It shows how what people care about can take very different shapes, and how art can be a way to find space for those differences.

Morta Žuklytė is a seventeen-year-old pupil at a high school in Lithuania who has won first place in a national short prose contest, and third place in the national poetry contest whose writing deals with language, culture and the tension between tradition and the modern world.

About her interview with Morta Auguste writes: "I have known Morta for many years and have seen her work – her poetry, paintings and photos. Young people can learn from her and

get inspiration to write their own stories, to draw or to take photos. Therefore, she is a true role model for me.”

Together, these conversations form a record of how the group has worked this year of talking, listening and writing with others.

## A Utopian Perspective: On Care, Context and the Future of Publications

An interview with Aryana Arian by Helen Ibrahimian

Helen Ibrahimian sat down with founder and editor-in-chief of *Perediza*, Aryana Arian, to discuss the magazine's origins, visions and approach to accessible, philosophy-driven media. With a common thread of questioning and philosophising, *Perediza* positions itself as a humanities- and philosophy-based platform. Arian touches on the absence of spaces for young people to engage in meaningful intellectual dialogue, and how she hopes *Perediza* can encourage exactly that. She emphasises a personal and reflective approach to media, and how committing to thoughtful, context-rich storytelling empowers their readers to question and understand the world.

Helen Ibrahimian: Where did *Perediza* come from, and what gap did you hope to fill, and for whom?

Aryana Arian: I started *Perediza* when I was doing my gap year in Copenhagen. I had just finished my studies in Humanities, Arts and Social Thought at Bard College in Berlin. When I finished university, I felt quite an absence – I had become used to being in a rich environment full of debates with my peers. We were all studying quite philosophical subjects that open up to many perspectives. When I left that bubble and rejoined the rest of the world, I missed the intellectual dialogues.

I noticed a gap, especially as academia can be a quite privileged place. It seems that we need a systemic change. I decided to create a magazine to highlight this, and I chose this format to make it accessible. An academic journal would be inaccessible to those who are not part of that world. A book might have only covered my perspective, and I wanted to combine various ideas, not just my own. When you hear the word magazine, you instantly think it is communal, with many minds working together. You flip the pages and you will find something for everyone. This is why I started it. I wanted something to bring back this intellectual discourse and also have a dialogue between the East and the West.

At first, I really wanted to focus on youth as the audience, because they are the ones trying to figure things out. I believe this is the period in your life during which you do the most thinking. Thinking about who you want to be. I wanted *Perediza* to be a place where young people can figure out how they want to think and what they want to care about.

*Perediza* is an ancient Persian word meaning garden. However, in the Latin translation of the bible it is linked to the Garden of Eden, which shifted to mean paradise. My idea was to make a paradise for us, where we can be hopeful and build a world in which we have strong values, care deeply and are conscious. The word paradise felt very positive to me, and I wanted the magazine to be a place of enrichment. I did not want it to be a place of complaining or criticising without solutions. I want us to find a way to make the world a better place.

Most of our audience are people who are trying to think more.

HI: It is quite interesting that politics is not one of the four sections, however, I would argue that a lot of the pieces touch upon it in different ways without being centred around it. The same goes for philosophy, it is not a separate section but rather woven into all that *Perediza* does.

AA: I am glad that you see that and understand that choice. Being Iranian, politics really is involved in every step I take. It has held me back a lot, it has invaded my life. Yes, there are things and people to blame, but I rather want to understand the core of why these decisions are made. The core of why people feel hatred. Of why they allow injustice. This is why I specifically want young people to read it, because if you do not reach the core, you will not know why you feel a certain way. And if you do not fully understand the foundations of your own beliefs, your beliefs can go anywhere. In dark directions even.

Some might say that art is able to bring us all together. We go to the cinema with people with completely opposite political views from our own. We go to concerts with them. We sit on the same plane. We might even share a dining table with them. Art, food and entertainment are what bring everyone together. Having something that everyone can enjoy, no matter who you are, is very powerful. What is at the heart of this movie, making two people from different sides cry at the same scene?

I wanted *Perediza* to have these four pillars that I believe are the contemporary parts of our lives: climate change, art, style and life. Life touches on mental health, relationships and love. Style is beyond fashion, about identity and expression. I wanted these sections to be open-ended. If I made it too specific, the articles would not make such interesting parallels and perspectives come through.

HI: I have heard how you want to take philosophy back into the hands of young voices. Articles reference other thinkers and experts, but the personal aspect is strong too. Most of the articles in *Perediza* are quite niche, adding a quite different tone, rather than being

journalistic, which I see as outdated. People now crave deeply personal stories. You can zoom in on something very specific and personal, while also zooming out to the bigger picture.

AA: Exactly. There is a reason behind you writing something, and why should we not know that? I sometimes read articles sent to me that are well-researched, but then I go back and think “can you tell me why this is important?” Why should we *care*? I force people to tell me why they are interested in speaking about something. A lot of other media companies are just publishing things and reading it gives no understanding of its purpose. For me, it was important that everything we publish is meaningful. I want to pick up on things; I want to learn and use it in my own life. Include statistics, information, facts about why this specific thing is happening. This is what makes our articles rich.

When deciding which articles go into the magazine, you can impact a whole group with what you decide to give a place. This is why an editor is so important, as they are conscious about what people will take away.

HI: Very true. A lot of people hold some very specific, possibly strange, knowledge in some niche area. Especially now, as people study such varied topics. And with *Perediza* being so multicultural with people from varied backgrounds, all being united by the desire to expand and learn more.

AA: For me this is exactly what is important. At university in Berlin, I was involved in several groups engaged with decolonising the curriculum. I was one of the insane students emailing every student. I have always been that girl that makes my point and fights for it. To me it was just so frustrating, as there were so many great thinkers that were missing and we were not discussing.

There are thinkers who have been put on a pedestal when they are the worst people ever. This was a big thing for me in my German philosophy class with Heidegger. Obviously, he has come up with incredible theories but at the end of the day I do think that it is important to know that he was a nazi. It is not that his theories do not matter, they are important, but when he uses the word *human*, what does he mean? It is important to know the context. I know this is a big philosophical issue and that a lot of people disagree with me. No matter how much you want to remove the author from the work, you need to understand that they meant some words in certain ways that you cannot ignore.

HI: A lot of people want to take the comfortable route. Why should your perspective not change when you learn something horrible about them? In my opinion, it should change everything.

AA: Imagine if you learned something about your friend, it would really alter things. The root of this is really the Western concept of individualism. When you put an artwork in a white cube, you detach it from the artist. You have no idea who the artist is and know nothing about its context. It is a very European idea of art, that you should look at something without any judgement. I wrote a whole essay about this, about not being influenced by knowing something about the artist, looking at the work entirely on its own.

HI: Art and entertainment are there for enjoyment but there is another aspect to it. Some people might want to just enjoy things for what they are and will not have a bad aftertaste when they learn that someone is a nazi or abused someone.

AA: That really does not feel human to me, and it does not seem normal. This is why, for me, it is no big deal if a writer speaks about something personal in their article. It does not take away from their research, and it does not take away from their message. The fact that we try so hard to separate ourselves from our work is a bit worrying.

HI: Especially in the creative field, where your interests and what you care about is what is important. You would not write about something that does not touch or resonate with you. Therefore, it is unnatural to not explain why this matters to you. I also think this ties in with what you said about how you curate what articles go into the magazine. We have all learned how to write essays in school. Anyone can look critically at an issue and write and balance two perspectives. But it is not about that. You can find that in every other publication.

AA: If you read any great philosophical book or something that you respect, the writer will always talk about the context. They will tell you how and why they stumbled upon such an idea. I love getting a little hint at what goes on in a writer's mind and who they are. You do not need their whole life story, but a little bit. You can feel it through the tone and the voice too. That is really what I like about my favourite articles. Even though I do not know the person, I can feel something about them through the piece.

HI: This is exactly what you reminded me of when I was writing my article ["The Guilt of Stillness"] for *Perediza*. I was writing about reclaiming our free time and using it to reconnect with our bodies and minds. My article was not life-changing or offering pointers that no one has ever heard of, but I was using my own experience in relation to them.

AA: What you did was so much more expansive than that. It was deeply personal, but you also touched upon systems and the economy while referring to aspects from your life that we could relate to. Then you gave us solutions based on theory, research and your own experience.

I really believe that schools and universities need to bring back criticism and dialogue for young people. Sometimes it really is a good exercise to make people articulate opinions and have debates. This should be a core pillar in our education systems.

HI: Art and entertainment are there to challenge you and to make you surer about your own values. We all have something that is our foundation and something that we will stand for. We may be taught to not always voice it, and most people have become dependent on following a lifestyle coach or influencer to tell them what is right and wrong because they cannot form their own opinions. It is easier to follow someone else than digging to find out what your own beliefs are.

AA: That has always been a thing, even Plato had a little group of fans. But then, there was a lot of room and time for people to ponder. It seems like all the life coaches and influencers now are saying the same thing with slight variations. Their thoughts and ideas are not all bad, but is there room for discourse? Does a life coach allow for that? Most of it is based on their experience and not real research.

This is the interesting thing with text; it forces you to see the gaps. When you write something down, instead of talking about it, you have to think about it a bit more. You have to think about rephrasing. This is why people do respect text more. You have to be more cautious.

HI: Back to what we talked about with paradise, or utopia. What kind of spaces – either physical or digital – do you wish existed to support what *Perediza* is doing?

AA: Digitally, I really think we have enough spaces. To me, digital spaces are not where fruitful and intellectual dialogue can occur. Not in a comment section, not in a random podcast app.

One of my dreams is to have a physical space with different rooms in which there is art, community and culture. In these rooms, people can have debates. Like Soho House [a private members club with branches in different cities], but for intellectuals. You would go there as you finished university, because there is no other place to have these dialogues.

You just want to hear others' opinions. Maybe it is about your work, maybe something that bothers you.

This is the kind of space I am envisioning. A space where you can go to work, where you can speak to people, while also feeling academic in a way. I just want somewhere that people do not go to seem cool, but rather to have a good conversation. I want a place where you go to study and to learn.

In the past, a philosopher would not just go to university and then be done with reading and research. You went there to learn how to research, and then you continued doing it. My goal is to create a space where people feel inspired to go back to studying. A space where it is calm and you have time to study for yourself. Not for a system, not for academia.

HI: Imagine a place where you know that the people who are there have the same intentions as you. It might be a bit utopian, but it is possible, and we should not think that it is not.

AA: For young people especially, it is important to build these spaces where they can blossom and use all that we have learned when coming together.

## About Artistry

A conversation between Morta Žuklytė and Auguste Karsokaite

Morta Žuklytė is a seventeen-year-old pupil at a high school in Lithuania. She has won first prize in a national short prose contest, for which she wrote a short text, titled “Ida”, about a friendship between a Lithuanian and a Jewish girl. Morta also came third in an annual national poetry competition, *Sėk žodžius tauriausius* (Let the words be the noblest). In this instance, participants needed to write three poems that revealed the writer’s respect for poetry, the Lithuanian language and culture, and the issue of preserving traditional values in modern times. Morta also likes to draw, paint and take photographs.

Because the PRAKSIS Teen Advisory Board project focuses on different perspectives of young people who share an interest in art, no matter which direction, and on what they *feel* and *think* about publications in this digital world, I wanted to have a conversation with Morta.

AK: Hello Morta. I’m grateful to have the opportunity to interview you. The Praksis Teen Advisory Board has developed questions about how relationships shape meaning and how the slow processes of publishing are being perceived by others. I want to ask you, what role do books or publications play in your life?

Morta Žuklytė: I mostly read Lithuanian poetry; it gives me a lot. To me, in poetry, our whole being is described through images that give me a sense of security, and that allows me safe travels of thoughts and dreams. In that way, I can still feel as if I’m a child.

AK: I try to read literature that I think is original. I’m not very fond of ‘books you should read’ lists. They reduce curiosity for other works that perhaps haven’t received that much recognition. There’s not a specific genre I prefer over others, but I enjoy books in which dreams and personal psychology play a role. Is there a specific book that is very important to you?

MŽ: The book that I felt was written for me is *Kukučio baladės* (Hoopoe ballads), written by Marcelijus Martinaitis, which is a cycle of poems.

AK: That’s fascinating to hear. Could you tell us a bit more about why this book means so much to you?

MŽ: The first time I read “Filly in the ear of hoopoe”, I immediately liked it. The images it evoked. It looked so beautiful and cheerful. While reading, I imagined hoopoe, his image, the Lithuanian village where he lived and his cottage. I have now read the entire cycle of poems. I especially adored that the hoopoe, a simple man from the countryside, sees the world in his own way, and ironically, says everything he thinks out loud.

AK: Today we see an increasing number of books that can be read on screen. As someone who reads a lot, what do you think feels different when reading a book versus scrolling via digital media?

MŽ: When reading a book, I tend to pay attention to the texture of the paper, pause between turning pages – even the sound of it – that slows time, and I can truly feel the object. While holding a phone, there is no delight, you’re only cheating yourself if you spend a long time scrolling.

AK: I agree, every detail counts. Do you trust information differently depending on whether it’s online or in print?

MŽ: Printed information is more reliable as it is usually more processed.

AK: Could you describe the art scene in Lithuania? How accessible for young people do you think visiting galleries or museums is?

MŽ: Lithuania has a lot of art spaces for young people to engage with and be interested in it. How accessible they are depends on where one lives. Smaller cities do not host as many artistic events as big ones, or venues in more well-known places. But I believe that if a young person feels the importance of art, they will create that artistic circle around themselves.

AK: Thank you for this interview. I hope to see more of your works in the future.

## On Duality, Criticality, Freedom and Distance

A conversation with Madihe Gharibi by Anahita Mollazehi

When our group discussed care as a topic/theme, I immediately considered cross-cultural perspectives, especially since writer Madihe Gharibi was working on a project with my school. Learning about her and her art, it was particularly her performance piece *Dual Homes*, in which she mixed sounds from Tehran with a walk in Copenhagen, that inspired me. This project exemplified how art can engage youth, as she reached out to us through the school, leading me to collaborate and be further inspired by her work.

Anahita Mollahezi: We – the PRAKSIS Teen Advisory Board – have prepared five questions about writing, reading and publishing and I have also prepared some personal questions for you. So, let's start with the first: what roles do books and publishing play in your life?

Madihe Gharibi: I will be honest: I've never been very good at reading. I don't read that many books or publications. People often think that if you're a writer and your field is literature, you must read a lot. I've spent more time writing than reading.

Still, books have played two important roles in my life. One is that literature makes me feel less lonely. When I read, I can see myself in other people's stories and feel that I'm not the only one dealing with certain things. The second is that books by others inspire me for my own writing.

AM: I feel the same about books. I do more reading than writing and reading makes me feel less lonely too. It's an answer that implies a personal connection with books, which I think we share. Which, if any, type of book does you feel was made for you?

MG: The way I understand literature is that it's about humans. It's made by humans, and it's for humans. So, I feel more connected with stories that are closer to life. I like it when literature blurs this boundary. So yes, stories that are more specifically about human relations and about life I feel more connected to.

AM: Do you have any examples?

MG: Yes. One example is *The Death of Ivan Ilyich* (1886) by Leo Tolstoy, which I read in Persian. I like it because it explores death, a universal experience that raises questions I often think about.

AM: How do you think publishing reaches people who don't really go to galleries and museums? Do you think that is a thing? Do you think such publications are more widely available for people, in comparison to art books?

MG: I think one reason is that you don't have to go somewhere in person, and therefore it's more accessible. Literature is also more popular. Some people feel out of place in galleries. I remember someone telling me they didn't know how to dress to go to an exhibition opening. That says a lot – people really feel like there are certain rules they don't know. Galleries and museums can feel like they're only for intellectuals.

But publications are something everyone is more familiar with. Since you're born, books are something you might receive as a gift. It's a medium almost everyone in the world knows. You can live your whole life without going to a gallery, but not without seeing a book.

AM: So, books in galleries and museums are less accessible and mainly for people who are already in the art world and feel comfortable there?

MG: Exactly. I also think that those who write non-art books may come from different classes or backgrounds. When it comes to art, it is more complicated. To make art, you need tools, a budget, lots of things. But to write, you just need a pen and paper, and you need to be able to read and write. Both writing and reading are widely developed skills. With regards to art – both those who create and the audience – it is more limited to a certain group of people.

AB: So, it's about access, in terms of socio-economic background and physical space, such as a museum. Now you can access things for free online, do you prefer reading online or on paper?

MG: Before I moved to Norway six years ago, I never read books online. I always had printed books.

I loved having a space in my room just for books. I never liked reading on a phone; printed books were simply what I had. When moving here, I couldn't bring all my books, so I had to start reading online, which was new for me. Still, I prefer printed books because they carry

traces of my life. I write when and where I bought them, spill coffee or leave notes in the margins; each one becomes a record of me.

AM: It feels more personal to you?

MG: Exactly. It becomes your book. You enter a kind of constant dialogue with it, which means you're not just a reader. I don't feel I can have that same kind of relationship with something on a screen.

AM: It's interesting that those tactile qualities can allow you to be able to be a part of the book. Final general question: do you trust information differently if it's printed or online?

MG: I like that question because I haven't thought of it like that before. Usually, the credibility that I give to a text relates more to the source of it. Who is the writer or who is the publisher? I don't think it being online or physical matters much.

AM: Thank you. Now I have some more personal questions. You studied and now teach literature, right? And you studied in Iran and Norway. How did these different experiences shape your teaching?

MG: The education systems in Iran and Norway are very different, yet they complement each other in my practice. I'll start with Iran and the University of Tehran, where I first studied writing seriously. At university, we learned from different teachers each semester, each with their own methods.

One of my most inspiring teachers was a playwright who viewed art and literature as ways of living. She saw life itself as a stage, which deeply influenced me. Her approach taught me to use writing as a way to understand life – seeing challenges as dramatic situations, identifying characters, conflicts and desires. She also encouraged us to write from our own lived experiences, which shaped how I teach today.

From Tehran, I learned the value of structure and discipline, but also how too much rigidity can suppress a student's voice. In contrast, in Bergen, where I did my Master's, students had total freedom, which sometimes led to a lack of direction. So, I've learned that teaching should balance freedom and guidance. The best teachers find that middle ground between structure and openness, theory and practice, consciousness and intuition.

AM: Do you feel that you've gained more experience because you've been taught in both these countries?

MG: Yes, of course. When I decided to come and study in Norway, it wasn't just for the sake of getting a Master's degree. It was because I wanted to expand my experiences. Because I thought that to become a good artist or good writer, I should deepen and expand my experience as a person. Travelling and having different lives is essential for being a good artist.

AM: What aspects of your cultural background and heritage have been most impactful for you? You've integrated it into your artistic creations and performances; how do you feel that your cultural identity enriches your art?

MG: I'm not sure if what I want to refer to counts as cultural heritage, but these are the values that shaped me in Iran. One is the importance of the idea behind a work and its connection to the self. My teachers emphasised that art and writing come from self-awareness and personal experience.

I also think courage in self-expression is part of my background. When I came to Norway, I noticed that many artists here create in a more abstract way, less personal. I was often told that my work was "too brave" in how openly I expressed myself. But in Tehran, we saw art as a kind of self-exploration, almost like using a knife to uncover and expose yourself.

For many artists I knew in Iran, art was not just creation but survival, a vital need. As the painter Bahman Mohassas said, "Painting for me is like eating or peeing. I have to do it." I relate deeply to that; for me too, art and writing are essential to being alive.

AM: In Norway we tend to be very introverted and don't really like sharing anything, so I see the difference. Would you expand on some key differences you've observed between growing up and studying in Iran versus living and working in Norway, particularly in terms of cultural norms, opportunities and personal development?

MG: Yes, cultural norms and artistic opportunities differ, of course. Not to generalise, but I've found that criticism plays a much stronger and more central role in art and literature in Iran. In Norway, I mostly find reviews rather than real critiques. In Iran, after an artwork or a book appears, critics often add another interpretive layer through discussion or writing, which I miss here.

That absence brings both freedom and distance. In Norway I can work more freely, without feeling judged or watched. I've made far more work here than I did in Iran. But at the same time, I don't feel I'm growing as much because there's less exchange and feedback from the audience.

Of course, the political systems and different levels of censorship in the two countries also shape artistic expression in very distinct ways, where I'm not saying one is better than the other.

AM: Thank you. Do you prefer one of them or are these key differences just general things, and you like both? For instance, if you had a big piece, would you want to present it here or in Iran first?

MG: Good question. I think the biggest question in my practice right now is who I am making art for, and I haven't found the answer yet.

I often feel little resonance when showing my work in Norway, because so much is lost in translation. And not just in terms of language, but in terms of culture, mindset and experience. What people receive feels incomplete, sometimes even false.

I wouldn't say I prefer one over the other. I'm trying to build a bridge between the two, both in making and showing art. My identity has become hybrid: I live in Norway but don't speak Norwegian, most of my friends are Iranian, yet I'm not in Iran, and my work is in English, which isn't my own language either.

Sometimes I feel my home is as big as the world, and sometimes I feel homeless. Perhaps both are true.

AM: A lot of people feel the same way. You mentioned earlier how closely teaching and creating are linked for you. Could you tell me how your interest in both began, and how they influence each other?

MG: No one in my family worked with art or literature. They were all engineers or doctors. I began writing at eight, when we lived in Germany and I felt lonely. I wrote letters to my aunt in Iran and later started an anonymous blog that became my way of coping and expressing myself.

A teacher later told me that writing is not a talent you're born with, but a way of seeing the world. That stayed with me through difficult teenage years. Writing became my tool for survival and understanding, and I wanted to share that with others.

I began teaching at eighteen and later was asked to lead a creative writing class. I realised my role wasn't to teach rules, but to help students shape their own experiences into plays and performances. That's when I saw that teaching and art making are the same practice, which involves creating spaces where others can transform their stories into something shared.

AM: Last question. Considering that much of your work seems to foster cross-cultural dialogue and understanding, do you believe that there is any significance in creating those intercultural encounters through art?

MG: For me culture is interesting because it shows how people respond to life. I am not interested in diversity just because it looks good. I want to understand humans. That is also why I read history. I want to see what people faced and how they acted. My work may look very cross-cultural, but what I really want is to see if people can connect beyond borders and labels. Good literature does that. *Hamlet* is not important because it is English. It is important because he has questions that I also have. So, for me it is about making the world expand beyond the borders we have, also the borders in our minds.

In the project we did together it was not about showing how different life in another country is. It was about showing that we are human, that we feel pain, jealousy, fear and that we respond to that. Sometimes events and talks are so much about differences that people feel even more separate. I prefer to expand the idea of self so that we can meet in something shared. Art can create connections, that is what matters to me, not difference.

## Weaving Books and Textiles

An interview with Aurora Passero by Sofia Orellana Gamboa, Bror Høgåsen-Hallesby and Assol Sokolova

Aurora Passero is a Norwegian artist who studied at the Kunsthøgskolen in Oslo, where she gained her Master's degree in 2011. Passero works mainly with textiles and creates her art by hand. PTAB visited the exhibition "Skudd, Fangst og u(Ro)" (Shoot, Capture and Un(Rest)) at the Deichman Library in Oslo, which included the piece *Fan Their Hearts, Inflamm Their More* (2010), a seven-metre-long coloured textile piece. The title refers to Greek poet Homer's *Odyssey*, which tells the story of Penelope promising men that she will choose one of them when she finishes weaving her tapestry. We were impressed by the scale of the piece and the amount of work it took to make it. When we contacted her, we received an invitation to visit her studio for a conversation, during which, among other things, she mentioned how space is a big part of her process.

Sofia Orellana Gamboa: We recently came across your work at the Deichman Library in Oslo, and we were really drawn to your piece *Fan Their Hearts, Inflamm Their More* (2010). A very cool title! We'd love to ask you a few questions about your work.

Assol Sokolova: We can see that you have a lot of books surrounding you in your studio. What do you find most inspiring about them? How do you draw inspiration from books?

Aurora Passero: Books are essential to my process. I've been collecting artist monographs, catalogues and various other kinds of publications since my teenage years. Whenever I visit an exhibition that moves me, I try to find the accompanying publication. Over time, these have become a visual and conceptual archive that I constantly return to. They help me think, reflect and reimagine ideas. I still prefer the tactility of printed material: the smell of paper, the act of turning pages. It's a slower, more embodied way of absorbing knowledge. I find that deeply grounding, especially in a world in which everything is increasingly digital.

AS: Yeah, you can actually hold it and turn the pages.

AP: Exactly. That sensory connection is irreplaceable. Since childhood, I've had a deep love for reading. I used to go to the library every weekend, borrowing stacks of books and disappearing into that paper world.

SOG: I agree – it’s important that people still experience physical books. You mentioned that books are a big part of your inspiration. Could you take us through your process – from idea to finished artwork?

AS: For me, each project begins with space. If I can, I visit the exhibition site early in the process. I study its proportions, materials and atmosphere, and then reconstruct a small-scale model in my studio. Understanding the architecture helps me think of space as a collaborator rather than a container; it’s like a blank page or canvas.

Once I understand the framework, I start developing the components. I’m fascinated by how much or how little is needed to activate a space. My process often begins with weaving. The repetitive structure of weaving gives me time to think, and it satisfies my need for order amid the open-ended nature of artistic creation.

[Aurora shows us a work in progress.]

I haven’t added colour yet. When I weave, I think through my hands. I can’t delegate that part of the process; it’s essential for my understanding of the work. People often suggest I should have assistants, but the physical act of making is what connects me to the material.

When I start dyeing, it becomes more intuitive. I begin with one tone, and then the next emerges almost naturally. It’s not random – it’s guided by sensitivity to colour, texture and mood. My references come from everywhere: a fruit’s hue, the materiality of asphalt, a Munch painting or a fleeting light in the gym. I try to stay open to the sensibility of all these encounters.

Finally, I put together the exhibition and begin thinking about titles. Titles come last, but they’re crucial. I treat them like another layer of the composition – testing how words sound, how meanings collide and how language can shift interpretation. I love the ambiguity that exists between word and image; it creates tension and new possibilities for the viewer.

AS: Do you try to communicate a specific message through your art, or do you prefer leaving interpretation up to the viewer?

AP: I prefer to give the audience space to engage on their own terms. My work always stems from intentional choices, but I value openness over prescription. I think art is most powerful when it invites interpretation rather than dictates meaning. It's about creating a situation for thought, not offering an answer.

AS: You mentioned that weaving is about logical order. Did you choose textiles because you're a visual thinker and enjoy the structured process, even though it's time-consuming? Do you like it that each project takes so long?

AP: That's a fascinating question, though I think that was several at once.

Yes, the weaving process, or the basic logical part of it, that's very important for me. As you say, because the rest in a way is more abstract. I need to trust my intentions more.

It's undeniably a lot of hard and physical work. Large-scale works, especially, demand physical endurance. When I dye materials, I work with heavy pots of water and layers upon layers of colour. The nylon absorbs weight and pigment differently each time, which adds complexity. Yet, I find that this physical engagement becomes part of the piece's emotional weight.

In a gallery setting, everything looks calm and composed, but behind that serenity is an immense amount of invisible labour. Some works take weeks; others come together quickly but require deep thought. I enjoy that duality – the tension between the slow, physical process and the immediacy of an idea.

AS: That's impressive. You seem fearless about large-scale work.

SOG: Yes, it seems very overwhelming. It's very impressive that you don't get scared by the amount of work.

AP: Fear is part of the process, but I try to transform it into momentum. For instance, the piece at Deichman was a major challenge – I hadn't woven in years, and time was short. There were moments of frustration and even tears. But once it was complete, all that stress dissolved into a sense of clarity. I immediately thought, "Alright, what's next?" [laughs]

That cycle of struggle and renewal keeps me active. Experience helps, too – it's not recklessness but trust built over time. I've learned to respect deadlines, to balance ambition

with discipline. In the end, being an artist requires a certain fearlessness – a willingness to risk failure again and again and I think that helps me. Because in the end I forget the stress.

AS: That also shows how you are a great worker. You approach your projects realistically, without being overly critical, yet stay brave and committed.

AP: Thank you. That perspective comes from experience. I don't underestimate challenges, even if it seems like a large scale is manageable. I've done this many times, which has taught me how to plan and deliver on time professionally. Of course, some projects take days and nights, but that's part of the process. Fearlessness is necessary for an artist.

AS: Do you have any advice or tips for future artists?

AP: Yes. Never take no as a final answer. Persist. It's always better to try and fail than to avoid the challenge. That is important for anyone pursuing creative work.





## To listen & care: an introduction on music as the language of connection

We listen because we want to care. music becomes the language we reach for when words fail, a way of saying *I m here* without having to touch. For some, it begins as melody, for others, a form of belonging. Youth voices echo through this raw, unpolished, urgent, trying to make sense of what it means to connect in a world that often feels disconnected.

To listen is an act of attention. To care is a form of listening. Through sound, we find each other again, building not just audiences, but relations that might grow stronger than the distance between us.

*The next following pages follow three young voices as they explore music as both language and gesture. The format is a loose, visual, textbased homage to the fanzine format than a thesis tracing lines between communication, empathy, and the need to be heard.*

voices tangled together,  
like the moment when a longing raindrop is finally swallowed by the sea.  
simple rhythms, simple melodies,  
together,

a whole universe.  
through the language of music,



we are united.



when I choose to take a moment or two,  
and pick up my guitar,  
or sing,  
or both,



it demands me to be present.  
it demands me to activate my senses,  
to focus on each note,  
to not just move forward,  
in the everlasting hunt for something new,  
to me, it is self care.

music allows the relations to those around me to  
grow stronger.  
when playing together,  
we need to be in touch with each other,  
we need to cooperate,  
we need to be vulnerable,  
and at last,  
we can create.



sharing a passion for music allows for new relations to form,  
and for a deeper understanding of one another to grow.

*Written by Ingrid Bjermeland Hesledalen*

# Were all just background music

*Written by Hibo Abbi*

the speaker crackles.  
someone says it s a vibe.  
someone else says  
it s too loud.  
both are right.

we curate playlists  
like personalities  
carefully shuffled  
to seem way too effortless.

records spin,  
screen glow,  
and somewhere inbetween  
we remember  
what it feels to listen and live for real.

maybe that s what care is all about  
just turning the volume down  
just enough atleast  
to hear each other s thoughts.



# Easy listening

*Written by Noah Visted*

Listen to me, sometimes it s hard to be heard.

Evertime I let the needle drop on one of my records I find my way back to a town far across waters. Where I spent a silver of my twenty first summer. seeking names spreaded across a wall of sound, with strangers surronding me.

melodies takes me back to a garden I used to come to read. To listen. To trace the outlines of legends told through the mouths of others. where I used to smoke fragile cigarettes, the way they used to, not out of habit, but out of reverence. I wait for seasons to end, and for myself to shift.

Some nights I follow the pull of an easy rhythm, slipping through backdoors, into venues in the spirit of something I used to believe in. I wait for it to come back around. Its easier to listen than to articulate.

I know my way back. And theres nothing easy about the weight of memory, but to listen is easier than you might think. Its happening right now.

I have a yearning feeling for the years lived by, and I find myself acheing for a bygone era. music is the vessel that takes me there. I search for a deeper connection that spoken words often dont communicate. It lets me travle. It cares for me, I care for it.

listen to me, to yourself, to the people, because they have the power. its easy, just tune in. maybe some day it will take me until the end. Until then, take care, Ill catch you on the flip side.





Written by,  
Ingrid Bjermeland Hesledalen, Hibo Abbi, Noah Visted  
*PRAKSIS Teen Advisory Board PTAB*, All Photos by authors

## **To Listen & Care**

### **An introduction on music as the language of connection**

Noah Visted, Hibo Nora Abbi and Ingrid Bjermeland Hesledalen

We listen because we want to care. Music becomes the language we reach for when words fail, as a way of saying, I'm here, without having to touch. For some, it begins with simply a melody, for others as a form of belonging. Youth voices echo, raw, unpolished, urgent – trying to make sense of what it means to connect in a world that often feels disconnected.

To listen is an act of paying attention. To care is a form of listening. Through sound, we find each other again, building not just audiences, but relations that might grow stronger than the distance between us.

*The following pages carry three young voices as they explore music as both language and gesture. The format is a loose, visual, text-based homage to the fanzine format, tracing connections between communication, empathy, and the need to be heard.*

This group has worked on a contribution that explores free-form poetic texts, related to perhaps the most obvious act of listening, listening to music. Through this, we aim to expand the idea of listening beyond sound itself: to understand it as a broader field of awareness. For us, listening to music can become a way of learning to listen to ourselves. At the same time, it is just as important for us to be heard by others, as the young voices of the next generation. Our contribution helps reveal a youthful context many already recognise but perhaps haven't yet put into words. Our work with *care* is a reminder of how vital it is to truly listen to each other, in the same way that we listen to a song.

The texts explore a broad theme of listening: the importance of being present, how relationships grow with the rhythm of the music, how it feels to listen and to live, and how memories return as an essential part of caring, and of learning to listen inwards as well as outwards.

## Tuning In

i hear voices tangled together,  
like the moment when a longing raindrop is finally swallowed by the sea.  
simple rhythms, simple melodies,  
a sunny day, a clouded mind,  
wind gently stroking your hair as if that was the sole purpose of its journey across the earth,  
muddy boots, memories of moments, of cities, of people no longer near.  
listen: it's all there. together, a whole universe.  
i can't help but feel that through the language of music –  
we are all united.

when i choose to take a moment or two,  
and pick up my guitar,  
i inevitably try, fail, listen and learn.  
i remember and recall what has been taught to me, and what i have taught myself.  
memories of slow mornings,  
of warm nights,  
of people tuning themselves to my pace,  
of peace, of attention and of care –  
this process demands me to be present.  
it demands me to activate my senses,  
to focus on each note,  
and to not just move forward,  
in the everlasting hunt for something new,  
to me, it is self-care.

always listen attentively.  
not only to music,  
but to falling leaves, and drowsy colours,  
to the hum of a fridge, and the steps of a staircase,  
to those around you, and to yourself;  
listen.

## **We're All Just Background Music**

the speaker crackles.  
someone says it's a vibe.  
someone else says  
it's too loud.  
both are right.

we curate playlists  
like personalities,  
carefully shuffled  
to seem way too effortless.

records spin,  
screens glow,  
and somewhere in-between  
we remember  
what it feels like to listen and live for real.

maybe that's what care is all about?  
just turning the volume down,  
just enough at least  
to hear each other's thoughts.

## Easy Listening

Listen to me, sometimes it's hard to be heard.

Every time I let the needle drop on one of my records, I find my way back to a town far across waters. Where I spent a sliver of my twenty-first summer, seeking names spread across a wall of sound, with strangers surrounding me.

Melodies take me back to a garden I used to come to and read. To listen. To trace the outlines of legends told through the mouths of others. Where I used to smoke fragile cigarettes, the way they used to, not out of habit, but out of reverence. I wait for seasons to end, and for myself to shift.

Some nights I follow the pull of an easy rhythm, slipping through backdoors, into venues in the spirit of something I still believe in. I wait for it to come back around. It's easier to listen than to articulate.

*I know my way back. I search for a deeper connection, the kind that spoken words often don't communicate. There's nothing easy about the weight of memory, but to listen is easier than you might think. It's happening right now. Music lets me travel. It cares for me, I care for it.*

Listen to me, to yourself, to the people, because they have the power. It's easy, just tune in. Maybe some day it will take me until the end. Until then, take care, I'll catch you on the flip side.



## **Can you help me with\_\_\_\_\_?**

This commission is a continuation of a workshop led by designer and artist João Doria de Souza on 3 May 2025, in collaboration with Nitja Centre of Contemporary Art. In it, João introduced the group to tools for thinking about how to help or collaborate with care. The discussion centred on practical questions: what needs to be asked and answered to avoid misunderstandings? And how can the person requesting assistance also take responsibility for the conditions of the collaboration?

First developed with PTAB as a riso-printed poster, the contribution consists of a set of utility cards that relate to one shared prompt beginning with “Can you help me with\_\_\_\_\_?”. Regardless of what the request may be, all cards must be considered in sequence as they do not offer discrete answers to separate situations but rather form a structure for thinking through any process of helping.

To demonstrate how the tool can be used, PTAB members wrote responses to the cards in relation to the making of this book.



Can you help me with \_\_\_\_\_?

Yes, but...

**See me!**

**Empathy** means understanding others' experiences through genuine presence.

**Are we in agreement?**

**Clarity** defines expectations and chooses conflicts wisely.

**I know how to do this.**

**– or not.**

**Competence** means recognising one's limitations and being honest about uncertainty.

**Let's be honest...**

**Honesty** involves self-awareness of one's own limitations and the courage to ask for help.

**Hear me!**

**Communication** means listening actively, asking questions and giving constructive feedback.

**Do you understand me?**

**Understanding** requires knowledge of cultural background, avoiding stereotypes and respecting differences.

**Trust me!**

**Autonomy** means standing by one's own values and building trust through mutual respect.

**Follow up.**

**Reliability** means communicating promptly about challenges, staying in touch and respecting shared deadlines.

## **Conclusion**

... great, then I will be able to help you!

—

Originally made by João Doria de Souza and PRAKSIS Youth × Nitja  
Poster Workshop 3 May 2025

**Can you help me with**

**Making a book about youth and publishing in the arts?**

**Yes, but...**

**See me! (Anahita)**

Yes, but I will be totally honest about what I contribute.

**Empathy** means understanding others' experiences through genuine presence.

**Are we in agreement? (Ingrid)**

Yes, but only if we're honest about what we can give. Time, energy, ideas, and what we expect in return.

**Clarity** defines expectations and chooses conflicts wisely.

**I know how to do this.  
– or not. (Sofia)**

I don't have any experience with this, so please be patient!

**Competence** means recognising one's limitations and being honest about uncertainty.

## Let's be honest... (Bror)

I've got school, this is not my full-time job and I need to have time for my hobbies and friends.

**Honesty** involves self-awareness of one's own limitations and the courage to ask for help.

## Hear me! (Hibo)

Yes, but only if the book listens back to our laughter, our doubts and everything in between.

**Communication** means listening actively, asking questions and giving constructive feedback.

## Do you understand me? (Auguste)

Remember there's a difference between understanding something deeply versus only knowing some background information.

**Understanding** requires knowledge of cultural background, avoiding stereotypes and respecting differences.

## Trust me! (Noah)

Yes, but let's make sure both our voices are heard.

**Autonomy** means standing by one's own values and building trust through mutual respect.

## Follow up. (Helen)

Yes, but I want us to be on the same page and to check in with each other in the process.


**Reliability** means communicating promptly about challenges, staying in touch and respecting shared deadlines.

## Conclusion

... great, then I will be able to help you!

—

Originally made by João Doria de Souza and PRAKSIS Teen Advisory Board × Nitja  
Poster Workshop 3. May 2025



**Wishes for  
Our  
Collective  
Future**

**+ Natural  
Wonders**

the most beautiful thing is everywhere



Can you hold your own hand  
and still catch yourself if you fall?  
or will you hit the ground

will we hit reality,

the day when we have held our own  
hands for too long

the day when we lose balance

let go of your own hand.



"I'm hoping that this world  
will change, but it just seems  
the same"

- Childish Gambino



THERE IS NO FEWIE NORA HEDGE AROUND  
 TIME THAT IS GONE, YOU CAN GO BACK AND  
 HAVE WHAT YOU WERE OF IT, IF YOU CAN  
 REMEMBER. SO I CAN CLOSE MY EYES  
 & MY VACILY AS IT IS TODAY, AND  
 IT IS GONE, AND I SEE IT AS IT  
 WAS WHEN I WAS A BOY. GREEN IT  
 WAS, AND POSSESSED OF THE PLENTY  
 OF THE EARTH

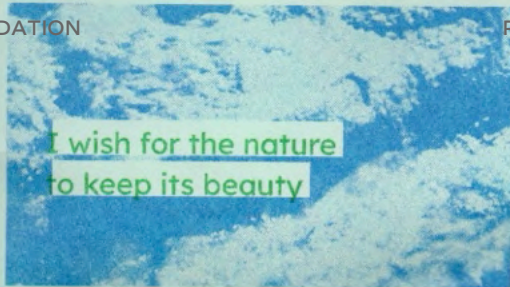
PRAKSIS



INDEX FOUNDATION

I wish for the nature  
to keep its beauty

PUBLICS



For species to flourish



artificiality is really blooming.





lets aim for cities  
with even more green  
parks and botanical  
gardens allowing for  
moments of quietude



working over the long term



abundance



Anahita Mollazehi  
Ingrid Bjermeland Hesledalen  
Sofia Orellana Gamboa  
Bror Høgåsen-Hallesby  
Noah Visted  
Assol Sokolova  
Helen Ibrahimian  
Annine Steen Slettebø  
Kristian Schrøder  
Camilla von Køppen  
Jessica Williams  
Amelia Greenhall  
Adam Greenhall

Nitja Center for Contemporary Arts  
PRAKSIS Teen Advisory Board (PTAB)

[praksisoslo.org/youth](http://praksisoslo.org/youth) [anemone.studio](http://anemone.studio)  
[nitja.no](http://nitja.no)

## **Wishes for Our Collective Future + Natural Wonders**

*Wishes for Our Collective Future + Natural Wonders* is a riso-zine made during a one-day workshop in May 2025 with ANEMONE (Amelia Greenhall and Adam Greenhall) and Jessica Williams as part of the Young Curators Mentorship project, in collaboration with Nitja Centre for Contemporary Art in Lillestrøm, Norway, supported by Sparebankstiftelsen DNB.

Using ANEMONE's free Spectrolite software, each board member selected an image from their phone, added a short text and produced printed sheets that were then folded and stapled into a zine.

The process was quick, intuitive and deliberately accessible, offering a counterpoint to the slower and more reflective work developed elsewhere in the programme. Although produced in an institutional context, the zine can be understood as situating itself in contrast to questions of institutional publishing and relates strongly to the group's wider conversations about care. The images and texts capture what mattered to each participant in that moment and show how small gestures, personal memories and everyday observations can form a shared publication.

## **Negotiations**

### **PUBLICS Youth Advisory Board (PYAB)**

Choosing to reveal their inner thoughts and concerns, PYAB members decided to include their own writings on their chosen theme of identity. Together they highlight that identity is rarely fixed but rather is something complex that is subject to a multitude of influences and impacts. They also highlight that identity is not only something negotiated outwardly, in how we situate ourselves in the world, but also inwardly, in how we think about ourselves in relation to the world that surrounds us.

## Negotiations

PUBLICS Youth Advisory Board (PYAB)

We are a group of nine young people stepping into the institutions of art, and in our context in Helsinki, into PUBLICS. Institutions pick and choose the stories they tell, which raises the question, who writes *our* stories? Which stories are told and who gets to tell them? PUBLICS Youth seeks to understand the forces that shape the voices that speak and question where and how our stories are able to take up space and can be read.

We imagine ourselves vulnerable – when no one is watching and at the same time everyone is. At its core, being part of PUBLICS is about learning together and working collectively. This year, we are exploring the world(s) of publishing and printed matter.

When read together, the texts that follow suggest that identity, the theme we collectively chose for our own contributions and commissions, is not something fixed but rather a constant negotiation between structures that surround us and individual agency. At the same time, identity can be thought of as the residue of events that have already disappeared, or the traces that haunt our being in the present. We suggest it is also the echo of the unrealised self.

Commonalities and shared understandings are hard to articulate in one voice, so we have chosen to construct the collective through our individual writings. Our intention has never been to create a single voice, in which individual experiences are lost.

One has to stop hanging out with one's thoughts in the corner of one's room and take them somewhere. This is how we started.

Identity is a promise: let yourself cry and laugh and grieve and contradict yourself – when no one watches and when everyone does – because your existence is not meant to make complete sense. Embrace it, and in doing so, honour the stories that are uniquely yours.

In the end we ask you, where do your stories come from?

## Negotiations

The images that punctuate the different texts in the following section have been created digitally by Dasha Taushan.

In order of appearance, they carry the following individual titles

*The Shack*

*Separation*

*The Cross*

*Ambiguity*

*Witnessing*

*Scape*

*Innocence*

*Closeness*

## Memories of I

Evi Volosnikova

Where does the ‘I’ begin? In what I see in the mirror every day, or in what I remember? Sometimes it feels as if the answers hide in the spaces between moments I don’t fully understand yet. Memories – smells, sounds, sensations – come back like little shards of light that suddenly pull me into the past.

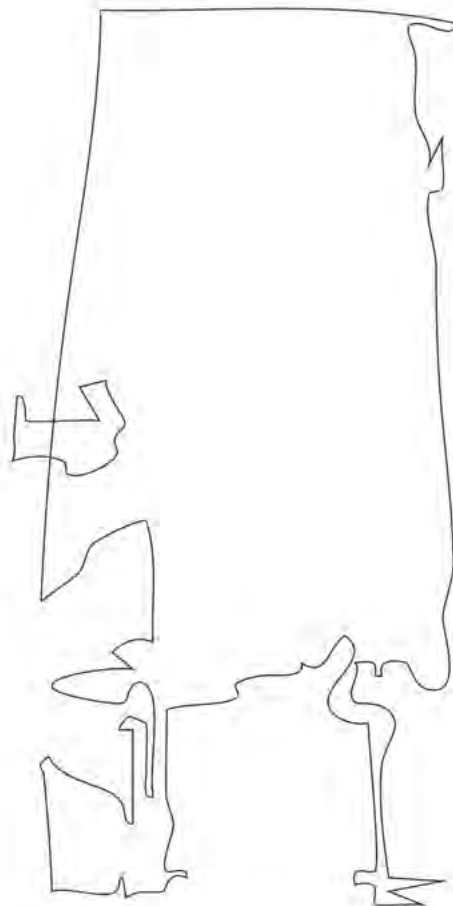
I remember the green blanket pulled over my head. I can smell the scent of my mother’s grown-up perfume and feel the warmth of the wool. A wave of sleepiness and safety washes over me. I know I am protected by my mother’s gentle hands. From the next room, I hear someone softly calling my name and inviting me to breakfast. The smell of fresh pastries and warm milk fills the air. I think it was my grandmother’s voice, but I’m not completely sure, since I haven’t fully woken up yet. My mother quickly responds, letting me sleep a little longer. I close my eyes again, slipping back into my innocent dreams. If someone now asked me who I am, I wouldn’t answer with my own name. I would say: “I am a daughter, I am a granddaughter.” I existed in other people’s hands and voices – when I was fed, tucked in, called “sweetheart”. *Will I only ever exist in their voices?*

The second memory, which split my small world into a ‘before’ and an ‘after’, is of something that happened at school. I looked down, admiring my new t-shirt. It was pink, sparkly, covered in sequins, and most importantly, it showed an image of my favourite princess character from a cartoon. I couldn’t take my eyes off it and felt so happy that I had finally convinced my mother to let me wear it to school. I entered the classroom, glowing with pride and excitedly showing it to my friends. But the response I received was not what I expected. “Ugh, that’s so childish, it’s silly!” I smiled awkwardly. “You’re so weird!” I blinked, confused. I felt the softness of the fabric and the sparkle of the sequins when I heard someone laughing. *Am I weird? Am I silly? Why do they see me differently? Why do their words sound louder than my own? If they see me differently than I do myself, is my truth not real?*

The third memory is of the glow of a monitor and the clicking of keyboard keys in the middle of the night, and a sense of forbidden discovery. For the first time, it seems, I had found a place where I could be the person I wanted others to see. Online, I could be someone else – braver, older, more confident. I created myself piece by piece from letters and symbols. It was a delicate, thrilling feeling – finally appearing like the person I had always wanted to be. I could choose an imaginary name, pick how I wanted to look, and be

open. *If I could be anyone here, does that mean there are more 'I's inside me? Who decides which image is the real me?*

If I exist in other people's voices, in their judgements, and in my own imagination, who am I really? Could the real me live somewhere between all these 'I's?



## **What I Am Not**

Aino Kaatra

The idea of what I am is a construct, of layer upon layer upon layer. Every layer, of stitch upon stitch upon stitch. But the layers are left incomplete – there are gaps between the

stitches. Thought of that way, I am lace. The negative forms of lace, the empty spaces, the incompleteness of the layers, is what makes lace lace.

Rachel Cusk writes the following about anti-description:

This anti-description, for want of a better way of putting it, had made something clear to her by a reverse kind of exposition: while he talked she began to see herself as a shape, an outline, with all the detail filled in around it while the shape itself remained blank. Yet this shape, even while its content remained unknown, gave her for the first time since the incident a sense of who she now was.[1]

Through anti-description – what I am not – I see what I might be at this moment. The holes, the gaps of the lace are created through this anti-description.

“They say Yes, they say No; whereas I shift and change and am seen through in a second,” thinks Rhoda in *The Waves*. [2] Lace is see-through. Its pattern shifts from layer to layer through repetition. Because of wear and tear, fibres soften and loosen and the fabric shifts, it changes. I want to be see-through too, bare, in a way. I also want to be able to shift and change and soften.

Hand-made lace is composed of different alternating stitches and layers. In knitted lace, layers are composed of different combinations of decreases, increases and other stitches. “I am not one and simple, but complex and many,” Bernard says in *The Waves*. [3]

The meaning of lace is equally complex and contradictory, not unlike a person... Seen as fragile, pure, virginal, lace is made by way of tedious, repetitive patterns. When worn on the body, it is considered as something inherently sexual or provocative, as promiscuous, worn to serve the male gaze. In a way, it is not entirely different from how layers of meaning pile up as I lace my fingers through hers: what we have is something for *his* gaze, something inherently sexual.

On the other hand, lace can be made from one long sustained thread, making it strong in its delicateness. Something beautiful, nice to see and wear; I have trims of lace at the edge of my top or my collar. I stitched a piece of lace onto the ends of my jacket sleeves.

It can be carefully hand-made, taking a long time, the maker sitting with the piece for hours, days, months on end. I’ve been finding value in taking my time too. In working stitch by stitch, layer by layer. Taking a while is a form of resistance.

I've been trying to see myself in the gaps, the rips, the cracks and negative spaces. The in-between, the incomprehensible, in the things that spill over the outlines – the wrongly placed stitches, in the anti-description, Barbara Myerhoff states that “[o]ne of the most persistent but elusive ways that people make sense of themselves is to show themselves to themselves —.”[4]

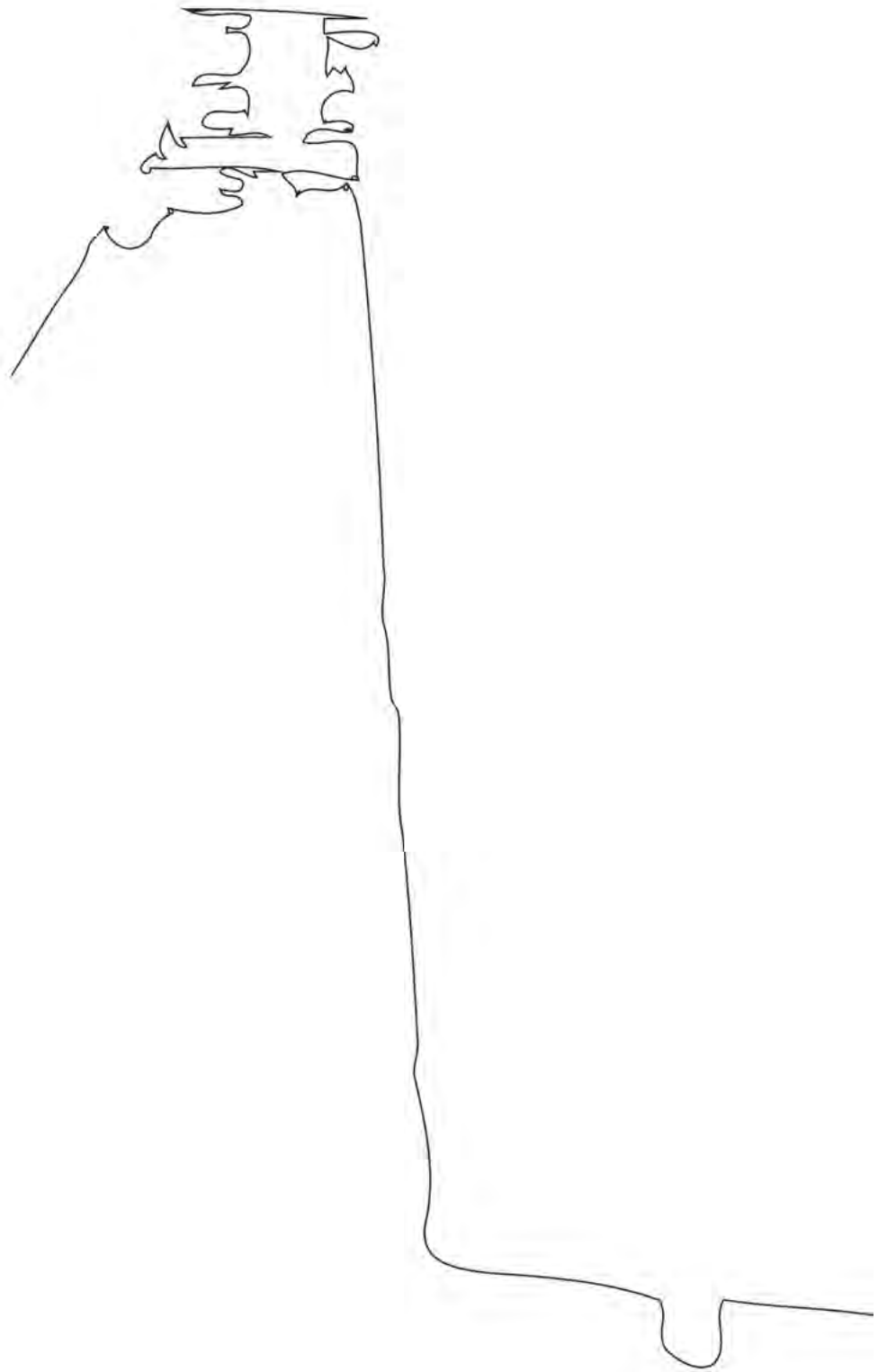
I started stitching together my lace scarf. I want it to be soft to the touch, warming on my neck, becoming loose, stretched out, worn, loved and wrinkled by age.

[1] Rachel Cusk, *Outline / Rachel Cusk* (London: Faber & Faber, 2018).

[2] Virginia Woolf, *The Waves*, ed. Gillian Beer (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992, [1931]).

[3] Ibid.

[4] Barbara Myerhoff, *Remembered Lives: The Work of Ritual, Storytelling, and Growing Older*, ed. Marc Kaminsky (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1992), p. 257.



## In-Between

Miya Zenina

When I left my childhood home, I managed to take a lot with me, but I still could not fit even half of myself into the suitcase. That suitcase became both the symbol of my choice and my judge, and leaving felt like having been given a sentence. Looking back, I ask myself: if I had taken everything, would I have remained myself? Or would holes still have been torn into what I felt was my identity?

The first thing I remember is the quilt my mother stitched from scraps of fabric. I always loved pink, and despite my crises of gender and identity – it called out to me. Every lost toy, every broken trinket was perceived through my desperate tears: “Why did you leave me?” Whenever my belongings were thrown out during arguments, pieces of me were ripped away. In those moments, I wondered who I was, and had made me, year upon year. Am I everything that surrounds me, or am I what is inside my head? A soul, do I even have one? Am I my family, then why don’t I want to talk to them anymore? Am I these cracked walls, then why did I leave them behind?

I always kept the gifts I was given, even the smallest ones. The flashlight my grandpa gave me with the words, “You’ll need this one day.” He passed away a few months later. When I returned for his funeral, I opened my memory box: the flashlight was among a pile of papers. With trembling hands, I took it out it blinked once and then went dark. Broken, just like my granddad’s his life had been broken – or at least that’s how it felt to me.

After I moved, I cried. I cried for a long time, every day, repeating how badly I wanted to go home and nothing of me was left. Not the language I spoke, not my loved ones, not the joy in my eyes. “I want to go home,” I whispered, sitting in my old room with the flashlight. But deep down, I knew it was no longer my home – just a dusty space with cracks in the walls. I couldn’t hide here anymore. I couldn’t be safe here.

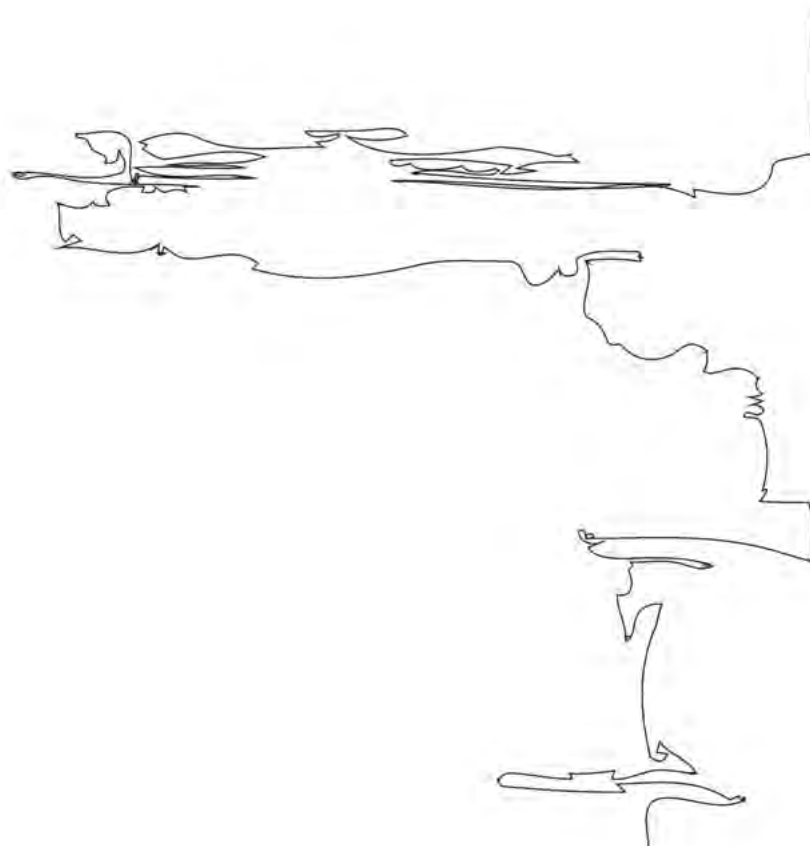
I closed my eyes tightly. This is my grandfather’s house. He’s been gone for three months. I closed them even tighter, until stars burst behind my eyelids. This is not my home. This is my mother’s house. She wants to sell it, and just like when my toys were taken when I was a child, my home was now being taken too. But did I even live here anymore?

I left, and sat at the station, unable to step onto the bus. It felt like a betrayal, with the betrayer and betrayed both being me.

When I arrived at our flat, memories filled my head again, and my eyes filled with tears. This is not my home; this is just the apartment I rent with the love of my life. I hate it – the yellow walls, the mess, the emptiness. It means nothing to me.

And yet, every time I return there, I also feel joy, I feel relief, I feel safe. Perhaps home is the place where I am allowed to be myself and. Perhaps home is me.

I cannot carry every object into the future, but I cannot release them either. The broken flashlight and the pink quilt still haunt me. Maybe identity is nothing but the weight of the things we carry with us and the emptiness of the things we leave behind. Maybe my only true home is something in-between?



## Too Real

Viivi Auerlehto

5.9.2024

As I fill it up with water, the fluorescent light colours the stainless steel of my washing basin in shades of silver and gold. There are only the quiet murmuring of the fridge and the distant thrum of traffic from Ring Road One.

I'm playing house.

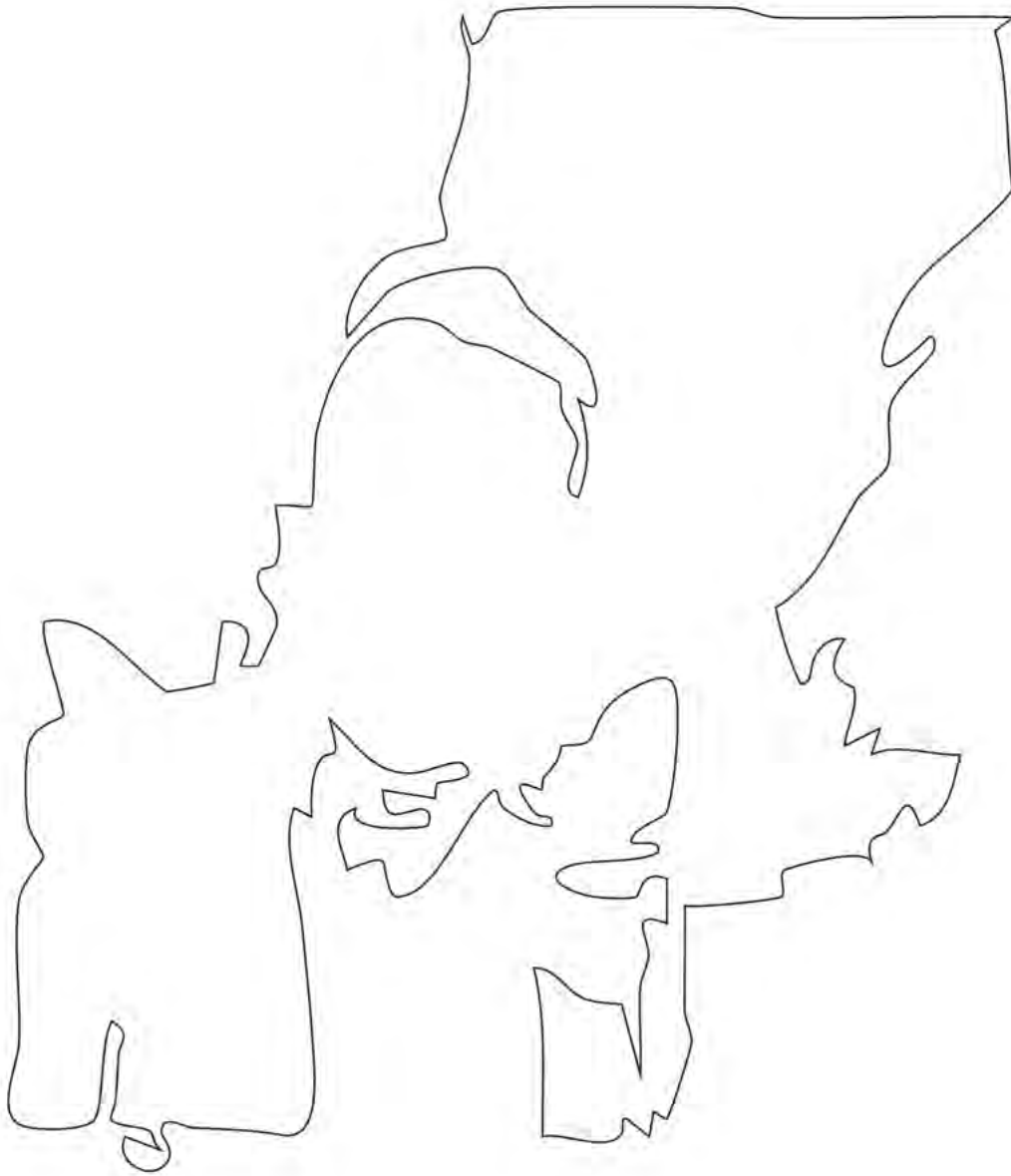
I wash the dishes with water that wrinkles the skin of my fingers raisin-like. I'm carefully placing the clean dishes into the drying cabinet when a whiff of tobacco seeps in through my open window. I tiptoe to it, peeking into the night with narrowed eyes, only to be met with nothing, again. I lean over the ledge to try and see better, to find the source of the scent before remembering that you're not supposed to do that. It's not nice to stare, to spy on your neighbours, and I don't want to be like that.

I retreat into my 21m<sup>2</sup> doll house, wishing I still had the dolls, as without them it all feels a tad too real.

I turn up the volume of my audio book and hug myself tightly under the blankets.

21.10.2024

The breath of night on the back of my neck feels oppressive. The weight of the sleepless hours sits like a blanket on my tired shoulders. I hate it and I'm drowning the loneliness in an endless stream of screen content. Emotions swell, shove their cold fingers between my bones, burst out of my pores as cold sweat. How can I live in the same house with tens of people whose names I don't even know? How can my own emotions scream so loudly they should be heard from here to Helsinki, yet no one comes?



## Smallest Differences

Pärinaz Estebzary

Where is home?! This may be one of the biggest questions that we ask ourselves and one that feels especially real for migrants. When I say migrants, I am mostly talking about myself, where I believe migration is one of the most personal experiences. Two people going through it under the same conditions, moving between the same places and at the same time, their experience can never be the same.

The answer to the question is a big part of everyone's sense of identity. There are certain events in life that bring changes you may not realise shape you. Your identity – your perspective, personality, mood, ethics and behaviour – seems to be part of you so naturally that you may not even think about it. When choosing a field of study, when registering for a new class, when following your passion or even trying to find it, you may ask yourself, who am I? What makes me me? And after having made your decision, all the questions fade away.

But for a migrant... migration feels like changing your home, your university, your society, while others assume that the difficulties you go through are simple. "You're homesick? It's OK, you have better opportunities here. Feeling lonely? It's OK, go out, meet people, make friends." They give guidance as if fitting into a foreign culture – the further it is from your own, the harder it is to fit in – is like going to a store and looking for your favourite snack. But no one knows what's really happening inside.

In the most migrant state, in the loneliest state, the tiniest details and deepest information you have about yourself are called into question. How can you explain that the smallest differences you notice make you question everything. Who am I? What kind of way of eating is this? This way of life? I want to be myself – the same person I was before – but here. But here doesn't feel like home. Deep down, you don't feel physically safe. You constantly feel an anxiety that, over time, can settle in your body so much that you no longer notice it – the anxiety about where home is. I live independently and freely here, I study, and if I get a job, I work, but despite all that I can't call this home.

These experiences are like a fog you get used to; they swirl in your mind until one crucial moment – the most important moment of being a migrant, especially if you migrated alone and are faced with all these thoughts and experiences by yourself: the first time you go back home.

I remember from before I migrated that a fear had settled in me after hearing the words of those who had already moved. They said that the new place would never feel like home, and that you'll keep thinking that your own country is home, until you go back and realise that even your home doesn't feel like home anymore. Because of that, I was afraid to return. Because of the intensity and confusion that I had gone through alone, and wanting to go back home with all my being I, I was still scared. When I finally returned – after what felt like years because of many different experiences in only a few months – I will never forget the first night I slept in my own room again.

I wanted to go back home not just because I missed my mom, dad and sister. I wanted to return because in those few months I had changed so much and the identity I had lived with for nineteen years before migrating was gone; it was no longer with me. I constantly felt a sense of disconnection and exhaustion, yet I didn't feel I had a new identity yet either. I imagined that if I went back home, my homesickness would fade and I would reconnect with my old identity. That did happen, though not exactly in the way I wanted, but it happened. My previous identity didn't fully return, but it had been so intertwined with the environment of Tehran and my old home that I could feel it again.

The ceiling of our home is much higher than that of the place I live in now. On the first night back in my old bed, I felt as if everything – everything I had and had not been – was falling on top of me through every single object around me. From the ceiling lamp with my sister's childhood doll wrapped around it, to the hand-printed artworks and drawings I made in high school on the walls, to my piano that my mom always cleaned so it wouldn't gather dust when I wasn't there, to my clothes and books.

It was then that I realised my identity is not just an untouchable inner dimension, or a theoretical definition in someone's mind. I understood how much it is tied to my environment and how attached we humans are without realising it. How much identity is in the details, how deeply a person exists in their belongings and surroundings. There, back in Tehran, my fear disappeared, but the confusion didn't. Those first few days were surreal. I couldn't understand what had happened or where I was. Even seeing the people I loved in person, I was constantly shocked, as if I couldn't tell if they were real, or if the months I had lived through, confronting death several times to preserve my spirit, were real.

I returned to Finland, went back to Iran again later, stayed longer. Then the war happened, I witnessed it up close and I came back. These events became a major part of me. Even now, as I write, I haven't fully found my identity, and I didn't realise that all my life problems would fall on me at once, leaving me unable to recognise myself. I have accepted

that I may not find myself for years. I don't recognise myself in my own mind, my own perception. Life wasn't how I thought it would be, and I wasn't exactly who I thought I was.

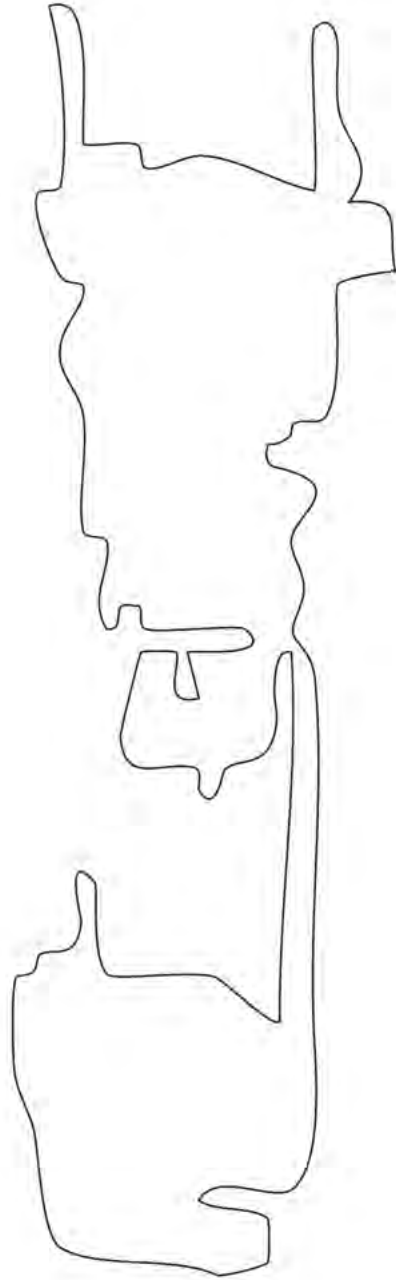
Yet I'm certain that, without even realising it, without focusing consciously on it, even while grappling with the question "Who am I?" and "Where is home?", I am imprinting myself on the things I own here. I know that no place can ever replace Iran, but the rest – who knows? One day, when I reach myself, I will realise I've been shaping all this time.

Even if you haven't experienced such circumstances, you still form yourself, your identity changes but you probably won't feel that accompanying sense of loneliness and lack of identity because everything is happening gradually.

Not every migrant reading this will think, "Yes, that's exactly me." But I know that there are others who migrated alone, who had no one, and who maybe don't have the opportunity to write about identity. When you leave your home, you understand others in the same situation and that connects you.

I don't have a definitive answer yet, but I have a clearer understanding: I am this person, with maybe a changing body and spirit, still forming – but I know my home remains Iran. My heart calms with this Iranian poem by Fereydoun Helmi:

*If you reach this point, let me tell you in secret and in veil,  
So no one hears this precious secret of the world.  
What they spoke and sang – you are that.  
You yourself are the soul of the world.  
Whether hidden or revealed – you are the one who all your life has been shouting for  
yourself.*



## Torn

Amran Ahmed

There are documented cases of people who, after they have received an organ transplant, start to dream their donor's dreams. They wake up with memories that aren't theirs, even of vivid scenes of events they haven't lived, have cravings they never experienced before. It seems that the body remembers. I think about this often: how much of what I call 'me' might actually belong to someone else, my family, culture, city, politics or generation.

I am more of a collage than a single portrait. My parents' voices echo in how I speak and in the choices that I make without thinking. My culture appears in the food I crave on quiet evenings and in the beats of songs I don't even know the words to.

Oslo, Norway. Nairobi, Kenya. Bosaso, Somalia. Helsinki, Finland. Every city I've lived in has left traces behind in me.

When I try to sort it all out and find the part that belongs to me, I'm never sure what remains. Is there a core, untouched by anyone else, or am I completely stitched together from borrowed pieces?

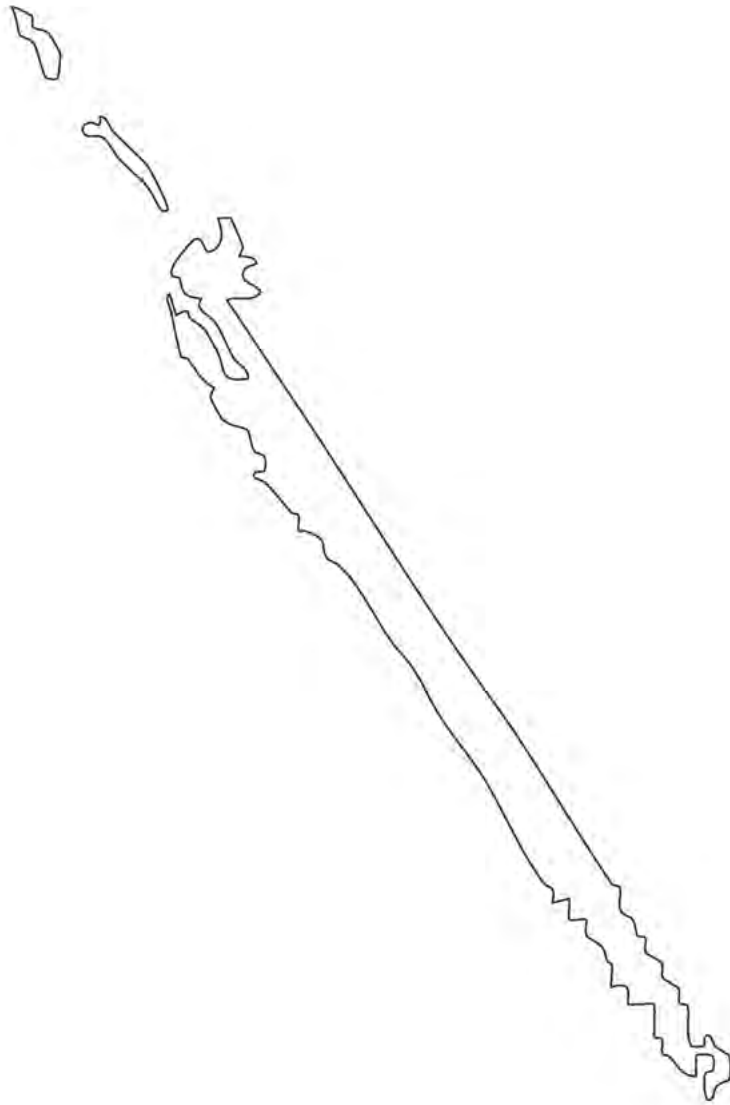
Family is the first mirror. The phrases my parents repeat – half-warnings to keep me from stumbling where they once did and half-reminders to carry faith wherever I go, live within me. I have ended up carrying not just their language, but also their silences. I find myself with inherited wounds and limits that I don't fully understand.

Yet, there is betrayal in that inheritance too. When I try to sidestep their expectations, I feel like I'm letting them down. And when I follow their dreams too closely, I lose sight of my own. The self becomes a balancing act, where neither side is ever fully satisfied.

Culture adds to this complexity. It sticks to me in gestures and jokes that only make sense to those who share the same background. It feels comforting, like being held, but also suffocating, like being held too tightly. To belong to a culture means speaking its language fluently while constantly translating myself when I step outside it. The betrayal here is subtle. By trying to cling to my culture, I risk trapping myself in traditions that I don't align with. But by letting go, I risk being seen as forgetting where I came from. Either way, I am torn between pride and disloyalty.

Then there's politics – a sharper edge of my identity. The ideals I support, the causes I care about and the words I share online define me just as much as they expose where my priorities lie. Here, the feeling of self-betrayal is stronger, almost humiliating. I know what I believe in and what I condemn, yet I live within the very systems I criticise. I scroll on a phone mined from suffering. I wear clothes sewn by hands I'll never see. This creates a split existence, of vocally supporting justice while quietly contributing to its erosion. I am the protest and the purchase, the outrage and the receipt.

This makes my sense of self feel less like a straight path and more like a loop, spiralling between conviction and compromise, inheritance and self-actualisation. To be myself is to be loyal to something borrowed while feeling guilty about betraying it. Maybe the truth is that who I am is never finished and never pure.



## I Steal from Those I Love

Dasha Taushan

I admire my grandmother's spiritual being:  
Her Orthodox-Christian minimal life, humble, still, predictable.

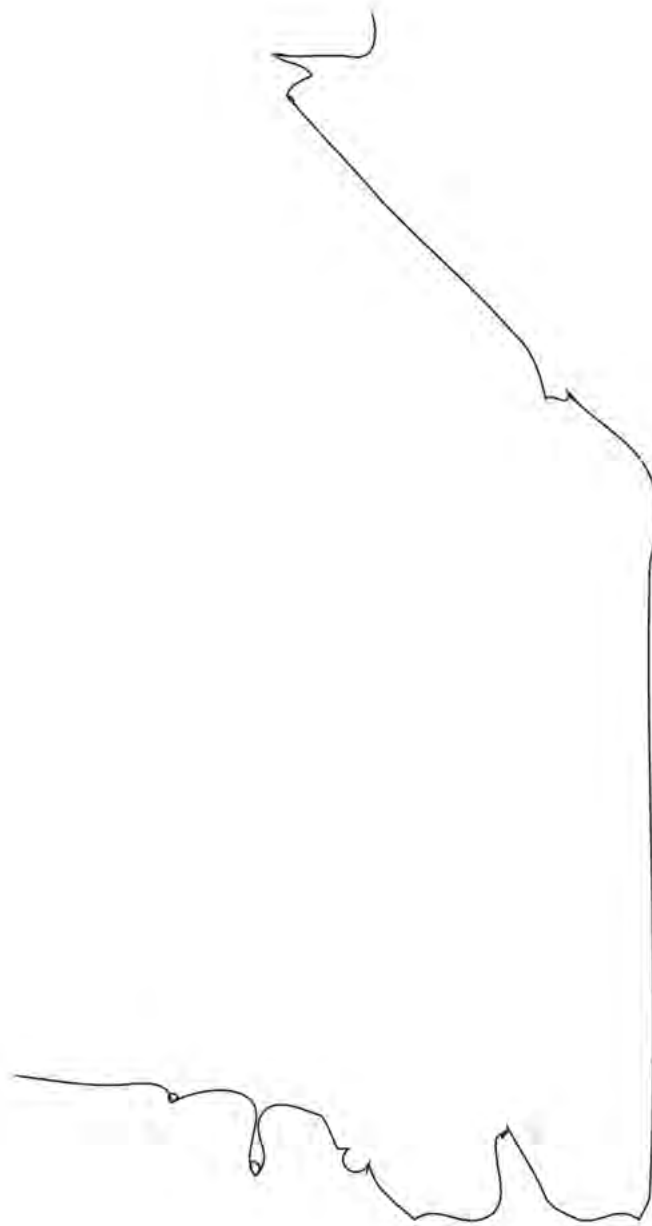
I collect small items that simulate it:  
A plastic battery-powered Chinese candle,  
A rose and a cross at its base, most likely ceremonial,  
A crucifix on my post-invasion niche artist's necklace,  
It hangs between old black radio resistors.  
Frankly, I only go to churches to sit in silence.

I like being overseen by the great all-powered entity,  
My heart follows a guidebook for what's right and what's wrong.  
Am I yet your industrial angel?  
I like it: role-playing a religion I can't follow.

The Internet made me a non-believer, or, possibly,  
Passing the responsibility to the 'entity' did.  
Still, I have fantasies of a space as uniting as a church,  
Of a church-like nature at least – frightening, substantial.  
I seek forgiveness, intentionally,  
I seek something to be ritualistically forgiven for.

But religion is for weekends, usually it's just  
My full-time job assisting and  
Satisfying the voices of the past,  
Occasionally it feels like I might not have anything if it weren't for them.  
A hauntology enthusiast or a nostalgia-porn actress?  
Maybe neither,  
I steal my identities from those I love.

Middle-child behaviour.



## Future Days

Casper Langenskiöld

1 September 2050

I think I'm dying, at least on the inside. Forgot that the government decreased ration sizes last week so now I have to live on whatever I have left in the fridge, which is barely anything – life just decided to fuck me over today, I guess. Anyway, since I'm one of the luckier ones, I have a job... with twelve-hour shifts (Oh, what to do...). This means that I must get up in the morning and walk through all the wonderful smog that fills the air like nothing else! To a place of employment that seems to strive to make me miserable.

2 September 2050

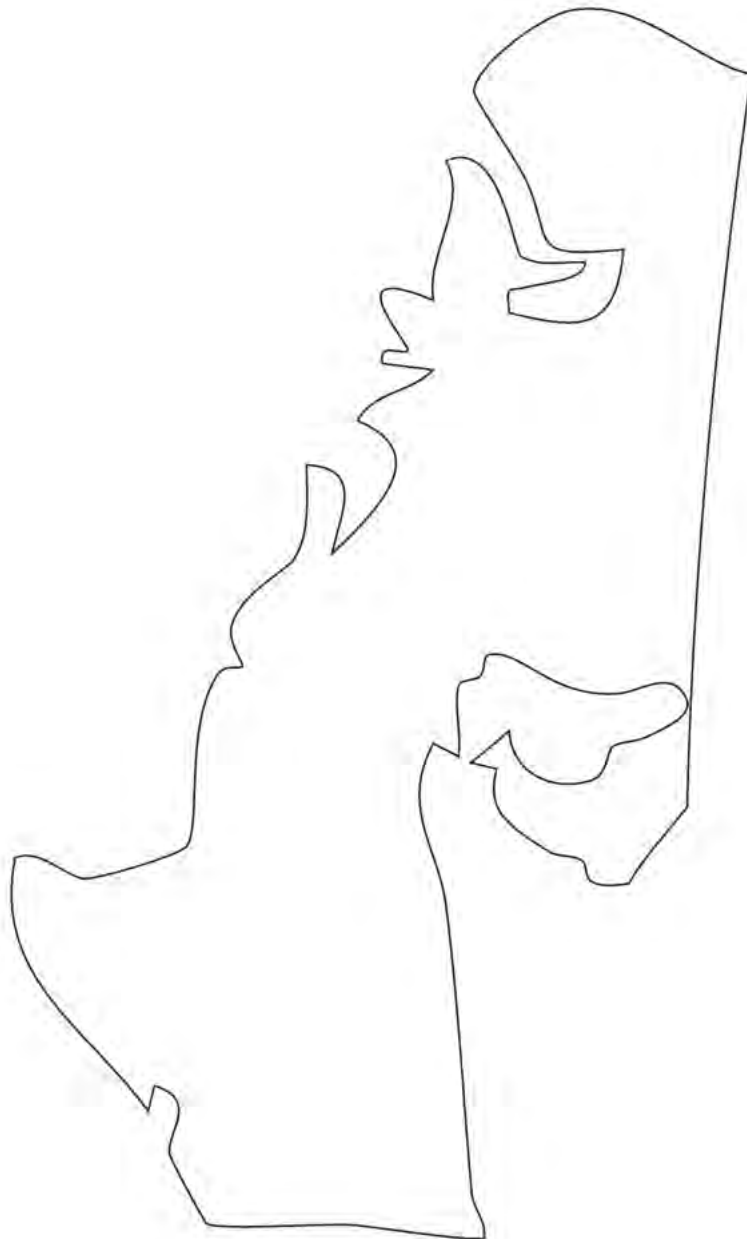
My memories feel distant to me, everything around me does too. Everywhere I go, nothing is recognisable anymore. Something ominous is constantly present, I can feel it but can't figure out what it is. Nothing provokes a reaction from me anymore, I'm almost completely numb. Today, for example, my friend broke his arm while we were at work. People around him barely reacted, hell, he barely reacted himself – he just sort of whimpered. Then they all just sort of carried on, why is beyond me, but then so did I. I miss feeling passionately about something in any sort of way, no matter in anger or happiness. Some people are talking about going on strike, and I ask myself what do I have to lose? If I'm going to be replaced by robots, it won't be easily done at least.

3 September 2050

Had a brief moment to think after work. I just realised summer has ended – how would I know, when it all looks the same nowadays? Seasons are a thing of the past, now it all just looks, feels and sounds like a rotting corpse waiting to be put out of its misery.

4 September 2050

A slow day except for the end. Turns out there are scabs among us, who ratted on people planning a strike to the bosses. Disappeared, all of them. All their belongings were immediately removed from the premises and buried behind the building. At this moment of writing, I'm looking for something to bring to the site where their belongings are buried, like a final symbolic gift. I can't stop thinking, where have all the flowers gone?



## Fictions

Nea Lähdekorpi

*Only later did she think with satisfaction: I'm a typist and a virgin, and I like coca-cola.*

Macabéa, the main character in Clarice Lispector's book *The Hour of the Star* (1977), has woken up and forgotten who she is. The above quote shows how the male narrator describes the thought process following this realisation of hers. It is unclear whether she is actually that shallow or only presented as such through his male gaze. Whichever is the case, the reader is introduced to the paradox of finding comfort as well as one's self in work, the patriarchy and consumerism.

Macabéa sees her work as a typist as her main occupation, which is understandable in her circumstances, just like it is in our current neoliberal society, in which the first questions asked when meeting new people are often about our profession and studies. Our whole upbringing prepares us for an existence as a worker. However, work is also one of the most authoritarian and hierarchical environments: our work tasks, actions and behaviours are subject to stricter norms than how we spend the rest of our time. Our work role is guided and scripted.

One shared ideal imposed on women and nature is that of being untouched. A touch (of a man) is capable of making nature lose its beauty and a woman her purity. To preserve their value, it is desirable that both are left *untouched*. What this way of thinking implies is that touch is always damaging and violent. By this logic, taking pride in the label of being a virgin could be understood as not having been hurt. Macabéa finds comfort in the idea of not having been ruined: she is yet to be discovered and admired. The patriarchal promise is empty though, because touch doesn't have to be violent. The idealisation of virginity is challenged by faith in the existence of other, gentler, nurturing forms of touch. No longer being a virgin therefore would not have to equal having been hurt or ruined if she could just escape the hegemony of violent touch.

Instead of mentioning a hobby, a value or a trait, when defining herself Macabéa chooses to refer to a deeply commercialised product. This is not surprising: every product is sold to us with a story about how purchasing it will help define us. What we own is a collection of short stories about us written for us. These fictions play such a prominent role in our society that we could perhaps live our life without writing our own. It raises a question though: who are we but consumers when even enjoying art is a form of consumption? We consume because as humans we always look for something to engage with, which is where

art can play a role that is different from other products. In reclaiming our stories, it maybe has a role to play – as a tool, as a step.

Macabéa's story is narrated for her. How much are ours?

## Life Experiences

PYAB

We chose to do interviews for this publication because that would allow us to include different people's opinions and perspectives on our theme, identity. The "Future Futures" project's aim is to suggest ways for art institutions to reach out to young people: interviews can act as a concrete way of doing just that and we fell in love with the idea of collecting stories.

We set out to select young or emerging artists, where each interviewer had their own reasons for choosing who to speak with – such as wanting to explore an art form they were less familiar with, to amplify a voice that might have been unheard so far, even within their own circles, highlighting migrant perspectives, or simply having been impressed by or connected with an artist's previous work.

We spoke with artists from different fields – poetry, dance, music, the visual arts – who are not widely known yet or who don't have an institution that supports them. All conversations were based on the same five questions to explore different views on identity and how art can shape or express it. The underlying question was how different people with different stories would answer the exact same questions.

Between us, we ended up speaking to five artists: Pepe Sivunen, a visual artist and art student from Turku, Finland; Rami Alwhithawi, a Venezuela-born musician with family in Syria and an interesting life trajectory who has ended up in Finland; Eme Tähtinen, originally from Myyrmäki, Finland, a dance artist whose main focus is street dance styles; Angela Eldips (or Aldebs), a Syrian dancer and choreographer based in Helsinki; and Sofia Koivuneva, a poet and a student who lives in Turku and whose work people may have stumbled across on spoken-word stages.

Our own stances and positions influenced who came to our attention and chose to feature. Social media no doubt played a major role: it helped define the range of people we encounter in our daily lives and therefore who we considered for our interviews. Social media can narrow the scope of possibilities, but it can also democratise access. People who may not have an institutional background or formal education can still have their voices and their art seen and heard by many through these platforms.

It's hard to reach out to those you look up to, it's hard to conduct interviews, it's hard to edit an interview without putting words into another person's mouth or editing out an

important part of their story when the word limit comes into view. It is always worth it to sit down and listen to someone's story though.

## Interview with Pepe Sivunen

by Viivi Auerlehto

Pepe Suvonen states about themselves: "I'm an artist and art student from Turku interested in a wide variety of mediums and subjects. I'm still finding my identity as an artist and discovering my practice. Recently I've been getting into media-art and printmaking. Some themes that I regularly explore are current events, identity and relationships. Activism, subcultures, protests and defending the rights of LGBTQ people are all subjects that inspire and determine the direction of my artistic work."

Viivi Auerlehto: Are there parts of yourself you amplify in order to be heard and seen – in life or in your art?

PS: I think that all the art we create is intrinsically personal and it's hard for me to answer this question. To me every art piece is a small protest – an expression of an opinion I might not say aloud or in a way other than through art.

I find myself having a lot of thoughts, opinions and ideas that I bring out by *wearing* and *showing* rather than speaking, through self-made patches, style choices, art. I like being able to express myself without having to come out of the closet with it each time – art is that gateway to me. Attending protests is also a way of making my position more visible, going out there to march for Palestine, for example, and show my view through action.

VA: Are there parts of your identity that are present in your art that you feel are left out from mainstream conversation?

PS: This was kind of a hard question for me... and maybe this is a bit of a roundabout way of answering it. To me the most important thing is to let people speak for themselves. No one should be speaking on behalf of another group of people, especially one they aren't part of.

VA: When you think about your path into the arts, what have been the key influences that shaped how you see yourself and your work today?

PS: One particular experience that comes to mind is the video *You can't get what you want but you can get me* by Samira Elagoz and Z. Walsh that I saw at Kiasma in 2024. That work

really impacted me in a way no other artwork really has. There were a lot of similarities to my story there – the looks, the identities, the long-distance relationship. I went to see it multiple times and each time it had as much impact as the previous. It really gave me the feeling that I'm on the right path.

I later met the artists at an event. Z Walsh noted that he and I both had yellow shoelaces – a small, wonderful thing to tie it all together. Yellow shoelaces are a common symbol in the subcultures I'm involved in. It's a way of showing where you stand.

VA: Do you see yourself as part of any artistic, cultural or social community? How does that shape your creative voice?

PS: There's quite a lot that comes to mind, though I also think I'm still finding my identities. The city I live in, Turku, the alternative scene here, through art and music. Turku Art Academy, where I study, is definitely a big community for me, one I feel I belong to. I will have a solo exhibition in Kirjakahvila/Book Café in Turku in a couple of months and that has become a very important place to me, as a cornerstone of a community where it's easy to make connections and where I'd like to integrate myself more in the future.

I tend to gravitate towards a lot of small groups, yet I find there's always a bigger network connecting everything, especially in the art world in Finland – it isn't very big and connections overcome city borders easily. There's co-operation between art schools and of course individuals. Connecting to other people who know more people opens doors to new places – from the world of small-scale art events in Turku to publishing in Helsinki, Stockholm and Oslo; I'm part of a community spanning it all.

VA: If your identity were a material, texture or sound – what would it be and why?

PS: I think it would be something like the sound of drums... starting from silence and ending very loud.

## **Interview with Rami Almhithawi**

by Pärinaz Estebzary

My name is Rami Almhithawi. I was born in Venezuela, but my family is from Syria. I'm an actor, producer, graphic designer and social media marketer. I lived in Venezuela for fifteen years, four in Syria, one in the UAE and have been in Finland for eight years.

Pärinaz Estebzary: Are there parts of yourself you amplify in order to be heard and seen in life or in your art?

RA: I like to show where I come from through my music, blending Latin and Arabic influences. My first album, *The Decent Life*, is about Venezuela, migration and adapting as a refugee. The next ones explore war, freedom, love and family.

I used to wear clown or Egyptian make-up as part of my alter ego – it helped me express myself until I grew out of it.

For me, freedom means choice. I used to think I had no control over who I was, but I learned to take responsibility for my life. I've written about my family too. Coming from a Middle Eastern family means a lot of love, but also emotional complexity. Therapy helped me heal.

PE: Are there parts of your identity that are present in your art that you feel are left out of mainstream conversation?

RA: I don't think anyone can fully understand me – and that's fine. Sometimes I think “thanks for listening,” but I know they're just enjoying the music.

I once performed a song about loss and my father's absence. A family came to me afterwards and said they loved it. Later I found out the mother had lost her daughter. Our stories were different, but she still felt connected.

Finnish people might not know what war feels like, but they connect in other ways. When someone understands Spanish, it's special – I sing about dark things and Finnish people just go, “Oh, Latin! I love it”.

PE: Thinking about your path into art, what have been the key influences that shaped how you see yourself and your work today?

RA: I was shaped by where I was born. In Venezuela, music is everywhere – you wake up, open the window and hear it. We lived somewhere between a city and a village. Salsa, merengue, reggaeton – that was my world, along with Western music. Later, in Syria, I discovered Middle Eastern sounds, but because of my sister I also listened to Green Day and 1990s rock – System of a Down, Linkin Park, Blink-182 – those bands really shaped me. When I came to Finland, I got into psychedelic 1960s and electronic music and met artists who helped me step out of my comfort zone.

In Venezuela, I had a band called Falafaso. We created a new local scene on the island where I lived. That time taught me to perform, to feel rhythm [Rami plays a rhythm on his guitar] and to find my own sound.

PE: Did they help you to come out of that zone?

RA: Yeah. Being an immigrant also shaped me – seeing people who do things differently inspires me. Having some distance from music helps me enjoy it more. What drives me is life experience, not perfection. I don't want to be the best guitarist or singer – I just want to make songs I enjoy. I came to Finland at age 19 or 20, and I'm still learning. For a while, I couldn't write in Spanish – it felt like opening a covered-up scar.

PE: Do you see yourself as part of any artistic, cultural or social community? How does that shape your creative voice?

RA: In Finland, everything feels very individualistic. It's mostly me and my band. We used to tour, but when Covid-19 struck, we stopped and that band ended.

Now I play with different musicians – acoustic, rock, drums, bass. There's a group called Scope, young independent artists who organise events. Sometimes I play with them, sometimes with the hippie crowd, but it doesn't feel like belonging anywhere specific. Right now, I'm focused on recording and writing. My next project might be called *Vida, Muerte, Guerra y Paz*. That might be the title. You know what *vida* means? Life. *Muerte* is death. *Guerra* is war. *Paz* is peace.

PE: If your identity were a material, texture or sound, what would it be and why?

RA: Fire and water; fire because I can be fierce and intense, water because I can be calm and flexible.

Maybe everything I say is fake, maybe I'm nothing or everything at the same time. We live in mental boxes that make us feel safe, but it's important to break out of them sometimes and ask who you really are. Lately, I've been learning to accept myself – my insecurities and flaws – and I feel like “take it or leave it”. I try to grow and be stronger, but I don't need to be perfect all the time.

## Interview Eme Tähtinen

by Aino Kaatra

Eme Tähtinen is a dance artist and choreographer whose practice engages with street dance styles as both artistic form and cultural practice. Originally from Myyrmäki, Finland, her work focuses on the development of street dance culture, while critically examining issues of visibility, commercialism and the structural boundaries within the dance field in Finland.

Aino Kaatra: Are there parts of yourself you amplify in order to be heard and seen – in life or in your art?

Eme Tähtinen: I'm not as extroverted or socially energetic as I come across, especially in art spaces. Many people assume that I'm a really social person – in art spaces I try to present myself that way – and it comes as a surprise to many that I get really nervous about social situations. I have set myself this mould of presenting as a socially energetic person, which feels demanding to keep up. The pattern is hard to break, as it is now shared by other people in the way that they perceive me.

In a way, it feels like I must present myself like that to get heard and seen, and to build my career in the arts – especially as I don't have a formal education. You need social energy to push yourself through, to present yourself in a certain way, even if it doesn't come naturally.

AK: Are there parts of your identity present in your art that you feel are left out from mainstream conversation?

ET: It feels as if I have to hide my incompleteness. Sometimes people talk about my work assuming that I always know what I'm doing or that I should always be doing the 'right thing' – forgetting that I'm only nineteen years old and I'm trying things out.

Of course, I strive to be good and do good but that doesn't mean perfection. Therefore, what I think is left out from conversations are mistakes that I should be able to make – being a valuable part of the learning process and I want to have space to do that. In my experience, there's not much room for that here. That's why it also feels important for me to build environments where people are allowed to be vulnerable and things don't work. I would like to have the opportunity to explore things that may not succeed in the end.

So, the part of my identity that has been left out is the fact that I'm also still looking for my place – and myself. I'm just a person who wants to be with others, trying things out.

AK: When you think about your path into the arts, what have been the key influences that shaped how you see yourself and your work today?

ET: My social environment, the people I get to make art with, have the biggest positive influence. On a larger scale, the Finnish dance field affects my work a lot: it influences, shapes and directs in a concrete way how it feels possible to express myself, as a dancer and a choreographer. As I started to question if that way is the only possible way to act and create, it directed me in developing my own direction, finding out what I really like.

My own role models and coaches have influenced me a lot too. Dance schools have an impact, and the Finnish way of doing things, which is really white and quite stiff and rigid.

Developing street dance culture in Finland, and pushing it forward, is important to me. There are such specific structures and boundaries and the effort to break them shapes my work and what I'm doing now. Of course, commercialism influences the Finnish street dance field a lot, and it is difficult to get away from that. I want to be able to offer spaces that are available for many but at the same time I don't want to work for free and through that be a bad example to other people. But still, money should not come before culture, community or the effort to build something new.

AK: Do you see yourself as part of any artistic, cultural or social community? How does that shape your creative voice?

ET: For a while now, I have felt that I don't belong to any community in a way that I'd want or need. I try to be part of many different spaces and groups, and to create spaces where people can meet and make friends, but in creating them, I end up not properly belonging to any of them. Also, when creating a context or a collective, some kind of authority role is given to me, whether I want it or not. Therefore, I create environments that I am not part of in the same way that others might be because of this role.

I'm so thankful that there are people who have made space for me. I'm glad that I get to do what I'm doing, which I wouldn't be without those who have made it possible for me. However, I think I've moved so fast in my career that I haven't had the time to appreciate it enough, which is very bittersweet.

AK: If your identity were a material, texture or sound — what would it be?

ET: I think I'd be some kind of liquid metal, like mercury. I feel fluid, in my doing and my art, in my identity and gender, my understanding of the world around me, everything. At the same time, I'm able to settle firmly in place, in a good way, to examine, consider and be curious. As an artist, I'm interested in always being adaptable, never staying fixed in one place permanently. Being able to adjust and transform but sometimes pausing to look around and search for myself.

## **Interview with Angela Eldips**

by Pärinaz Estebzary

My name is Angela Eldips, I'm a Syrian dancer and choreographer. I moved to Finland in 2019 and since then I've mainly worked on art-related projects – always connected to dance. I also have a pharmacy degree from Syria, but I realised it didn't fit me, so I chose to follow art instead. I started with music when I was five. My parents aren't artists, but they always encouraged creativity – going to concerts, the theatre, ballet, playing the violin. I studied both pharmacy and dance at the Higher Institute of Theatrical Arts in Syria and graduated in 2018.

Pärinaz Estebzary: Are there parts of yourself you amplify in order to be heard and seen in life or in your art?

AE: The art I make is often political. I'm drawn to projects that explore deeper or controversial themes – issues people usually avoid, but I find important. Coming from Syria, that background will always be part of me and appears in my work, even when I don't intend to.

After having been in Finland for six years, my life feels more stable and privileged, which changed my perspective, but the Syrian part of me remains. Art helps me process emotions – sadness, anger and gratitude – and reminds me not to take life for granted.

I have everything in life, but there are millions of people who don't. I believe in real stories, not just what's in the media. I like to ask people directly, "Do you think Finland is really the happiest country in the world?" because we only learn through honest exchanges and by hearing the other side of the story.

PE: Are there parts of your identity that are present in your art that you feel are left out of mainstream conversation?

AE: It's not that people don't get it – it's that I'm conscious of the audience. It's hard to tell the truth in Europe without being misunderstood. If I speak about how religion is used in power, it's seen through Islamophobic lenses, which is not my point. I'm not against faith; I'm against how it's used politically. That's why I'm careful about what I share – I don't want to give the cherry on top, which is the story people expect, criticising my home country and thanking Europe. I'm grateful, but mostly to the people – Finnish and non-Finnish – who stood by me and others. In the Middle East, creating feels revolutionary, your art carries weight. Here, people value it too, but often just as part of an identity.

PE: Think about your path into art, what have been the key influences that shaped how you see yourself and your work today?

AE: Life experiences shaped me the most. In Syria, I could've gone into drama or taken a commercial path, but I wanted art that connects with people and brings change. In Finland, I've learned through community projects and working with non-professional artists. Their creativity is free – it opened my eyes as a choreographer to see dance beyond academic limits.

In contemporary dance today, everyone moves the same way – no matter their background. This effect of globalisation isn't bad, but it makes me want to bring my heritage back into my choreography, to decolonise the idea of dance. Syrian and Middle Eastern folk dances are so rich, I want to include more of them in my work. Exchanges with other people while travelling, meeting artists, hearing stories have shaped me most.

PE: Do you see yourself as part of any artistic, cultural or social community, and how does that shape your creative voice?

AE: I'm a freelancer, so I work with different groups and artists. Some collaborations, like with Rami [Alwhithawi], I want to keep growing. Working with new people pushes me out of my comfort zone – it keeps me from repeating myself. I don't belong to one group, but engage with a range of like-minded people who share similar values about art. They can come from anywhere or any field. Recently, I applied for a grant with a friend who does printmaking – we want to create a participatory exhibition in which people can move through the artworks. I belong to a group of people who inspire me to grow and challenge myself.

PE: If your identity were a material, texture or sound, what would it be and why?

AE: Maybe a sound? But then again, not everyone can access sound – if you're deaf, for example. Maybe a material, because at least you can sense it. It's a good question!

## **Interview Sofia Koivuneva**

by Nea Lähdekorpi

Sofia Koivuneva is a poet based in Turku, Finland, whose work challenges the idea of a singular, assigned woman identity by engaging with normative thinking and emotional complexity. Reflecting on her practice, she explains, “In my writing, I often dive into large social phenomena or constructs; without compassion my lines would feel shallow, and without anger my words would be pitiful.”

Nea Lähdekorpi: Are there parts of yourself you amplify in order to be heard and seen — in life or in your art?

Sofi Koivuneva: I am a very sensitive person, and I would never wish to hide that part of my identity in my art. Instead, I allow myself to be very vulnerable in my writing, maybe more than outside of art. Even though angry lyricism is also a part of my stream of consciousness, it is equally as important to write sometimes cryptic, compassionate and mindless melancholy out as it is.

At times it's worthwhile to include totally uncontrolled naivety. With my poetry I want to channel that it is OK that your big and sensible heart has made choices solely based on emotion. It should never be a shame to care or feel too much.

NL: Are there parts of your identity present in your art that you feel are left out from mainstream conversation?

SK: I feel that in mainstream conversation, the diversity of women's identities is often overlooked. It is a common impression – in the arts and in general – that women are either very sensible and tender or very angry, eager and confrontational. I want to convey that these two extremes exist at the same time in me and in so, so many other women. These traits are deeply intertwined. I am a very empathetic person and consequently I am also angry seeing all the unfairness and suffering in the world unfold every day. A person can be sensitive and still be very determined and vice versa. In my writing I often dive into big

social phenomena or constructs; without compassion my lines would feel shallow, and without my anger my words would be pitiful.

NL: When you think about your path into the arts, what have been the key influences that shaped how you see yourself and your work today?

SK: I shared my poems with other people in a creative writing class about three years ago. For the first time, I received feedback and it felt as if people had really listened and paused to think because of my poems. That's when writing became an actual hobby for me, and not just something foolish I hid in my note app and diary. Even now, one of the most meaningful things remains the fact that someone sees my poetry as worth their focus and time. My art changed through sharing it. Even though it is created by me, it is no longer just mine. I'll always remember that when I first performed my poems on stage, one person in the audience cried. It's bizarre and haunting how art can connect the artist and the reader/listener. I would never have discovered this if I had just left my poems between my grocery lists and birthday reminders.

NL: Do you see yourself as part of any artistic, cultural or social community? How does that shape your creative voice?

SK: I have, fortuitously, surrounded myself with people and communities who share my passion for creative writing and artistic self-expression, especially through poetry. I'll always represent my voice in my poems with pride, because I want to be part of an environment that encourages others to experiment with their art.

Community is where I find my inspiration, where I'll share and polish my ideas, and where I seek for assistance when I face a block in my creativity. Of course, I've come to view the readers and listeners of my art as a community too. Through these different communities I've found a very rhythmic, almost rap-like style of writing. Before, I enjoyed the writing part, but now I've also come to look forward to how I can perform my poems. Without the support and attention of these communities, I would never have discovered such a fun aspect – writing to perform.

NL: If your identity were a material, texture or sound – what would it be?

SK: If I were a material, I would be a cobweb! A cobweb is resilient when needed, and it sticks with you if you walk through it. Although it's soft and harmless, it can give rise to a variety of feelings depending on who it connects with. It lingers, and holds on to dusty memories in places forgotten, but also attracts attention and reflects light when the sun hits

the dew drops dangling from it. And like everyone's identity, a cobweb is always changing and growing! <3

## **Life Experiences**

PUBLICS Youth Advisory Board (PYAB)

Having articulated their thinking about notions of identity through writing, PYAB members selected a range of creative practitioners to have conversations with to explore the same topic, in all its complexity. In these conversations, they tease out how the artists' life trajectories have shaped their understandings of their identity and how that feeds into their work – either as a subject or in how they approach their practice.



Mix trust desire chaos  
with any of the above and  
see if you like it

For this residency-cum-collective  
the mix would come out as:  
pockets of trust      inkling of desire      stock chaos

The residency theme is authenticity  
We try several ways into it,  
meet experts, workshop, skim through books  
The EU-funded air of soft coercion  
is keeping us at it

One evening I can't do another networking dinner  
I stay alone in the apartment  
filming myself naked and crying  
I'm a simple woman  
You say authenticity, I undress

The residency head suggests  
"only give things you feel comfortable giving"  
Noooooo, why did you say that???  
I prefer all-in-too-much-yes-intimacy! INTIMACY!!!  
YOU POLITE CUCKS!!!!!!!!!!

Keep it light, bitch  
I tell myself  
keep it Scandi-cool  
(Finland isn't part of Scandinavia)

Oslo is weighing me up  
shocked by the results,  
this genteel atmosphere a defence system  
familiar from Helsinki  
biting me back like a  
toxic Nordic ouroboros  
So this is how it feels to visit my home,  
huh

I know I know I know  
I'm at my most unbearable when I insist on intimacy  
as in "Let's make this moment matter everybody!"  
Deepness deep dip dip dip      dip      dipdipdipdip

What's so special about depth, girls  
I don't want another hole in myself anyway

Speaking of pussy  
I'm responding to the Theme by showing off the Wound  
It's too much, out of context, out of breath,  
uninspiring really  
like trying to flirt at a funeral where  
the only hole getting filled is the one in the ground,  
right fellas??

We go check out this queer bar  
in which we're tasked to do an event later  
although we aren't a queer collective  
Turns out it doesn't matter  
the bar is populated by straight couples anyway

Nobody shows up to the event  
All the queers in our group have  
politely refused to contribute,  
save for one who ends up sharing this  
deeply moving story about queer desire  
just out of your reach, yeah I still think about it

Unrelated but  
the only real artist talk we end up having is  
at that straight queer bar  
where my friend finds herself defending the pyramids,  
    this local artist had gone to see them  
    he wasn't sold

I continue my research  
at a queer sauna eavesdropping cis gays and lesbians  
who double as wealthy white immigr... expats  
They drone on about their white-collar jobs  
I'm forever grateful for the doll who saves me from them

Speaking of dolls  
A male artist offers me "I've fucked trans women"  
as an apology-cum-allyship for something he said  
Unrelated but  
certainly authentic

We try out more queer parties

There's one that costs fifty to get in  
DJs play non-descript house and techno at every venue  
I'm past being impressed by the pyramids

Dancing with other artists what a bliss  
Why do anything else during a residency  
Is it guilt, genuine interest, or a bad habit

During a Zoom prior to us all meeting IRL  
I remark how this 40-minute call has to be  
the longest I've pretended I'm a professional  
But you know me  
I'd do anything for Scandinavian boys

Final week, open studios  
We don't have studios but we stage one for tonight  
Authentic voices      authentic movements  
authentic artists performing                      authenticity

I'm co-hosting like I've never spoken to a mic before  
My sad makeshift animated gifs looping on two iPads,  
yeah you guessed it,  
they show me naked and crying in the apartment

I storm out before the afterparty  
text the group chat personal issues cu 2moro xo  
classic Mia move

Crossing the moneyed centre mad wailing  
my Wound watering itself                      dip dip  
Would I live in a city where nobody asks are you OK  
Two questions as souvenirs

On the last day  
me and a friend record a dialogue  
After meeting at dead center for a month  
we're finally speaking from experience  
making sense first and foremost to each other  
The exchange rejuvenates us  
in a seventeenth-century corner room with Vermeer light

That same morning I bump into a more established artist  
It's sunny & I'm crying my eyes out, classic Mia  
She says how are you

I tell her sorry, I can't do this  
She understands like  
any mid-career female artist worth their salt would

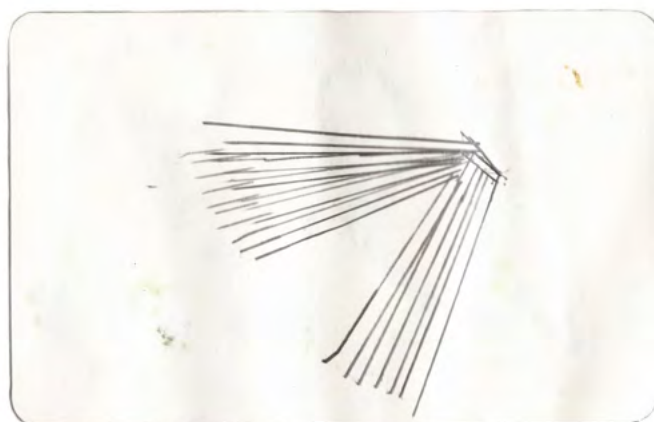
What made me cry in Oslo?  
Was it communication becoming a duty,  
our private territories demarcated by dialogue  
with invitation to enter lost in the mix

It could've been the hormones  
or that I was aching to be railed  
Should've slept with that man from the park  
and/or the apologising artist

- *I love how the layout of the text changes at the beginning of the second page – it made me stop and really concentrate on reading.*
- *I like the lack of punctuation; maybe there could be a full stop at the very end.*
- *It's kind of hard to give feedback on a text that is this personal and poetic. I really like the style of it and would honestly keep everything as it is.*
- *Weirdly it feels as if I know you from having read a couple pages. It's strange, very intimate, and I definitely didn't expect to read such an honest and grounded diary when hearing Nordic exceptionalism was the topic. But, as a white-passing queer migrant in Finland, I feel slightly offended or annoyed. Not sure why, because I fully share your passion for roasting Nordic superiority in their arrangements. Maybe I am annoyed at being welcomed into a sad and – what seems like the only alternative reality where intimacy feels gross and staged, or somehow made fun of. I think you hint at the brief subtly, which is very pleasant to read, like solving a puzzle. The last paragraph on page 5 looks like a typo with a double “and and” (?) – seems unintentional, sry if I mis-interpreted. Anyway, amazing read! Very glad to be working on a publication together.*

## If you look closely, you will see that it's snowing

Hikari Nishida



### Arrival

I moved from Strasbourg (France) to Helsinki as an exchange student at the Fine Art Academy in the winter of 2020. It was not my first time coming to Helsinki, since I had completed an internship at Kosminen gallery and Khaos Publishing the year before. School was an excuse to come back here, as I was interested in being in this country, meeting artists and workers in the cultural field, perhaps finding inspiration and projects to do, such as being part of a collective, an event or something else. Arriving to this country with studies as a framework and receiving all kinds of financial, administrative support, it felt like a convenient way to move elsewhere. Some people asked, “why Finland?” I would reply that it was more about not wanting to be in France. When I visited Helsinki for the first time it felt like a strangely comfortable place that had some close similarities to Japan, another country in which I have my roots. The main reasons to move were blurry and intuitive.

While being at the Academy, I wanted to connect with artists and people working in the field, always in mind to find out how they “do it”: how one works and sustains oneself financially, what kind of opportunities, places to present works there are, and especially to get to know about artist-run platforms and initiatives in the city. I wanted to know more about how artists work through their own structures and collectively. The Academy felt lonely sometimes, as it seemed to support the work of an artist as an individual and rarely as part of a group.

Nevertheless, I was drawn to Finland as through my internship I felt there was something fresher than the dusty French cultural scene, something newer that could happen, more open and less gatekept.

### **“If you look closely, you will see that it’s snowing”**

What if the blank page were deep, moving and full? I am thinking of Remy Charlip, an American choreographer and artist who published the children’s book *It Looks Like Snow* in 1957. This book contains no images and only white paper sheets, where a text runs across the bottom of each page. On one of the pages it states: “If you look closely, you will see that it’s snowing.” In my opinion, that is a perfect example of a powerful and rich publication. The emptiness that the artist offers us is filled with mental images. It is the idea that the page is not empty or that emptiness can be full itself... the artistic potentiality of a sheet of paper.

In fact, if you fold a paper in its centre and open it, two pages appear in front of your eyes. That is already a book. Maybe, the first book of all. I like the simplicity of such material and medium. Books travel to various environments: to an art gallery or a person’s jacket pocket. Its size is also in relation to the body; it can be touched and held. As an artistic medium, I like its accessibility for an audience, its democratic aspects. These thoughts are similar to those from Atelier HOKO (based in Singapore) whose exhibition “BOOK?” reflects on the various ways in which to think and define it as a medium. It struck me that their exhibition also starts with a presentation of a paper folded in two. I saw it at the Tokio Art Book Fair (not to be confused with Tokyo Art Book Fair or TABF). It is a new and experimental book fair organised by the TABF organisers, one of the biggest (if not the biggest) art book fairs in Asia. It is interesting to see that a book fair can feel the need to birth another one.

## **Book Fairs and other tadpole ponds**

Art book fairs are the places where publishers gather to sell their new books, to explain what they are in a simple way. They are, in fact, more than that.

A festival might be the best word to describe such a project, as Moritz Grünke (Gloria Glitzer) wrote in their pamphlet “The Future of Art Book Festivals: Formerly Known as Book Fairs”. It is a celebratorily space for communal practices and resistance, a place for building our own systems. It is our beehive. I would also suggest that an art book fair is a pond full of tadpoles. You can see the participants (artists, designers, publishers, printmakers and collectives...) gathered in one space all together for two, three days. From afar, they look like tadpoles discussing in groups, talking to crowds and visitors, everyone around the same objects: books. Books on tables, books in hands, books stacked, books exchanged. By books, I mean all kinds of publications and printed matter exploring the diverse possibilities of the medium, mainly self-published.

Art book fairs are the places where you can meet. They are platforms that weave an impressive social, international network around book(work)s. One of the things I like when I organise Under the Leaf art book fair in Helsinki is the collaborative force and energy that comes from it. I like how it draws all kinds of practices and thoughts, concepts

together. The clumsiness resulting from the event's vitality, its messiness, which comes from the relaxed environment, like a living room, with people sitting next to each other on not so comfortable chairs, resourcefully presenting lots of titles on their small table spaces, with the slight awkwardness of the visitors browsing the titles in front of their makers. They are here because of the excitement of sharing work in such an environment, away from the white cube settings of a gallery space or the loneliness of the studio in a grey city.

### **Art bookshop as a nest and a non-business**

My internship with Kosminen gallery and the bookshop, at the time run by Khaos Publishing, was in 2019. When they stopped with the bookshop, I had the opportunity to create this "Temporary Bookshelf" in the gallery: a small, non-profit bookshop in the centre of Helsinki. What was supposedly a one-month project turned into six, then a year, then two years. To sell, every title had a price tag slipped into it, inspired by a TABF system that captured contact info and used Mobile Pay (a very common payment system in Finland). One could then pay directly via the Mobile Pay app on one's phone. The connection was direct with the artist. A then very utopian system that also took a big weight off my shoulders: no accounting, no need to set up a business as I never had the intention to turn this into a business. I had not much interest in selling for profit. What I wanted to do was build a small space for artists, creators working with publishing, to present their work in the city as well as create a place for encounters with like-minded people. The project had a bookshop-like shell, but the inside of this shell was a platform for voices to be shared.

It was my way to meet the scene and work with others too. The urban/non-urban environment that is Helsinki can be a great inspiration for initiatives. A small or mid-size capital offers much more than a fancy French city. Because it is accessible in terms of size, it feels easy to do, to organise, to find a space and to create organically while being impactful. My work feels meaningful in this particular environment.

### **Events as a context for distribution, experiments and celebration of book(work)s**

Along with Under the Leaf art book fair, I have been attending and organising various events. Most of them in Helsinki but sometimes elsewhere, in places like Suomenlinna island, artist-run spaces (Kohta, M.O.), working spaces (Kalasataman seripaja, Enne Galleria, Comics Center), schools (University of the Arts, Taidekoulu Maa), a museum (Vantaa art museum), festivals (Drifts, Utopias Lahti, Tokyo Art Book Fair, Helsinki Design Week, Arts & Crafts fair). Together they give an overview of the connections I built locally and internationally over time, often because of my cultural backgrounds. Before Under the Leaf, there was the Seasonal Book Launches series: these were similar to mini fairs for newly published titles, a gathering of five-to-eight publishers/artists per event. The idea was to join forces and that would help the distribution of each of their book(work)s. Developing a platform that can support other artists making books was my

intention in all the events I organised under the umbrella title of “The Temporary Bookshelf”. In addition, I wanted to learn more about others’ artistic practices.

As an artist whose work also evolves around books, I find it meaningful to work at a larger scale and purpose than myself. I would like to mention the inspiring work of my friend and collaborator Roos Hermsen, who founded Muijala art residency in Reila, in rural Finland. She once mentioned to me how Muijala is the best artwork she has ever done. In that sense, I also see the events I have organised as part of or an extension of my artistic practice. Working with others, working for others to benefit from it, create a structure, generate it, is my way of operating. At various scales and levels of intensity, it is a necessary kind of work for an artist I believe. It was also my way of creating my own structure that supports me. With that structure, searching for fundings felt easier, to argue the importance of a community-driven project.

It felt also essential for me to generate a structure for myself and not to wait for institutional validation to give me an opportunity to work. Those seem to have come later, as if attracted sometimes like old flies buzzing around sweet honey.

What I regret from those projects is that I should have started with more people from the beginning. It is something I have learned later, that being supported yourself is as important as you supporting others. To those reading this and who are studying, I can only advise to think collectively, grab the chance to work together, since you meet with so many artists there. Studying was for me about gathering ideas with other students, forces, capacities; those are the dearest and most transformative memories I have.

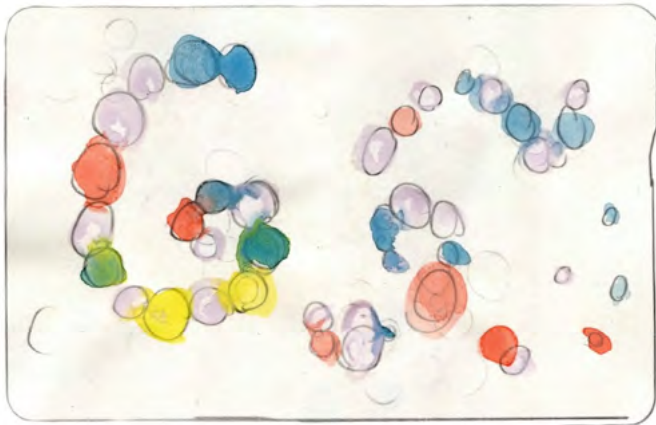
### **The outsider’s eyes**

As a foreigner, working to meet others was also important to get to know the cultural actors of the field. As a newcomer, I had nothing to lose trying. A lot is happening thanks to the newcomers who have nothing to lose. Books are one reason to meet with others and to weave a network. But also, being in an educational structure, as lonely as it felt (the Academy, the internship), helped immensely in navigating the art pond. Being able to learn and understand your own environment – but also sometimes being completely lost, frustrated, disagreeing – it was crucial to play around and to be able to experiment later.

More than needing a toolkit, it felt necessary to understand how to do things and figure out who to follow and who not to follow. Like a tadpole in a pond that follows its water stream,

swims around algae and rocks, catches elements and objects while it's swimming or leaves them behind, and finally finds other tadpoles to sing with, to build and expand the pond borders together.







- The bookmarks idea is amazing, hopefully it can be applied within Tuukka's ideas about the design!
- It's a little hard to grasp what this all will look like in the end... did I understand it correctly that the short pieces of text are the contents of the bookmarks?
- I especially loved the bit about book fairs; all of these pretty much fit our ideas to a T. Very good work and am excited to have this in our book.
- I am unsure about the idea of bookmarks. I am usually anxious about things falling out of a publication and potentially losing some info. We still don't quite know how big or thick the book will be and what function it would serve. It would also mean that the experience will be quite fragmented and can potentially get lost if the book isn't handled with care. If you're OK with that, and Tuukka greenlights it, we could definitely try it out! I was also thinking that some sort of visualisation of connections of your experiences, where a simple map would be very interesting to look at! I know it'd be taking your idea into a different direction, and I wouldn't want to limit your creative freedom, but still wanted to share :)

## Postlude

Gerrie van Noord

“When is the deadline?” was a question asked during a workshop I had with one of the youth boards in late summer 2025. A seemingly straightforward query, but one to which it was difficult for me to give a direct answer. Of course there was a final date by which the book, this book, had to be ready to go to print. Before reaching that point though, it had to be designed, with several stages of adjustments and tweaks to be expected. Texts needed to be proofread – not once, not twice, but thrice... – after having been edited and re-edited. These processes could only happen after contributions were commissioned and then written or produced in some other shape or form. And of course, all this could only follow decisions about what was to be produced in response to shared concerns that were to be identified through workshops, site visits and other activities by each of the three youth boards involved. When that seemingly simple question was asked, none of this was effectively in process yet.

I also wanted to resist answering because, even though there was an indicative timeline for the various stages listed above, experience has taught me that slippages as to what happens when and seepages between envisaged contributions almost always emerge, and that what is originally planned is hardly ever fully matched by what is eventually delivered. I also knew that some deviations would be easier to deal with than others, and that certain aspects might force a rethink of earlier made decisions or a revisit of original intent and the reality of effect. Simply focusing on a delivery date – be it of the whole book or of an individually written text – would therefore not only have bypassed the complex evolution of a publication, which was made more complex by the fact this was to be produced by and with three youth boards from three cities in as many countries, alongside three distinct organisations and their respective teams, structures and ways of doing things. It would have also completely negated the point of producing it in the first place. The objective was, after all, to collectively explore how producing a printed book might be relevant now, who it might be relevant for and what therefore every board’s contributions might offer when situated alongside others’. Within the larger collaborative proposition, each board would have to work with and through its members’ individual interests to come to a shared question that would allow further decisions to be made.

Given the above, my role in *Reaching Out: A Book about Agency, Care, Identity and...* has been an unusual one. I have not set the framework, nor have I invited any of the contributors, and therefore I am not an editor in the traditional sense, as designer/publisher Tuukka Kaila rightly pointed out in the latter stages, after the various elements had started to fall into place. As someone whose practice is dedicated to how certain forms of collaboration challenge traditional understandings of ownership and authorship, I do, however, enjoy stepping into projects where my and others’ roles are not fully set yet, and are as much part of a process of moulding and shaping as the eventual output. It is precisely through the slow formation of relationships and the unfolding of

processes of exploration, and sometimes challenging, of form and content, idea and execution, agency and authority, that conventions and traditions and assumed ways of doing things come clearly into view and can be adopted, amended or pushed back at.

With so much to be decided by and with others, I tried to act as a critical friend and encouraged the boards' members to step into the proposition of collectively producing a book with an open mind. I've done so precisely to encourage them to explore their own ideas and expectations, while the arts organisations and individuals working with them had to do the same. Through the digital mediation of zoom screens and myriad documents in shared folders on virtual drives I have closely followed, albeit at several steps removed, the processes of identification of topics as well as the subsequent deliberations on how these might somehow translate into content. Seemingly contradictory, it has been the enhanced potential to communicate through digital means that has allowed me to be in (almost) live conversations with everyone since last May last year. In intense bursts, I was able to offer detailed comments and suggestions on people's writing and gently encourage certain directions to be more fully embraced, while sometimes also explicitly urging not to engage with specific ideas or approaches but offering a clear rationale about why.

My trust in the value of process and taking the time to let things crystallise has proven to be justified. Even though not all questions that were posed in the process of this book's making may have been addressed or answered, while the three boards have approached generating their own and others' contributions very differently, after having been carefully clustered and sequenced or sometimes purposefully been spread out, unexpected resonances have emerged and started to hum or even sing across the various elements. And although also in the latter stages of the design process earlier proposed text treatments didn't entirely match with what was delivered, the ultimate deadline was met in the end, as what you have in your hand demonstrates.

