

HOW TO LIFE in the SLOW ACADEMY
"Non Knowledge. Not everyday"

Layout of the presentation:

1. Why **How to Life** - the corrupted concept of 'artistic research'
2. What **How to Life** **is** and **does**
3. Everyday as marginalizing structure
4. Uncanny, infraordinary and how to explore the unknown

Since this is an approach to exploring the unknown and the extraordinary we cannot give content notes as the content is always a bit of a surprise for us. We continuously work between being open to failure and wanting to control what we do - struggling with the frustration that follows the act of providing an audience something incomprehensible - and simultaneously trying to create new paths. (Stepping outside an expected

framework and way of working, intuitively trusting it but rationally questioning it). Please join us in the struggle that we want to share with you and ask questions and comment throughout this (so-called) presentation!

Thank you Slow Academy, for making this event, and creating a space for acknowledging **slowness** and making it into a practice of activism and a way of emphasizing the political aspect of research and art. We need places where to discuss not only our practice and research, but also topics related to it, like **precariousness**, admitting that one is tired, or anxious, safer space, support competition and constant rush in art and research, fear of missing out. The continuous demand for being like a boy scout in art and research always ready, always prepared.

We were working in a project called Pori Live, a collaboration between two universities and the city of Pori, that demanded to measure, explaining and delivering proper results. The requirements for that project were a kind of antithesis to what our practice and research are about: the **uncanny**, **infraordinary**, uncontrollable and unstructured. We started the project **How to Life - Lowering your expectations below average** to do research and art that would allow us more time for walking, drawing, thinking, dialoguing, and making guacamole. Of course, this did **not happen**.

Taking today's academy as a background and the constant request to make your research look like proper is not how we understand research to be and what we want it to be. The risk in teaching **methods** to artists who should be educated to do artistic research is that

it will create research with no content but only a form, imitating science, and no originality.

As we see artistic research is as doing things, studying the world, having an interdisciplinary approach, related to anthropology. It is getting lost, but even "Getting lost still takes us somewhere" (Sara Ahmed, "Queer Phenomenology").

The work is based on experience, as we yet cannot know new things: I wanted experience to lead me where it was leading, not to some end given in advance...

"Experience is questioning (testing), in fever and anguish, what man knows of the facts of being" (Bataille, Inner Experience, 9)

How to Life can be thought of as a "reorientation device" (Sara Ahmed's concept): in a system of **possible** actions, we are testing impossible actions. This notion takes us to the everyday, which is one of our main interests, and how it is organized, structured and filled with **expectations**, and how these expectations tend to **fail** and open gaps and splits that make us feel **uncanny**. How does the **everyday** happen, how are we confronted, and how do we approach it. The topic of orientation is related to how we feel at home in the world, and what happens when we don't? Where does the notion and idea of belonging falls in all of this?

Within the concept of the everyday many factors and outcomes become visible, such as are routines and the way in which they form an everyday that is supposed to be more or less similar to everyone, everybody sharing the common

everyday, but which it isn't. In a way, the concept of the everyday acts at times as a marginalizing structure. As Ahmed writes: "Objects, as well as spaces, are made for some kinds of bodies more than others" and also The work of repetition is not neutral work; it orients the body in some ways rather than others.

This also considering the nontraditional nature of the work of an artist, or a researcher. Work, family, relationships, living, traveling, routines: wake up, brush your teeth, put on makeup, eat breakfast, go to work. Reserving "everyday" to able bodies that fill the societal expectations. Working outside the normative/expectations one ends up working double shift: doing one's work but also explaining it all the time, both to others and often even to oneself.

And it is not only the everyday that becomes a problem, but also discussing and **mediating it**: when your everyday is abnormal and it does not fill the requirement of the concept anymore and there is not really a **vocabulary** to discuss this phenomena anymore.

All these topics are related to what we study in our research: the uncanny and the infraordinary, that both refer to a phenomena of something being out of place.

Uncanny, or originally **unheimlich**, is a concept referring to the feeling of something formerly homelike and known becoming **strange and unknown**: a secret that was supposed to stay hidden coming to daylight, as Schelling described it. Uncanniness is a feeling of not-being-at-home, in contrast to being-at-home, as in the average everydayness of Dasein, as Heidegger

writes in *Being and Time* (1962, 185): it makes us anxious and afraid, but we might not be fully capable of explaining why.

About the **Infraordinary**:

"... Hence our approach to the city, for instance, no longer connected to traditional notions of urban geography (cadastral survey, social classes, concentration, density and other phenomena); rather, it connected to what we termed the *infra-ordinary*, i.e. what we do when we do nothing, what we hear when we hear nothing, what happens when nothing happens. Outside of the city nothingness can perhaps exist (...) but it certainly does not exist in the city. In the city there is never a void. There is always background noise, there is always a symptom, a sign, a scent. So we were interested precisely in those things which are the opposite of the

extraordinary yet which are not the ordinary either things which are 'infra'..." (Paul Virilio on Georges Perec)

This out-of-placeness also means that it is something we do not know, and this not-knowing is scientifically a problem: how to approach, research, and discuss something we do not know? "Bataille would have called this sovereignty, meaning the mastery of non-mastery, and in this he followed Nietzsche who complained that we don't think sufficiently about the fact that when we explain the unknown we reduce it too quickly to the known." (Michael Taussig: Walter Benjamin's Grave, 2006. viii)

In How to Live we try not to reduce the unknown to a known, but to find means how to (somehow) mark it, how to intuitively approach it without trying to explain it, and how to share this

with the other with the respect of the
unknown nature.

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