

A R T & R E S I S T A N C E

The Powers and Restrictions of Art as a Tool in Sociopolitical Struggle



MFA thesis by Haidi Motola

University of Arts Helsinki, Academy of Fine Arts

2016

The MFA thesis is consisted of two parts:

1. Mycotoxycosis (2013) – video installation. First exhibited in Kuvan Kevät (May 2013),
The Academy of Fine Arts, Helsinki.
2. Art & Resistance (2016) – a written essay.

I would like to thank:

Pekka Niskanen, my supervisor for the exhibition part, for all the support.

Ya'ara Gil-Glazer, my supervisor for the written essay.

Johanna Lecklin, for reading, for the patience, and all the help with writing the essay.

Ulrika Ferm, for helping with the last steps and editing the text.

Salla Tykkä, Pia Lindman Capar Stracke and Ulrika Ferm
whom I had the chance to meet as professors in Time and Space.

My father for the discussions and the precious advises.

My mother for help with all translations and so much more.

Gabriel de la Cruz, my partner in the struggle, for all the help and support along the way.

Ewa Gorzna and Kasia Miron, for all the technical and moral help and support.

For all the interviewees who shared with me their stories and knowledge.

For all those in the Academy of Fine Arts, who made my studies possible after all.

And especially my family and friends who gave me hope and support
when nothing seemed possible.

**ACADEMY
OF FINE ARTS**

**✕ UNIVERSITY OF
THE ARTS HELSINKI**

TABLE OF CONTENTS:

1. Introduction	1
2. The Restrictions: the economic and political ties of art practice	7
Art in the capitalist society	
The Island of Happiness	
Politics and Art – the cases of Finland and Israel-Palestine	
The Autonomy of Art	
3. Art as Resistance	21
1. The mere artistic practice as resistance to oppression	
2. Political art that acts mainly within the art field	
3. Art practice on the border of the art field	
4. Activist art that acts mainly outside of the art field	
Collaboration as an artistic method	
Conclusion	
4. The personal storytelling as a resistive art practice	44
The Moulded Academy of Fine Arts	
Mycotoxycosis	
Mycotoxycosis as a postmodern illness story	
The trajectory of Mycotoxycosis and its implications	
Mycotoxycosis – Restrictions and powers	
5. Conclusion	61
Documentation of Mycotoxycosis	68
Bibliography	79
Appendix – USB stick:	
Mycotoxycosis, 13 min. video.	
Interviews Part One, 56 min. video.	
Interviews Part Two, 1 h 17 min. video.	
Interviews Part Three, 1 h 5 min. video.	

The question of the relation of art practice and socio-political activism is a question that have been following me for many years, ever since I finished my photography studies in Tel Aviv in 2007. That period marked a turning point in my life. Until then I had managed quite successfully to live in an escapist bubble, where the Israeli occupation and war were some things happening far away. As a Jewish-Israeli, Tel Aviv was an environment that easily provided the possibility to escape the political reality around. My life in Tel Aviv, the studies and work, kept me busy enough and maintained an illusion of ostensible normality and freedom. But with the years and the continuing war and violence this bubble started cracking, revealing the reality piece by piece. After finishing my studies, I took a decision to learn what was really going on; what the occupation really is and where exactly is it taking place. I started by volunteering in a human rights organization working in the occupied territories, called b'Tselem. I worked in their video department and joined a project where video cameras were distributed for people around the West Bank, especially in places where the risk of violence and human rights violations was high. Then for the first time I saw with my own eyes what the occupation looked like. I saw the checkpoints, the apartheid roads, the construction of the separation wall that cut through villages and lives, the house demolitions, the curfews, the night raids and arrests, the restrictions of movement, the lack of water and infrastructures. I saw the daily violence and oppression conducted by the Israeli occupation. And what I saw affected me a lot. I got more familiar with the daily life under the occupation when we started a small video workshop in a village near Ramallah, called Ni'ilin. It was through the students in this workshop that I learned about the weekly demonstrations against the construction of the separation wall in their village and many other villages in the West Bank. I first joined as a photographer, observing the events from a safe distance behind the camera, but with time and the erection of the wall the role of protester took over. I learned the importance of embodying the resistance physically, the power of using my body and presence. I realized the resistive force that we have in us as citizens, as subjects within a society. I learned the power of nonviolent resistance and civil disobedience that we embody through our presence and actions. I learned that through these actions we intervene in the public sphere, undermining and disrupting its hegemonic order, in this case the normalization of the occupation.

The term performative in this text refers exactly to this experience of being aware of your presence and actions in the public sphere and using these in order to express ideas, opinions and feelings, and to intervene and interrupt the normal flow of the hegemonic order. I'm considering here the performative in relation to the political and the social. The concept of the performative is wide and cuts through different discourses, such as linguistics, identity politics and gender and queer theories. Probably the one, who is most associated with this concept, is the philosopher and theorist Judith Butler, who argues that sex and gender are not given identities, but rather constituted through different social *performances* (*Gender Trouble*). From

another perspective, the theorist Jose Esteban Munoz, conceptualizes his critical queer theory and identity politics through the perspective of art and performance. He defined the concept of *disidentification*, a process where minorities within the art field appropriates features from the mainstream culture and transforms them into their own cultural purposes (*Disidentification*).

These weekly demonstrations in the West Bank had performative, almost theatrical, aspects because of their repetitiveness and their almost predictable scenario. On one side the demonstrators with their slogans, signs and songs and on the other the soldiers with their teargas and bullets. Every week, at the same time and place, starting with a march from the village towards the wall and usually ending with a violent dispersal by the army. Sometimes the army provided surprises in the predicted scenario, by evading the village before the march even started or by using undercover forces disguised as demonstrators. The simple act of marching as a group, as citizens, is rendered into a performative and subversive gesture because of the context and the place. The West Bank mostly is under Israeli military rule and therefore the demonstrations are always proclaimed as illegal by the army. This prevents the Palestinians the fundamental democratic right to protest, even in their own villages. By the simple action of marching, the Palestinians are claiming back their rights as citizens and the right to their lands. The repetitiveness of these actions is also aimed at creating an actual change in the public sphere, undermining the dominating order of the military rule. The demonstrations, or performances, are addressed both to the local community in order to strengthen the communal ties and emphasize the common resistance, as well as to the occupying forces in order to demonstrate resilience and strength against the oppression. These demonstrations consist mostly of Palestinians from the village and villages around, as well as a small group of Israelis and internationals¹. The media also plays a part but the coverage in the mainstream media usually stays marginal. I refer to it as a performance, but it is important to mention that these demonstrations have a lot of implications on the daily lives of Palestinians in these villages. They are subjugated to the constant threat of night-raids, arrests and other forms of harassments and violence. Too often these demonstrations end up with protestors being killed, severely injured or imprisoned.²

Even though most of the time a strong feeling of hopelessness accompanied these weekly demonstrations, a feeling of being caught in a limbo and unable to change anything, I still continued to

¹ The Israelis participating in these demonstrations are a very small minority in the Jewish Israeli society. At the time when I was participating in these demonstrations, between 2007 and 2010, we were about 3–15 people to go to the village of Ni'ilin and/or Nabi Saleh. I assume that in best times we were all together a few dozen Jewish-Israelis to go to the Friday demonstration in several villages on the West Bank. It was a group called Anarchist Against The Wall that initially started to organize the collaboration and participation of the Palestinian resistance against the construction of the separation wall and the occupation in general. The Israeli authorities are in many ways repressing these demonstrations as well as the collaboration between the Jewish-Israelis and the Palestinians.

² About the weekly demonstrations and their performative and artistic aspects see the film *Bil'in Habibti* by the director Shai Carmeli-Pollak.

participate and always carried the camera with me. What drove me to do this was both a need to resist, to interrupt the consensus by simply being where I wasn't supposed to be, especially as an Israeli citizen, opposing the normalization of the occupation; and the importance of documenting these events that are not very present in the public discourse. It was during this time that many questions arose in me regarding my role as a photographer and artist, as well as a citizen. Suddenly the idea of doing art felt less important, less urgent and almost unethical. I was overwhelmed with the reality that I just discovered and felt the urgency to change it or at least to change my role in it.

During my photography studies there was very little, if any, reference to art as a socio-political³ practice. It was rather the autonomy of the art field and the importance of the independence of the artist that were emphasized. The art practice was portrayed as separated from other social practices; rather as observing and reflecting from a distance. This kind of practice suddenly felt impossible once I realized how people are oppressed, tortured and killed right next to me, and that it is done in my name. On one hand doing art in this reality felt immoral but on the other hand it seemed like the only sane thing to do, the only way to maintain some normality and humanity and the only way for me to deal with the situation. This feeling of contradiction settled in me and has since been with me in different forms and generated many thoughts, some answers and more questions.

Back then I found myself navigating between these two worlds; between art and activism. I felt some kind of contempt from both sides, as well as between the both identities within me – the activist who sees the art practice as detached from reality, carefree and escapist, and the artist who sees the social activism as waste of time, as politically engaged and biased, lacking depth and sophistication. Through time though I came to think about the similarities between the two worlds, which both obviously attracted me. Both choices, that of art practice and that of activism, position you easily in the margins. Both practices contain insecurity and instability, notably economic, but also in many other aspects.

I was born in Israel, which I only much later became to know as Palestine as well. In this text I refer to the geographical area that used to be Mandatory Palestine until 1948, and today is known as the state of Israel, as Israel-Palestine. Omitting one part and calling it Israel or Palestine would be neglecting the complexity of this place and denying one of the narratives. Historically, culturally, and socially speaking Palestine can't be confined to the Occupied Territories. Rather than an arbitrary separation I see the situation as overlapping, as a parallel existence of two nations and many different worlds, where some subjects are more privileged than others. As the Israeli state I refer to the governing institutions that are conducted by the Zionist ideology and systematically neglects the Palestinian narrative. Since I mention in my text the West

³ I use the term socio-political in order to emphasize the connection between these two spheres and say that the social always have political implications and vice versa.

Bank, I want to stress the point about the difference in the rights and freedoms, and say that the situation of Palestinians with Israeli citizenship is very different from those living in the West Bank under the military rule and again very different from those living in Gaza strip, which is under siege since 2006. And by its contradicting definition as a Jewish and democratic state, it is obvious that the Jewish citizens are the privileged ones.

Part of my childhood I spent in Finland, the home country of my mother. Both these cultures and languages have always been very present in my life and the extreme difference between them has in many ways shaped my identity. Moving to Helsinki in my late twenties was a chance for me to experience a life that I considered more 'normal' and to live in a place where I could concentrate on art and studies. I saw it as an opportunity to distance myself from an intensive and hectic environment, as well as an opportunity to connect to my roots on my mother's side. I still remember the feeling when I arrived to Finland in 2010. For some time I had an almost physical sensation, as if someone had dropped me off a carousel turning at high speed. I felt that even if I was standing still everything was turning around me, a kind of vertiginous feeling. It took me some time to slow down and adapt to the new rhythm and volume of life.

I was very excited and happy to move to Finland and extremely eager to study and develop my art practice. But very soon my life took an unexpected turn when I fell ill already during the first semester. I had never heard about indoor-air problems and the dangers that hide in water damaged buildings. It was a shock for me to discover that there had been people who got severely ill in the building of the Academy of Fine Arts already before, and what made it grievous was the negligence of this institution. As far as I remember no one told us when we arrived as new students, about the history of the building and all the health problems involved. Later when I asked about it, I was directed to the academy's web page where I found all the results from the indoor-air measurements and after a lot of research I was able to understand them as well. I then realized that the problem was huge. I understood that what I was confronting was not merely a medical problem but also a problem of systematic negligence and hiding.

I think I was lucky that I was able to grasp the problem from a point of view of an outsider. My experience and the place I came from had taught me not to trust the system, but on the contrary, to be alert and suspicious. It turned out that this experience was rather helpful. I was not intimidated of being marginalized or going against the hegemony. I was not bothered when insulted and marked as weird, crazy or different. I was not afraid to oppose those who claimed to manage the situation or who appealed to certain expertise. Even though I was surprised and it took me some time to wake up from my perception that in Finland things like this cannot happen, I realized that even in Finland there is corruption and that people in charge were renouncing from responsibility and even worse, they lied and distorted the reality, endangering many people.

Since this so called mould problem took over my studies and life I decided to take it as a subject for my graduation project. *Mycotoxycosis* was a video installation where I dealt with my experiences in the academy and my illness. I presented it as part of *Kuvan Kevät*, the graduation exhibition of the Academy of Fine Arts in 2013. Through the work I wanted to bring up the issue of people who got ill from mould and biotoxins caused by water damaged buildings, a subject that was silenced not only in the academy but also in the Finnish society in general. I was hoping to initiate a change that would put a stop to the continuously emerging cases of illness, at least at the academy. It is important to mention that in the last couple of years the situation has changed a lot and mould and indoor-air problems are gaining more attention in Finnish media and in the public discourse, slowly revealing the magnitude of the problem, especially in public buildings like schools.⁴

Since I couldn't participate normally in the studies I had to find other solutions and ended up doing most of my MFA studies outside of the Academy of Fine Arts. This text is an opportunity for me to try to articulate these experiences and thoughts. I will discuss here the relation of art practice and socio-political activism – two worlds that I find myself connected to. I will unfold some of my experiences, research and ideas and look into some artistic practices as examples. My claim is not that art should forcefully be socially or politically engaged. I rather ask, if one aims for socio-political change *through* art, then what are the aspects that should be considered in order to create a powerful and meaningful artwork? Or in other words, what are the restrictions and powers of art as a tool in socio-political struggle?

In the first chapter I discuss the economic and political ties of the art field to, and as part of, the capitalist system. I will refer to some examples that demonstrate the capitalist economics' influence and implications on the contemporary art field. I use the Saadiyat Island project in Abu Dhabi, where three major museums are being built – Guggenheim Abu Dhabi, Louvre Abu Dhabi and Zayed National museum – as a contemporary example for the relations between capital, politics and art. I also look into two socio-political systems that I am familiar with, that of Finland and that of Israel-Palestine, and explore their policies regarding arts and culture. These policies rose into a bustling debate in both countries during 2015, around the elections that changed both governments, shifting them towards the right. The debates that came about demonstrate different approaches as well as different political and economic restrictions regarding art practice. Through comparison I try to get some insights regarding these policies and their implications on art and artistic practice.

⁴ Just recently, for example, a group of parents organized a demonstration in the centre of Helsinki calling to recognize the mould and biotoxin illness and demanding the rights of their children for safe school environments (Karila; Malmberg).

In the second chapter I explore the resistive force of art practice. I look into different possible ways to dismiss the political, economic and social obstacles that can interfere with art practice that aim for socio-political change. I refer to the theoretical and philosophical ideas of Gilles Deleuze, Herbert Marcuse, Theodor W. Adorno and Chantal Mouffe. Based on their writings I look into contemporary examples of art practice around the world that deal with various forms of oppressions or socio-political issues. I differentiate socio-politically engaged art practices into four categories and try to look which kind of practices can have impact on and cross from the art field into the socio-political field. I discuss for example the work of the *Belarus Free Theater*. I take the case of the last Venice Biennale, curated by Okwui Enwezor and its topic *All The Worlds Futures*, as an example of a current tendency in the art world, of so called political art. I review some works of the Catalan artist Núria Güell who in her practice merges art with the socio-political field. I discuss also some of the works of the street-art and performance collective, *Etcétera...* from Buenos Aires, working for almost two decades with both local and global socio-political issues.

In the last chapter I take my own work, *Mycotoxycosis*, as a study case of an artwork that aims for sociopolitical change. I first unfold the story behind the work and then consider the work through the restrictions and powers of art practice discussed in the previous chapters and finally I ask whether it succeeded in achieving its goals.

THE RESTRICTIONS: THE ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL TIES OF ART PRACTICE – 2

“If the Arts Council is sponsoring the revolution, it is very unlikely to be the revolution.”

- Will Bradley⁵

The emancipation of artists from the religious and stately institutions, in the West, was parallel to the socio-political changes of the 18th and 19th centuries – the rise of capitalism and industrialisation, the formation of the nation states and the emergence of the democracies. These changes also led to transformation of the power structure in which art and artists were operating. The newly won freedom on the other hand led to new ties and dependencies in the new social, political and economical orders. As the writer and curator Will Bradley claims: “This modern freedom depended greatly upon the institutions and mechanisms that supported it, institutions deeply embedded in a larger economic and political system” (22).

Art in the capitalist society

In the capitalist system art is a *market*, and the artistic creation is rendered into profits. Production and commodification are at the core of the capitalist system and anything that can potentially yield profit serves the system – and almost everything can. The artists play a role in the capitalist system, by producing commodities, or *symbolic goods* according to the sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (*The Market*), by maintaining the exploitation on which the capitalism relies on, and by rendering creativity into *cultural value* that serve the capital. The art world consists of a whole set of systems and institutions: art academies, private and governmental funding bodies, museums where the *symbolic goods* are stored and political and economical interests are invested, art fairs, festivals and biennales where the *values* and *profits* are formed, and galleries and auction houses where these values are dealt and exchanged.

This connection and concatenation between art and capital is represented in a very direct way in the work of Denis Beaubois, *Currency* (2011). The work is composed out of one-hundred dollar bills, all together twenty thousand Australian dollars, provided for the artist by the Australian council of art. The money was presented as a pile of bills, or as a sculptural object if you like, and was auctioned in a fine art auction house. As the artist stated:

⁵ (Bradley, Art and Social Change 22).

All currency used in the creation of the work will not be altered or modified and will retain its potential function and value as currency. However, each hundred dollar bill will have its serial number recorded to validate it as an authentic part of the work, thereby instilling a cultural value on top of the financial value. The tension between the economic value of the material against the cultural value of the art object will be explored through the process of the financial transaction. (Beaubois)

Beaubois validated each dollar bill as art by registering each serial number as an authentic part of the work and at the same time he kept the financial value and the option to use it as such. The work was finally sold for 21,350 AUD, meaning that the buyer added the cultural value on top of the financial value of the money.

In the global capitalism artists have special status. They are allegedly free – most likely they had access to art studies and freedom to choose this occupation. The freedom of expression is central to their profession; as freelancers they are free to set their own time frames; they are relatively free to move around, since as an artist it is usually easier to get a visa for travelling and working in other countries. There is a proliferation of artistic residencies, biennales, festivals and fairs. Nevertheless, most of the artists are not living of their art, most of them rely either on temporary grants or sponsors and usually have jobs on the side. So most of the artists join the huge group of precarious workers constantly having to find creative ways to sustain themselves and with no insurance or security for the future whatsoever. The romanticized passion and commitment to the *art cause* are used and exploited in the art world. Volunteering and underpaid internship-work is very common, young and passionate artists are used as free labour while maintaining the capitalist exploitation system. In her text *Politics of Art*, the visual artist and writer Hito Steyerl describes the situation of contemporary artists very accurately:

Contemporary art's workforce consists largely of people who, despite working constantly, do not correspond to any traditional image of labour. They stubbornly resist settling into any entity recognizable enough to be identified as a class. While the easy way out would be to classify this constituency as multitude or crowd, it might be less romantic to ask whether they are not global lumpenfreelancers, deterritorialized and ideologically free-floating: a reserve army of imagination communicating via Google Translate. ("Politics of Art" 3)

Steyerl criticizes the *political artists* who deal with socio-political issues and injustices happening around the world, while at the same time participating in the very same exploitation system that they are criticizing. She calls to turn the gaze onto the art field itself and rather than representing political situations that always happen *elsewhere*, to understand how the art world is embedded and engaged politically and socially, in the current atrocities and injustices around the world. In 2013 Steyerl participated in the 13th Istanbul Biennale. Her work, *Is the Museum a Battlefield?* was a performative lecture where she tracked down the connection

between the arms industries and art institutions. She started with an empty bullet casing that she found in a field nearby the mass grave of PKK militants, finally leading her to some of the companies sponsoring the Istanbul Biennale. Towards the end of the performance/lecture she acknowledges her part in this *battlefield* as an artist and resolve it by saying: "In any case, after I found myself in such a loop, I made a decision – rather than withdraw from such spaces because of their connection with military violence and gentrification, I would on the contrary try to show this video work in every single art space connected to this battlefield" ("Is the Museum a Battlefield" 00:32:25). Steyerl's decision raises the question if it is possible to effectively subvert the system from within? Can you undermine the system while at the same participating and even profiting from it?

In the context of the 13th Istanbul Biennale the question about the role of art and artist in social struggles was highlighted by the Gezi park protests. The protests that initially started as a struggle against the urban planning in Istanbul, which was threatening to destroy some of the public spaces, broke out just before the opening of the biennale. The protests were violently suppressed by police and government. It is interesting to note that one of the Biennial sponsors was the major Turkish corporation Koç Holding that through its subsidiaries is supplying, among others, also the Turkish police (Batty). The decision of the curator Fulya Erdemci, to withdraw from the original plans of the program, designated to take place in public spaces around the city, was criticized by many artists and activists (Batty; Deniz).

The Island of Happiness

A good example for the intimate relationship and engagement between the art world, capital and politics is the Saadiyat Island project in Abu Dhabi (island of happiness in Arabic), where three major cultural institutions are being built – Guggenheim Abu Dhabi, Louvre Abu Dhabi and the Zayed National museum in partnership with the British Museum. In recent years there has been a growing attention around the working conditions, exploitation and violation of the rights of migrant construction workers on the Saadiyat Island. In 2009 Human Rights Watch published a first report on the subject, documenting a severe exploitation and abuse of South Asian migrant workers on the island. Since then there has been some improvement from the side of the United Arab Emirates authorities and the companies behind the project. But still, in its latest report from February 2015, HRW describes a continuing abuse of the workers and lack of inspection and enforcement of the contractors who don't bear any consequences for their violations.

In 2011 a coalition of international artists, Gulf Labor, launched a call for a boycott on Guggenheim Abu Dhabi and started a campaign to put pressure on the Guggenheim foundation. Even though the foundation is not directly responsible for the workers, according to the coalition it is a moral obligation to

assert responsibility on their well-being and obtain guarantees to protect their rights (“Petition”). Together with other artists and activists Gulf Labor has been conducting actions in the Guggenheim museum in New York in order to raise awareness and put pressure on the Guggenheim foundation. The coalition’s petition is calling for artists and cultural workers to take responsibility of their actions and understand the mechanisms behind the art world that concern and reach other fields as well. Walid Raad, one of the artists stated: “Artists should not be asked to exhibit their work in buildings built on the backs of exploited workers. Those working with bricks and mortar deserve the same kind of respect as those working with cameras and brushes“ (Gulf Labor). The campaign raised awareness about the working conditions in Saadiyat Island and in the UAE in general, forcing the Guggenheim foundation and the state-owned company in charge of the project, the TDIC (The Tourism Development and Investment Company), to respond and take action. Even though some changes and improvements were achieved, the struggle still continues and the call for boycott is still on. Beyond exploitation and human rights violations it is the hypocrisy and power of the capitalist system that are embedded in the *Island of Happiness*. “It is a multi-faceted destination, that features a wide range of luxury-based experiences”, as it is advertised. Between the golf fields, luxury hotels and beach villas lies the cultural district where the museums are being built. “A truly unique district where its’ many visitors can appreciate heritage and culture while connecting with like-minded people through the universal language of the arts” (Saadiyat Cultural District).

Out of the 9.5 million inhabitants of the UAE more than 80% are immigrants and most of them are work migrants from South Asia. So demographically speaking it is a specific situation where most of the inhabitants of the country are not its citizens and don’t obtain the same rights and. These people are working and serving under very questionable conditions, very different to the minority of the wealthy Emirati citizens. Needless to say, they don’t have access to the luxurious part of the *Island of Happiness*. So the questions one should ask are: Who are these “like-minded people”? And does one “universal language of arts” really exist?

The UAE is investing enormously in this cultural district to attract wealthy tourists, buyers and investors and to build up prestige and a certain social status for these *like-minded people*, so they feel at home between the Louvre and the Guggenheim. But the art and culture seem like mere facades, decoration, attraction, both hostages of the power of capital, where the “universal language of arts” is subjugated to the laws of those with money and power – and the laws are strict in the UAE. Any criticism of the government as well as political activism is harshly suppressed. A new counterterrorism law from 2014 includes death penalty and poses further threat on activists and dissidents whose peaceful criticism might be condemned as terrorism. What kind of freedoms can artists have within this suppressive and violent system and how does this oppression affect the art and culture? Just recently the artists Walid Raad and Ashok Sukumaran as well as

a NYU professor Andrew Ross, all members of the Gulf Labor, were banned entry to the UAE for security reasons. Many activists face a severer treatment. According to HRW many dissidents, human rights activists, journalists, lawyers and even bloggers have been arrested and imprisoned across the Gulf region, often merely for expressing their opinions and thoughts. Many people have been subjugated to torture and unfair trials. With the growing use of social media, the legislation has changed, becoming more repressive in the name of national security (“EU: Seek Release”).

The branded museums and the branch of the high prestige New York University in the cultural district of Saadiyat Island are serving as glittering distractions from the government’s violent censorship and suppression. They are camouflage for suffering, humiliation and reoccurring deaths of those who are building them. By collaborating, these institutions reveal the double face and hypocrisy of the West; on one hand condemning the autocratic governance systems and violation of human rights, but on the other surrendering to the affluence of the authorities that contradict the liberal values and ideals that these institutions claim to stand for. The money precedes any human rights or moral principles and regardless of these severe violations Europe and the US are keeping strong relations with the wealthy countries of the Gulf. As stated on the Louvre Abu Dhabi's website:

The future Louvre Abu Dhabi will be a universal museum in the Arab world. Its very name is testament to what is an unprecedented alliance between the United Arab Emirates and France, through one of the highest level of cultural cooperation ever created between two sovereign countries ... Confirming its universal nature, the intergovernmental agreement signed by the United Arab Emirates and France in 2007 was the foundation of this collaboration. (Louvre Abu Dhabi)

The Gulf Labor was participating in the 56th Venice Biennale, 2015, as part of Okwui Enwezor’s curated exhibition *All the World’s Futures*. Their first action at the biennale, in collaboration with G.U.L.F (Gulf Ultra Luxury Fraction) and with the participation of local artists and activist groups, was to occupy the dock landing of the Peggy Guggenheim museum. The reaction of the museum was to lock the gates leaving the protestors and visitors outside (Cascone; Vartanian). The artists and activist were there to amplify the demands of the migrant workers and to pressure the Guggenheim foundation to act. They were also there to raise awareness about precarious working conditions in general and most specifically in the case of the Venice Biennale that for 120 years runs on free and underpaid labour. So the Gulf Labor participated in the event while criticizing it. The question is: What impact does this protest have within the biennale, as part of the biennale event? Can it bring any meaningful change? Can one substantially criticize a system while taking part in it? One of the core forces and vantages of the capitalist system is its ability to appropriate everything and turn even the criticism of it into advantage. As Bradley writes:

The institutions of the Western art world have proven both flexible enough to accommodate every formal challenge and resilient enough to resist every structural attack; in this they reflect the characteristics of the economic and political system that supports them. (23)

Politics and Art – the cases of Finland and Israel-Palestine

In 1935 the philosopher Walter Benjamin wrote his essay *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* in which he reviews the impact of the mechanical reproduction on the art practices and their social and political implications. According to Benjamin the mechanical reproduction emancipates the work of art from its historical dependence on ritual and thus brings a change in the function of art – “Instead of being based on ritual, it begins to be based on another practice – politics” (222).

In the contemporary political situation in Europe, where the right wing is at power and the threat of the economical crisis is present, there is a growing debate around the role of art and artists in the society. In recent years many governments have significantly cut public funding for art and culture and cultural institutions have had to close down. Culture and art are often claimed to be luxury, a surplus, not a necessity for the society or its members. From the left usually comes the argument that art is an important component of a democratic society – a way of expression and communication, a field of fruitful criticism and development of creative thought, which all are crucial for the well-being of any society.

In Finland in the wake of the last elections in 2015, the debate around public cultural funds grew very vivid especially following the expression of the Finns Party’s (Perussuomalaiset) member, Juho Eerola, who said that if the economic situation will not get better he would cut fifty percent, or even completely stop the public grant system for artists (Frilander, “Perussuomalaiset”). The Finns Party that claims not to agree with the plutocracy of the right nor with the systematic power of the left (“Arvomaailmamme”), suddenly gained a remarkable share of votes in the 2011 elections and became the second biggest party in the 2015 elections. Together with the winning Center Party, (Keskusta), and the National Coalition Party, (Kansallinen Kokoomus), both centre-right, they form a conservative liberal government. Heavy cuts on arts and culture were already planned under the last government and with the austerity policy of the current one, many artists and cultural workers are very worried about the future (Tulonen).

Finland has a public funding system for arts and culture, aimed at both institutions, and private people in the form of working grants.⁶ Even with the cuts, the increasing number of art school graduates and

⁶ According to the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture the budget for arts and culture in 2015 is about 463 million €. This is about 0.8 percent of the country’s total budget (“Kulttuurin ja taiteen julkinen rahoitus ja ohjaus”).

tough competition, many artists are still able to live and work from grant to grant and in between on unemployment benefit or some part-time jobs. In recent years with the economic and political changes in Finland and with the new saving mode, many questions regarding art practice, its meaning and relevance are raised and discussed in different forums.

In November 2014, some months before the elections, an event was organized in Helsinki that gathered politicians and artists on the same stage. This summit was called *Make Art Policy!* It was organized by *Baltic Circle*, *Checkpoint Helsinki* and *Public Movement*. The goal was to initiate and encourage a discussion about the policy of arts in Finland. The event combined a structure and choreography of an official state event with performative and artistic strategies (*Make Art Policy!*). The politicians, the artists, the cultural workers and the audience were all part of a performative discourse, forming a theatrical orgy of art and politics. Representatives from political parties were invited to present their art and culture policies. The audience was instructed to interfere by raising coloured cards that signalled to the politicians either to be clearer or to give an example of what they were saying. As expected, especially before elections, the politicians were tiptoeing their way between the blue and white cards that were raised. Everyone agreed on the importance and significance of art and culture but no concrete statements assuring the funding were made (Frilander, "Perussuomalaiset"). The Finns Party that seemed quite eager to cut the state funding and push art towards a patronage system represented one of the extremes. The other extreme was the Finnish Communist Party that proposed to move some of the Defence Ministry's budget to art. The artist and representative of the communist party, Juha-Pekka Väisänen, said that education, culture and art are the best defence politics and asked why it is so easy to invest 200 million in a battle tank but not in art? (Frilander, "Kakkua"). In general, the leftist parties supported the idea of basic income for artists. But the most interesting were actually the voices from the centre-right. In Finland, like in many other European countries, we are in recent years witnessing a shift towards the right, both in the governments as well as public opinions and social values. This obviously also effects art and culture as shown by the project *Make Art Policy!* On one hand the discourse moves around the importance of art in education and welfare/well-being, emphasizing the utility of art (as pedagogical or therapeutic tools), and on the other circling around funding possibilities that will lower the burden of the state, moving the responsibility of art and culture towards the private sector and encouraging commercialization. So looking to the future it seems that professional artists should be also pedagogues, therapists or business women/men, and that art institutions and cultural workers will increasingly depend on private corporations and on the stock market.

Taide2015 (Art 2015) in collaboration with *#Kulttuurinvälkysymys* (Cultures' Interpellation) is another initiative created by Nuoren Voiman Liitto (national literature association) and YLE (national public

service broadcasting company) as a platform for debate about cultural policy in Finland. The campaign started by asking the Finnish parliament members to reply shortly to the question: “What is the meaning of art?” The answers were passed on to artists of different disciplines, whom in turn were asked to create something, based on these written answers (Taide2015).

The answers of the politicians were very positive in general. They agreed on the importance of art, even its necessity for well-being was mentioned more than once. While some used the stand to bring out their own creativity and artistic background, others only had a vague understanding of the art field. I noticed though, that it was only the left politicians (mostly the Left Alliance party) that considered the artistic practice as work and emphasized the importance of supporting artists in order to continue to have art in our lives and in society (Taide2015). The writer Antti Nylén got an answer written by the former Prime minister Alexander Stubb – “Art does good to the soul, like sport does to the body”.⁷ Nylén, like many other artists in this project, opposed the instrumentalization of art and in his poetic essay he wrote:

The creative work destroys its creator. If it doesn't, it is something else: wage work, entertainment or art therapy, at worst 'art projects'.

[...] The artist, living on grants, like any other beggar, is doomed to gratitude. She is dependent on charity just like the junkie is on dope / She is impatient and irascible and bites anyone except her dealer / And as we know, her songs are not her own anymore / They are the songs of her feeder. They are lullabies for the consciousness of the rich.⁸

Nylén himself, as he writes, is enjoying a three-year working grant from the state. So he knows the system, and as an artist he knows his addiction and his dealer. Artists like Nylén, need money for working and living, for creating their art. When most of the money comes from state funds, artists are deeply tied and dependent on the state and its policies. The whole system of producing and presenting is subjected to the funding system. Artists have to adapt their plans to the criteria of the funds. They do it either intentionally or unconsciously, but to some extent everyone has to adapt to the system. Since the system is maintained by bureaucracy full of both personal and institutional interests, this forcefully affects the artists and their creations. The question is what kinds of a social and political criticism can emerge from this system? To what extent can artists be true to themselves and to their work when it comes to criticizing the state or the society

⁷ “Taide tekee sielulle hyvää kuten liikunta keholle” (Stubb qtd. in Nylén). My own translation from Finnish.

⁸ “Luomistyö tuhoaa luojan. Ellei tuhoa, se on jotain muuta: palkkatyötä, ajanvietettä tai taideterapiaa, pahimmassa tapauksessa ”taideprojekteja”.

[...] Apurahataiteilija, kuten muutkin kerjäläiset, on tuomittu kiitollisuuteen. Hän on riippuvainen almuistaan, niin kuin narkomaani aineestaan / Hän on lyhytjänteinen ja kiukkuinen ja puree kaikkia, paitsi diileriään / Ja kuten tiedetään, hänen laulunsa eivät ole enää hänen. Ne ovat hänen ruokkijansa lauluja. Ne ovat tuutulauluja rikkaiden omalletunnolle” (Nylén). My own translation from Finnish.

that enables them to live and to work? Or does it rather in advance exclude any criticism.

In a completely different setting, in Israel-Palestine, there were also elections in 2015. The Likud-national liberal party, won again with Binyamin Netanyahu as the prime minister, for the fourth time within the last twenty years. The new government now is composed of right wing and religious parties. Soon after the establishment of the government, the expressions and actions of the new minister of culture and sport Miri Regev set fire on a debate around the policy of the ministry's funding of art and culture.

It all started with a threat by Regev to cancel the promised support of Elmina – a multicultural theatre for children and youth in Jaffa. The reason was that Norman Issa, the artistic director of Elmina, refused to participate as an actor in a play by Haifa Theatre that was to take place in the Jordan Valley, in the Occupied Territories. In the theatre it has become customary that actors/actresses who refuses to play in the Occupied Territories for conscientious reasons⁹ will ask for replacement in advance (Ashkenazi; Stern).

This incident ended by Issa promising that Elmina will perform also in the Occupied Territories and Regev pulling back her threat. According to her, their agreement was an example of freedom of speech and tolerance (Stern). While Issa's decision got a lot of criticism from the left who adopted him as an example of an oppressed artist and blamed him for giving up his values and ideology, it looks more like blackmailing than tolerance. This was followed by other threats and budget holds to institutions by the cultural minister – screenings were cancelled, theatres were checked with a magnifying glass by the ministry, on everything between content to funding sources. Regev started her tenure with explicit declarations, saying that if needed, she will censure artists and artworks, and that her office won't fund any art piece or institution that delegitimizes the state of Israel (Lis;Pileggi). This is still a pending and interesting question, what does it mean? How can an artwork delegitimize a state? It was adequately pointed out by the press, that Regev actually confuses delegitimization with criticism and that according to her, any art piece or institution that is criticizing the state, or doesn't align with the new government, shouldn't be funded by the state. This of course raises questions about the relation between the democratic state and its cultural institutions, about the role of art in society and the role of criticism in democracy. What kind of art should be funded by public money and who has the right to set and change the criteria for this? For Regev it seems to be clear as she said: "When the rules are clear, everything is good... the fact that I declare my position in advance is good also for the artists who are at the moment writing scripts and plays, so they know in advance what will get funding and what will not" (Haaretz).

⁹ I use here the term 'conscientious reasons' referring to the term 'conscientious objector' – a person who refuses to enlist to the military service or participate in a military activity, or in the case of Israel-Palestine also a person who refuse to serve as a soldier in the Occupied Territories.

All this evoked reactions from artists and cultural workers, as well as from politicians, and led to a media debate around the questions of freedom of expression, about censorship and incitement. Artists protested, boycotted cultural events and arranged alternative screenings. They accused the cultural minister of deviating her position and interfering with the content of the artworks, for sabotaging democratic values and undermining the freedom of expression. Regev answered with a new creative term she came up with: “the freedom of funding”, meaning the freedom of the government of choosing whom to support and whom not.

Regev seems to have two main objectives as cultural minister: one is to increase the budget to the culturally marginalized parts of the society and to the periphery, where her roots as a Mizrachi woman¹⁰ are, and the second is to fight against, what she calls, delegitimization of the state of Israel, which is to be seen as part of a larger governmental concern; namely the “image” of Israel, to fight against anyone who criticizes its policies or actions.¹¹ Of course censorship is nothing new, discrimination prevails in the art, so in many ways Regev is just continuing in the line of her predecessors. However, the difference is that this time it is done in a much more vociferous and provocative way and that a right-wing-religious government backs it up. Curiously enough before her political career, Regev has a long military career, serving as spokesperson of the army, and before that she was chief military censor (Knesset member).¹² So with her military background, the experience with censorship and PR skills in defending actions of the army, she stepped into the role of cultural minister.

The dangers here are many. It damages culture and art, narrows them down to one single governmentally aligned point of view, leaning on nationalistic and patriotic values. The threats of funding cuts can lead to so-called self-censorship, where artists and institutions align with the demands and change their content accordingly. This again threatens to reduce the diversity and richness of points of views and expressions, which is the pulse of any art practice and essential to democracy. Beyond this, it legitimizes

¹⁰ The term Mizrachi, literally Eastern in Hebrew, refers to Jewish people who come from Arab countries of the Maghreb and the Middle East. This term was coined after the large immigration of Arab-Jews to Israel in the 50's. The Ashkenazi, the Jewish people originated from Europe, has largely dominated the political and cultural field in Israel. The Arab-Jews have suffered from racism and cultural suppression in Israel. More references regarding the discrimination of the Mizrachi Jews in Israel-Palestine, see for example, Chetrit and Shohat.

¹¹ The term *delegitimization* has been vastly used by the Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu when talking about the BDS movement (Boycott, Divestments and Sanctions). The movement was established in 2005 and since then it is growing and increasingly gaining international recognition. In recent years the Israeli government is assigning a large amount of resources in fighting this campaign (Eichner; Shalev; Persico ; Omer-Man, “Israel's President”).

¹² The Military Censor is overlooking all the media in Israel and is authorized to suppress any information that it regards as harmful for the safety of Israel. More about the military censor and the press in Israel see Omer-Man, “A Letter to Our Readers: On Censorship”.

censorship based on political views and backs up anyone with power to censor art and culture. This reveals a system inimical to democracy and closer to totalitarian regime.

Beyond the question of freedom of expression, in the context described above, another question emerges – namely the war over culture – the power of those in power to shape cultural narratives and heritages by supporting certain voices and silencing others. And also the power of images and words – the role of art in shaping collective identities, which are used and abused by different agencies.

These two examples of Finland and Israel–Palestine are very different, but the common aspects that I want to address are the connection between art practices, the socio-political system and the capitalist society. Let us look at the question of censorship taking place differently, but still relevant, in both previously elaborated cases. While in Israel the censorship seems very explicit and clear, and almost provoking in its declaration, in Finland it is much more ambiguous and unspoken; who has the right to say and what, or which art is supported by the public funding system and which art is not – in a way it is much easier to deal with overt censorship with very clear guidelines, than to reveal a more complex and covert system.

It's interesting to see the difference in the instrumentalization of the art and culture by the political system in these two cases. In Finland the political discourse about art and culture often contains the question of utilizing art – how artists can be useful for the society. The vastly used term in Finnish 'yhteisötaiteilija', meaning a community artist or social artist, distinguishes artists who are working with a community. There is a growing amount of projects of this kind that are often referred to as *participatory projects*, where a certain community, usually socially or culturally marginalized one, is invited to participate in the process of making an artwork and with the aim of raising awareness or improving the life of the community by artistic means.¹³ In Israel the political discourse is very much about the "leftist" and the "rightist" art; if a certain artwork is promoting left or right-wing views. The political discourse is around whether art is *with* or *against* the state – art that supports the Jewish Israeli culture and historical narrative, or art that questions and undermines at least certain aspects of it. And if the art is criticizing the state, why should the state support it? Artists that dare to subvert the policy and actions of the state or criticize the Zionist hegemony are accused of being *against the state* and disrupting the unity of the people. Mostly art and artists that are supported by the state are either reinforcing the Zionist hegemonic narrative or don't pose any threat on it; and further on art and culture are

¹³ The artist Lea Kantonen is one of the pioneers of the community art in Finland. She has been working for over two decades mainly in collaboration with her partner Pekka Kantonen. Together they have created different community art projects with indigenous people in Finland, Estonia and Mexico. In her doctoral dissertation Lea Kantonen deals with many questions regarding community art, based on her experiences (Kantonen).

simultaneously used to camouflage the ugly reality and paint it with nice colours of pluralism and coexistence.

The Autonomy of Art

I would like to end this chapter with a notion about the so-called autonomy of art. The political role of artists is often omitted from art history; nevertheless, artists have always participated in the political life and social struggles in different ways. But also artists who are not driven by socio-political motives are still working and creating within, reciprocally to, and in correspondence with the society and within a certain political system. In this sense art is always political and it is always a social activity. As producers artists are always part of the economical system and they depend on the system in order to finance their work. From this point of view the idea of art as autonomous and the art practices as separated from other social activities is an illusion. But nevertheless the idea is still very prevalent in the art field. Keeping this illusion of the autonomy of art serves certain interests as Bradley adequately writes:

The conception of art as an activity separated from the rest of social life, which remains a guiding principle to this day, serves certain interests more than others. By positing art as somehow outside or above meaningful political engagement, and also as dependent upon the perpetuation of existing economic conditions and social relationships, it serves conservative social and political forces, no matter how radical it might appear from a particular aesthetic standpoint. (9-10)

Bradley points out that the autonomous status of art practices, as separated from and above the socio-political life and at the same time embedded in the economical system, creates a situation where art practices are perceived as disconnected from any socio-political engagement or responsibility (9-10). Any radical or critical content will be relevant only within the discourse of the art field. So even though there might be a growing number of artists that are dealing with social and political issues, as long as they comply with the idea of the autonomy of art, their impact risks staying within the art field. And on the other hand the art field vastly neglects the many ways in which it actually is very much intertwined with society and the political and economic systems.

The idea of separation of art practices from daily socio-political reality is not a hermetic idea, and sometimes when art touches a delicate point the consequences can be harsh. There is a dual reference towards art and artists – on one hand their practices are seen as harmless and not in touch with *reality*, since the idea is to keep art free from any commitment, free to fulfil itself. And on the other hand we see that artists are constantly confronted with censorship and even persecution in certain places, implying that art and artists

have a socio-political impact – that some art practices are considered a threat on a certain order.

If art reached its autonomous status during the 19th-20th centuries it was followed by a counter reaction towards the end of the 20th century, when new social movements emerged. In the same spirit of change new artistic movements were created, both inspired by and contributing to different social and political struggles. The institutional critique emerged and artists started to undermine the system of the art institutions and criticize the alienation of the art world. Many artists and movements advocated for the connection of the art practice and the so called *daily life* – feminist artists brought domestic labour of women into the art field, and at the same time questioned the male dominance. Performance art emerged, leaving the stage and going into the streets and the public domain, questioning the borders between private and public, the cultural norms and the role of art institutions. Movements like Pop Art used the techniques and imagery of the media and mass culture. Using the idea of ready-made they appropriated images of everyday objects and public figures from magazines and advertisements. They questioned the borders between high-culture and popular culture and emphasized the development of the consumerist culture.¹⁴

These two prevailing concepts: the autonomous art-sphere that frees the artists from any social or political responsibilities, and on the other hand the strive to unite daily life and art, give rise to extremely problematic artworks, sometimes referred to as political art. Artists, curators and art institutions appropriated the *daily life* or *reality* in the form of social practices and socio-political situations into art. I want to refer to one example that I recently encountered and judging by Facebook discussions is bringing some controversies to the surface.

The Finnish artist Jani Leinonen opened his new solo exhibition in Kiasma, the museum of contemporary art in Helsinki in September 2015. The exhibition was titled “*Tottelemattomuuskoulu*” – *The School for Disobedience*. The invitation stated: “Leinonen challenges us to question the structures and practices of art as well as politics and the world of education. He is a new kind of public artist, exploiting in his work the practices of the media, publicity and social media” (“Jani Leinonen”). For one of the art pieces, *Anything Helps*, Leinonen hired two Romanian women that usually are begging for money in the streets of Helsinki, to sit in the museum for a few days. They were sitting in front of a wall where Leinonen presented signs written by street beggars he had gathered all over the world. According to an article in *Helsingin Sanomat* he wanted to create discomfort and break the sterile atmosphere of the exhibition. He was quoted saying that it is astonishing that only now in the museum, when objectified, the Romanian beggars stand out.¹⁵ This

¹⁴ On the relation of art and social movements see for example, Raunig, *Art and Revolution* and Bradley and Esche, *Art and Social Change*.

¹⁵“On hämmästyttävää, että romanit pistävät silmään vasta täällä ... Vasta kun heidät kuin esineellistetään täällä osaksi teosta, niin heidät huomataan” (Leinonen qtd. in Viljanen, “Taiteilija”). My own translation from Finnish.

sounds somewhat arrogant since it is hard to miss the growing number of people living and begging in the streets and thus diminishing the discrimination and racism they constantly face. Maybe art has grown so detached from reality in its autonomy that it needs to import the reality into the museum in order to grasp it as such. Art is no longer pointing at daily life and naming it art, but instead validating “reality” as an important socio-political issue, only within the artistic discourse. These two women were brought into the museum to represent themselves, for few days be on display, displaced into the museum as an artwork, which most likely aimed to provoke. But the issue evoked here is not the living conditions of the Romanian people in the streets of Helsinki, but rather the decay of art, constantly searching for new things to fill and hide its emptiness. The *sterile atmosphere* and context of the museum, as opposed to the street, maybe creates a safe distance from which the audience can approach the Romanian women. Ostensibly Leinonen was calling for civil disobedience in his exhibition but this call loses its power since he himself is obeying and following very precisely the rules of the contemporary capitalist art world.

“Not every act of resistance is necessarily a work of art, although, in a certain way it is. Not every work of art is necessarily an act of resistance, and yet, in a certain way it is.”

– Gilles Deleuze¹⁶

In the previous chapter I looked into some of the conditions that may pose obstacles and restrictions on art as means of social and political change. In this chapter I look at different ways to possibly overcome these obstacles and ask how art can work as resistance. I understand resistance in a similar way to how the philosopher and art theorist Gerald Raunig describes it: “Contrary to the superficial meaning of the word, resistance is not merely a reaction to domination; as antidialectical concepts, resistance and insurrection are productive, affirmative and creative” (“The Many” 385). Resistance, from this point of view, has other aspects in addition to negating a certain dominating force and rather than being destructive it is constructive and creative.

There are many different struggles taking place, right now, all over the world – resistance to the capitalist chauvinist hegemony, resistance to oppressions, suppressions and occupations, resistance to autocracies, to fascism, to colonialism and imperialism, resistance to the institutionalized racism and xenophobia. What has art to do with all of this? I would say everything and nothing. For the philosopher Gilles Deleuze there is something inherently resistive in art practice. In his words: “There is a fundamental affinity between the work of art and the act of resistance.”¹⁷ He refers to Malraux who said that art is the only thing that resists death; the proof of this for Deleuze is that he can look at sculptures that are thousands of years old. He says “The act of resistance, it seems to me, has two faces: it is humane and it is also an act of art. Only the act of resistance resists the death, either in the form of a work of art or in the form of a popular struggle. And what is the connection between the work of art and the popular struggle?”¹⁸ For Deleuze it is the most intimate and mysterious one (Deleuze). Deleuze is referring to the artistic creation as well as to the philosophical creation of concepts when saying that the act of creation is an act of resistance. Each act of creation is resisting something, preliminarily death but not only. Each act of creation is undermining a

¹⁶ “Tout acte de résistance n’est pas une oeuvre d’art, bien que d’une certaine manière elle en soit. Toute oeuvre d’art n’est pas un acte de résistance et pourtant d’une certaine manière elle l’est” (Deleuze 00:40:59). My own translation from online video source.

¹⁷ “Il y a une affinité fondamentale entre l’oeuvre d’art et l’acte de résistance” (Deleuze 00:39:09). My own translation from online video source.

¹⁸ “L’acte de résistance, il me semble, a deux faces: il est humain, et c’est aussi l’acte de l’art. Seul l’act de résistance résiste à la mort. Soit sous la forme d’une oeuvre d’art, soit sous la forme d’une lutte des hommes. Et quel rapport y a-t-il entre la lutte des hommes et l’oeuvre d’art? Le rapport le plus étroit, pour moi le plus mystérieux” (Deleuze 00:44:33). My own translation from online video source.

certain given order and creating *counter information* to the prevailing information that constitutes the *society of control* (Deleuze).

Herbert Marcuse and Theodor W. Adorno, both philosophers associated with the Frankfurt School, dedicated their last writings to art and its social and political implications. Both of them referred to the resistive potential of art, but saw its radical power valid only within the art field. For Marcuse the sphere of the autonomous art is essential in order to express its inherent radical power, to imagine a different reality and to evoke through aesthetic subversions the possible social and political changes. But if this imagined world, this illusion, created within the art field becomes reality, then, according to Marcuse, it will cease to be art. “Art can express its radical potential only as art, in its own language and image, which invalidate the ordinary language, the ‘prose du monde’” (103). Even though art can’t change reality by itself Marcuse argues that there is a fundamental relation between art practice and popular struggle and that there is something inherently revolutionary in the essence of art:

The tension between art and revolution seems irreducible. Art itself, in practice, cannot change reality, and art cannot submit to the actual requirements of the revolution without denying itself. But art can and will draw its inspirations, and its very form, from the then-prevailing revolutionary movement – for revolution is in the substance of art (116).

[...] It is indeed an internal exigency of art, which drives the artist to the streets ... But in doing so he leaves the universe of art and enters the larger universe of which art remains an antagonistic part: that of radical practice (121-122).

Marcuse notes that according to Adorno “art responds to the total character of repression and administration with total alienation”. He asks whether this has not reached the point of no-return where the alienation has gone so extreme that it is completely detached from reality and hence without any commitment (116). Art becomes harmless and loses its subversive power, it becomes succumbing to the dominating order.

The question of Marcuse is still very relevant. It is resonating in the question that the political theorist Chantal Mouffe poses: “Can artistic practices still play a critical role in a society where the difference between art and advertising have become blurred and where artists and cultural workers have become a necessary part of capitalist production?” (Mouffe 1). Mouffe addresses the argument that art has lost its political power since the capitalist system automatically recuperates and neutralizes any criticism and that artistic practice has become an important component of capitalist productivity. Mouffe’s point of view is although quite optimistic – for her, art practice plays a crucial role in what she calls hegemonic struggle. “What is needed is widening the field of artistic intervention, by intervening directly in a multiplicity of social spaces in order to oppose the program of total social mobilization of capitalism”(1).

For Mouffe there are two important notions for understanding *the political* – antagonism and hegemony. The antagonism as an inherent aspect of a pluralistic society – a force that constantly strives to conciliation and at the same time never will get there. And hegemony as a power that constitutes a certain order in society and maintains it through institutional practices. Mouffe developed the concept of *Agonistic Spaces* – public spaces that serves as *battlegrounds* for the confrontation of different hegemonic projects. It's an on-going confrontation and struggle that never will lead to any reconciliation, but will rather constitute the public sphere and the hegemonic order through those encounters. And this is where the art practice enters – in either building and maintaining a certain hegemonic order or challenging and undermining it. What Mouffe sees as artistic activism is the interventions in public space that aim to disrupt the capitalist hegemonic order and reveal its repressive characteristics:

What is at stake in what I call the 'agonistic' struggle, which I see as the core of a vibrant democracy, is the very configuration of power relations around which a given society is structured. It is a struggle between opposing hegemonic projects, which can never be reconciled rationally. (3)

Mouffe argues that artists can still have a meaningful socio-political position even if the radical critique of the avant-garde is no longer valid or possible, and cannot constitute a meaningful resistance:

They [the artists] still can play an important role in the hegemonic struggle by subverting the dominant hegemony and by contributing to the construction of new subjectivities. In fact, this has always been their role and it is only the modernist illusion of the privileged position of the artist that has made us believe otherwise. Once this illusion is abandoned, jointly with the revolutionary conception of politics accompanying it, we can see that critical artistic practices represent an important dimension of democratic politics. (5)

So how can artists use the inherent resistive force of art practice, of creation, and constitute a subversive force against the dominant hegemony and against different oppressions – and thus play a role in the social and political fields? How can art practice create a meaningful criticism and open possibilities for change? There are a few ways that I see artists and art-groups using the resistive potential of art in their practice today. I will elaborate on them while using some contemporary examples. I distinguish these artistic practises into four categories: 1. The mere artistic practice as resistance to oppressions. 2. Political art that acts mainly within the art field. 3. Art practice that acts on the border of the art field. 4. Activist art that acts mainly outside of the art field.

Of course a certain work or art practice can at the same time fit in different categories and the working strategies and goals of an artist or an art group can change with time. The categories above serve to analyze the socio-politically engaged art practices and to think of the effects they may have on the social and

political fields. Looking through these categories I ask whether art practice can constitute a meaningful resistance and if it can initiate or be part of a meaningful socio-political change.

The mere artistic practice as resistance to oppression – 1

In certain places and under certain regimes of strong censorship or limited freedom of expression, the mere act of making art, expressing opinions, thoughts and feelings can be an act of resistance and civil disobedience. Artists have been persecuted and tried for their actions and work or for their political opinions and expressions. The authorities often use creative interpretation and loopholes in the law in order to prosecute artists while covering the political aspect of it. Maybe the most known contemporary artists who has suffered from persecution following his art practice and activism, is the Chinese artist and dissident Ai Weiwei, who has been criticizing the Chinese government's severe human rights violations. Weiwei was arrested in 2011, kept in detention without any charges for nearly three months, and was then finally accused of tax evasion. When released he was still kept under heavy surveillance and restriction of movement. Later he faced different vague charges, such as of spreading pornography and of bigamy (Weiwei). But even under these difficult conditions Weiwei continued his art practice and to comment on and criticize the government's actions. His main tool of expression and communication became the social media. Weiwei was banned from leaving China for more than four years, until the authorities handed back his passport in 2015 (Phillips; Sayei).

Another known case is that of the Iranian director Jafar Panahi. Panahi's films are vastly screened and awarded internationally but many of them are banned in Iran. During his career he constantly had to deal with the Iranian authorities that do not appreciate his work that much. In 2010, following the re-elections of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and the protests of the Green Movement that were violently suppressed by the regime, Jafar Panahi was one of the many activists and dissidents to be arrested. He was sentenced to six years in prison and got a twenty-year-ban on making films, talking to the press or leaving the country (Dehghan). He was held in house arrest for a long time and even though he has not served any time in prison until this day, the threat of incarceration is constantly present. He is still subjected to restriction of movement and denied his freedom of expression. However, all this didn't prevent him from making films. His latest one, *Taxi* (2015), recently won the Golden Bear prize at the Berlin Film Festival. During his house arrest he made a documentary film, *This Is Not a Movie* (2011) about his daily life dealing with the prosecution and imprisonment in his own house (Romney). In both cases the international recognition and pressure might have had an effect on the trial and the process. Like Weiwei said himself, many have been imprisoned in China for much less. Most of the cases are not mediated nor get famous like these. The list of artists

imprisoned, forced to exile or subjected to persecution in their respective countries could be long.

The Belarus Free Theatre (BFT) is another inspiring example. The theatre group, originally from Minsk, is now based in London and performing around the world. The founders of the group Natalia Kaliada and Nikolai Khalezin were granted political asylum in the UK in 2011 after facing continuous persecutions in Belarus¹⁹, where the group had to perform underground. In November 2015, the BFT celebrated its 10th anniversary by a two-week festival in London called *Staging a Revolution*. During the festival performances and discussions took place all around London, in places that were revealed to the audience only twenty-four hours before the performance. This method was meant to give the audience a glimpse on how it is to make theatre and organize performances under a repressive dictatorship. The audience got a text message indicating a meeting point from which it would be picked up and led to the performance venue, just like the group used to do in Belarus, where the underground performances often were raided by the police and KGB, sometimes leading to the arrest of both actors and audience. (Belarus Free Theatre)

“Life under dictatorship is very easy”, says Aleh Sidorchyk, one of the actors of BFT in the opening of a documentary about the group. “In Belarus there is no need to think about anything. There is no need to take any decisions. And there are no problems” (*Dangerous Acts*). From the very beginning the BFT addressed issues that are taboo and absent from the public discourse in Belarus, like mental health, suicide, sexual violence and political oppression. In their artistic practice they deal with injustices and human rights violations. They bring to the stage their personal experiences as well as other people's stories.

In 2010 following the protests after the elections that were claimed as a fraud, many people, including journalists, activists and political opponents as well as many of the BFT members, got arrested. Working with the group got more dangerous and staying in Belarus posed a real threat. Many people ‘disappeared’ during that period of time. “The year 2011 was a turning point”, Kaliada says in the movie, “That year we lost our home. Even when none of us knew what would be happening next, it was possible to make art out of an absolutely horrible year. I believe it helped us to survive as human beings” (*Dangerous Acts*).

In certain places you might pay a heavy price for expressing your thoughts and opinions through art or other means. It takes courage to stand against the hegemonic order and the dominating powers. The decision of public dissent is not easy and the price for it can be huge. You might give up many comforts of life, relations with friends and family can suffer, you can put people who are close to you in danger and you

¹⁹ Belarus is infamous for being called Europe's last dictatorship. Alexander Lukashenko has been in power since 1994, shortly after the country gained its independence. In 2015 he was elected for the fifth time in a row. Lukashenko has been condemned by Western countries for his authoritarian ruling system as well as for severe human rights violations and elections frauds. Many of his political opponents have been imprisoned or in worse cases just disappeared. (Sevortina and Gorbunova; Harding; Tyrkalov)

might pay with your freedom or even your life. On the other hand the margins can be a very inspiring, fruitful and lively sphere to create and act in. Oppression, when one is not succumbed to it, forces one to find creative ways around it. Going back to Marcuse, there is a certain affinity between the revolutionary act and the creative act – they are both driven by a strong desire for freedom. A friend and director once told me that for him, as a Palestinian living in Israel, the mere act of making films is resistance – by creating films and expressing his thoughts and ideas he resists the oppression of the government and the Zionist hegemony. “They can take away everything, the land, they can try to take away my language and culture, but I won’t let them take away my voice and my right to say what I think. And this is something that is worth fighting for and even worth being imprisoned or killed for.”²⁰

Political art that acts mainly within the art field – 2

It’s a growing tendency in the art world to dedicate exhibitions and biennales to socio-political themes. The so-called *political art* is proliferating – art that aims to uncover certain power structures or reveal marginalized injustices, or sometimes just to reflect on certain socio-political situations or events. Some artists and curators take an explicit political stand or use art as a platform to criticize, raise awareness and provoke public discussions.

The 56th Venice Biennale in 2015, curated by Okwui Enwezor, is an excellent example. Enwezor, a curator and writer, is known for his political approach in his practice and for reclaiming the place of African art within the mainstream art field and art history. Enwezor has a long experience of curating and directing biennales.²¹ *All the World's Futures* was the main exhibition in Venice in 2015. “A project devoted to a fresh appraisal of the relationship of art and artists to the current state of things”, as he stated (Enwezor). And indeed the *current state of things* was reflected in the exhibition; the wars in the Middle-East, the refugee crises in Europe, the exploitation of workers, race, gender and class discriminations, as well as the environmental and economic crises. The exhibition was criticized for being “the most morose, joyless, and ugly biennale in living memory; a show that, in the name of global action and social change, beats the visitor up with political theory rather than giving us the pleasures and stimulation of great art” (Genocchio). And on the other hand it was accused of hypocrisy – playing with politics, using atrocities as artistic entertainment and criticizing the

²⁰ From a conversation with Tawfik Abu-Wael, 2015.

²¹ In his resume you can find the 2nd Johannesburg Biennale (1997), *Documenta 11* (2002), Bienal Internacional de Arte Contemporáneo de Sevilla, Spain, (2007), the 7th Gwangju Biennale in South Korea (2008) and the Triennale d’Art Contemporain of Paris at the Palais de Tokyo (2012). And he is currently the director of Haus Der Kunst Munich (“Okwui Enwezor”).

global capitalist systems while playing a significant role in it (Charlesworth).

Of course the task of curating such a huge exhibition with all the tradition and prestige that comes with it, is not an easy task. But if the aim of the curator is to think “how can the current disquiet of our time be properly grasped, made comprehensible, examined, and articulated?” (Enwezor); then shouldn't the institution of the biennale itself be examined, as part of, and complicit to, the current disquiet? The Venice Biennale brings together capital and art on a big scale and more than anything this recent political edition of the biennale shows the zeitgeist of the art world. It is hard to criticize the biennale of not being activist, since the aim of Enwezor as he states it, is not to cause any change but rather *to examine, to grasp and to articulate* the global disquiet. And this is the prevalent position of the art world – to examine and reflect on political things from the safe distance of neutrality of the art field: To *deal with* politics without necessarily *being* political.

One of the main events that took place all along the exhibition was a performative reading of Karl Marx's *Capital*, directed by the artist Isaac Julien. Ironically enough, at the same time Julien was promoting his new film in Venice that was supported by Rolls-Royce Motor Cars company. The readings were accompanied by a series of events and performances that in different ways communicated with the text. Bringing *Capital* to the heart of a global capitalist event is obviously rather controversial and provokes critique, which of course both Julien and Enwezor were well aware of. But, as mentioned before, the capitalist system is embracing and relying exactly on these controversies.

One work in the biennale evoked controversies also outside art circles, *THE MOSQUE* by Christoph Büchel, commissioned by The Icelandic Art Center (IAC) for the Icelandic pavilion. The police allegedly for security reasons shut down *The Mosque*. During its short existence it was an actual functioning mosque built inside the church of Santa Maria della Misericordia, a 14th century building that ceased its religious use over forty years ago. *The Mosque* was to serve as a place of worship for the Islamic community in Venice, as well as a place for cultural and educational events, such as courses in Arabic and Icelandic. Even though on the mainland of Venice there is a place that serves as a prayer room for the Islamic community, in the historic part of the city there hasn't been a mosque since the 17th century. Regardless the historical connection to Islam and the current demand of the Islamic community, a mosque has not been permitted in the historical centre (Higgins; Kennedy).

The work of Büchel touches a delicate point in the European community and undoubtedly this was one of the goals. Whether it was a mere artistic provocation or a socially engaged artwork perhaps is not the point. But apart from the artists there were many other people involved in this project – people from the IAC, the Venice Muslim community and volunteer workers, that probably truly believed in the aim of the project as it was stated by the IAC:

The purpose of THE MOSQUE is to draw attention to the political institutionalization of segregation and prejudice in society, and to catalyze reflection upon the conflicts that arise from the sorts of governmental policies on immigration that lie at the heart of global ethnic and religious conflicts today. The aim of our project, a peaceful and beautiful one, is to provide a platform for dialogue about and communication between different cultural positions, and to thus make a positive contribution to this dialogue on the international stage. (Icelandic Art Center, "Statement")

The authorities argued that *The Mosque* is not an artwork but an actual place for religious worship. They seemed to expect a representation rather than the actual thing, and said the permission that the IAC got did not apply for this purpose (Icelandic Art Center, "Statement"). Whilst in the art field the question of what is art and what is not, has long been out-dated, it still seems to play a role under certain conditions, especially when the artwork touches delicate issues. While the public debate around *The Mosque* raised questions about religious rights, minorities rights, Islamophobia and xenophobia, which are on the surface all around Europe right now – the silence from the part of the art field was jarring. Even art that thrive on political polemics stayed out of this one. The curator and biennale's director didn't take any public stand and neither did the artists. It was the IAC that fought to reopen *The Mosque* but without success. The IAC expressed its disappointment in the lack of support from the Biennale and their capitulation to the Venice City officials' demands to censor parts of the artwork and cease the active involvement of the Muslim community "in favour of creating a conventional visual art exhibition" (Icelandic Art Center, "Correction").

The Mosque as a symbol, as a representation would probably be within the limits of the "conventional" and would evoke a discourse inside the art field, but it is exactly the activity and the involvement of the community that crosses the border from art into the social and political fields. The artist uses the community and its activity and renders them into an artwork, by framing them as such within a highly valued art biennale. The question of Islam as religion and culture in Europe is highly sensitive following the growing immigration from Muslim countries, recent terror attacks, the complicity of Europe in the wars in the Middle East and Africa, as well as its colonial history. The public representation of the Islamic religion and culture is being suppressed by legislation in many European countries and the debate around it is charged. And it is exactly this debate that Büchel and the IAC wanted to evoke.

In their statement the officials of the biennale made a clear distinction – conventional visual art should stay within the limits of visual representation, of *dealing with* and *articulating of* political issues, but not *acting* politically or intervening in the socio-political life. A political art exhibition again is representing political issues but staying within the art field. In a huge production like the Venice Biennale different interests obviously collide. And in this case the question that arises is what are the relations between the artist, the art institutions and the community/ies? Who has what responsibility and towards whom?

In his article about the hypocrisy of the art world and how it is embodied in the 56th Venice Biennale, the art critic and associate editor of *Art Review*, JJ Charlesworth, wrote:

Could it be that in the partying and the networking, and all the talk of politics and capitalism, the real point for all these countries and non-countries is to be part of the new machinery of the global economic world order, of which art biennials have become the cultural window-dressing? ... Underneath all the political posturing, what it really represents is a bad case of disavowal—of not wanting to admit that you're part of a system that is the problem, not the solution. (Charlesworth)

Art practice on the border of the art field – 3

There are artists that in their practice cross the border into the social and political fields. One example is the Catalan artist Núria Güell. Güell has graduated from the University of Barcelona and she also studied at the Behaviour Art School under Tania Bruguera in Havana. Her works have been awarded and exhibited internationally. In other words, her practice takes place within the art field and traditional art institutions, but at the same time Güell is stretching the operational limits of the art institutions and in her words she is “using art as umbrella, in the sense of a ‘space of protection’” (Debatty).

The work of Güell is swaying on the borders of art field, as well as on the borders of legality. She takes the subversive potential of art and applies it in the social and political fields. Through her works she analyzes and subverts institutionalized power relations. She often appropriates strategies from the institutions and systems, which she is undermining, into her artistic practice. She questions the hegemonic ethics and the established legal system, as well as how the governing bodies abuse them. Güell uses her status as an artist and the aura of the “autonomous art” that provides her relative privilege and freedom to carry out her projects.

One of her works, *Displaced Moral Application # 1: Exponential Growth* (Spain, 2010–2012), is a collaboration with the artist Levi Orta and the famous bank robber and anarchist Jaime Giménez Arbe, alias ‘El Solitario’. For the work Güell and Orta asked El Solitario, who was serving time in a high security prison, to design a plan for robbing a bank. This plan turned into a novel where El Solitario describes different strategies to expropriate banks. The plan was then stored in a safety deposit box in the very same branch that the plan was targeting. The first chapter of the novel was sold in an auction house specialized in art and documents and the money was given to El Solitario. In this work Güell questions the ethics of the monetary system and the ways in which banks yield profits. The work demonstrates how value can be generated out of potential value. This way Güell compares the art market to the capitalist financial system. (“How to Rob a Bank”)

In *Humanitarian Aid* (Cuba-Spain, 2008–2013), Güell offered to marry any Cuban who wished to immigrate to Spain. In Cuba marriage is known to be the surest way to emigrate and to get legal papers for living in Europe. Anyone could apply by writing the most beautiful love letter they could imagine and a jury of three Cuban prostitutes chose the winner. The deal between the artist and her future husband was that she would cover the wedding expenses and flight ticket to Spain, and he would be available for anything she asked him, including attending exhibitions and openings, until the end of their marriage. In case of acquisition of the work the profit would be equally divided. Güell asked him to keep a diary about the whole process of marriage and emigration to Spain. The diary was presented as part of the artwork. After getting his Spanish citizenship and passport their marriage was over and they signed the divorce document. After the project Güell's ex-husband stayed in Europe thanks to the legal status he gained. (Núria Güell)

Too Much Melanin (Sweden, 2013) was created in the framework of the Goteborg International Biennial for Contemporary Art. For this work Güell asked the biennale to hire Maria, a political refugee from Kosovo. Her main task was to play 'hide and seek' with the visitors of the biennale. This working contract with the biennale finally allowed Maria to obtain a working permit after living nine years in Sweden. The Swedish government had denied Maria and her family asylum over and over again and thus forced them to hide and live without legal documents. In Sweden like in many other EU countries there are a growing amount of controversial policies and legislations regarding migratory issues. One of them is the REVA project that offers bonuses for police officers on each capture of so called illegal immigrant. (Núria Güell)

All these works are based on some kind of a contract between the artists and her collaborator. They are based on a 'give and take' relation that Güell sets up with the persons she works with. As an artist, she gets her art project and the collaborator gets something she needs or wants, like a visa, a permit or a legal status. Unlike the previously mentioned work by Jani Leinonen, where the two Romanian women were hired to present themselves, as part of an artwork within the museum, and after a few days went back to their daily life on the streets – in the case of Güell, the persons participating are achieving something they desire through the project and the aim of both the artist and the participants is to create a meaningful change. Her artistic/activist strategies are also offered to others to use as tools for socio-political change. This can be seen in *Displaced Legal Application #1: Fractional Reserve* (2010–2011, Spain), where she created different ways of informing and educating the public on the monetary system and banks. One of the outcomes is a book called *How to expropriate money from the banks*, which is an actual step-by-step handbook, available online for free (Güell, "How to Expropriate").

Güell uses the art field and its institutions as a platform for her projects but also as a 'safe zone' where she can realize her ideas that otherwise might be condemned illegal. She uses this "autonomy" of art in order to implement her projects. In her practice she merges artistic strategies with political and corporate strategies,

drawing from different fields according to each project. Even though some of her works are one-time projects dealing with a specific situation like *Humanitarian Aid* or *Too Much Melanin*, Güell has a strong social and political awareness that guides her through the work. This means that even one-time projects have long-term objectives of change. She openly addresses and uses her position and status as an artist and as an EU citizen. With a deep understanding of both art and socio-political activism – Güell lives and works in both.

Activist art that acts mainly outside of the art field – 4

Resistance movements and popular struggle were always accompanied and inspired by art. Artists have played an important role in different socio-political struggles. From the Paris Commune, to the Russian revolution, to the social struggles of the 60s and in different social movements of today, artists were and are participating as citizens, protestors, fighters, or as artists, using artistic tools. The desire to change reality and the strive for freedom were always embedded in art practice. The means to engage in society have changed through time and through technological developments as well as through theoretical and philosophical developments that have expanded the boundaries of the art field. I want to address here the activist art practices that use the tools of art with the objective of socio-political change. Usually these practices are taking place outside of the mainstream art field and art institutions. Exhibitions in galleries and museums are only a by-product, a way of reaching a certain audience and publicity, but not the goal. The art in its many forms – performance, painting, graffiti, video, photography – is taken out to the streets and other public spaces to reach people who are not necessarily frequenting places dedicated to art. The idea is to raise awareness, to evoke public discussion, to intervene in the public sphere and in social and political life.

The art of revolution

The so called Arab Spring, the revolutionary wave of civil uprisings, protests and demonstrations that started in Tunisia in 2010 and spread all over the Arab countries of North Africa and the Middle East, sparked hope for change and freedom in many people. The protesters were confronted by suppression and violence by the authorities and pro-governmental forces. Nevertheless, by the end of 2012 the people managed to overthrow the leaders of Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Yemen. The revolution was soon followed by a counter-revolution in many of the countries, and until now the Middle East is torn apart by wars and devastating violence. Despite oppression by governmental authorities such as a-Sisi in Egypt and Bashar al-Assad in Syria, as well as extremist Islamic groups such as ISIL (Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant), grassroots

movements still exist and constantly fight for freedom and equal rights all around the region.

Ahdaf Soueif, a writer, novelist and cultural and political commentator, talks about the intersection of art and politics as she experienced it during the Egyptian revolution. What is the function of art during a revolution? What is the work of an artist during a popular struggle? What does it look like? Does it have any meaning? She gave a few answers to these questions during her presentation in Perth Writers Festival in 2013. She addressed the conflict between acting as a citizen and acting as an artist:

During the revolution, as a citizen, you were really required to be on call, to do whatever you could ... While if you are trying to be an artist and write about things, then you can't be on call in that way. You have to have some distance. You have to have some space. For me, I put aside thoughts of fiction. And in fact, I would say that every Egyptian novelist that I know, put aside thoughts of fiction and we were all involved in writing columns. And we were using what skills we have as writers of fiction to write the columns ... Instead of creating an imaginary world, which is what you do in fiction, you... really believed that you were trying to create the world that we all imagined together, you were trying to create it on earth. And therefore your job was to make reality as powerful, and as engaging and as empathetic as you possible could. (Soueif 00:14:27)

Soueif explains that the priorities need to be clear in a situation like this. She put her role as fiction writer aside and made herself primarily available for the cause of the revolution. Secondly she used her skills as a writer and as an artist in order to support the revolution and the people, and also in order to deal with the situation. In her talk Soueif elaborated on the different functions of art practice during extreme times of upheavals. She talked about the importance of art in creating a community, by giving a form to the collective experience, a form recognizable by everyone and reflecting their personal experiences. This creates the feeling of belonging and of not being alone. Another function she mentioned is to articulate feelings, thoughts, ideas and experiences. The important role of art is in telling a story, as she says, the narrative of the people. It is important on the level of *listening*, to the voices of the people who are oppressed and to amplify their voices; and on the level of *telling* the story, first of all to ourselves as persons and as a community, but then also to others, to create a strong narrative so that those with power won't erupt the story and tell it according to their interests.

Soueif points out that art is a good way of expressing the collective experiences, feelings and thoughts, while at the same time reminding that the collective is made out of individuals – the collective pain is formed out of each and everyone's own pain and story. And finally, with a vision towards the future, towards the world after the revolution, the function of art could be in imagining and creating the new social order. In the revolution in Egypt, Soueif explains, people organized themselves through grassroots movements and horizontal structures and used social media and open sources to communicate and resist the

government. This web-like social structure could become the new democratic structure. And in this kind of structure, according to Soueif, when ideas and actions emerge in different places and connect with other ideas and actions along the web, art could be the channel that enables this connection and act as the link between the bits on the web.

Before the revolution street art was very rare in Egypt, especially explicitly political images. Any dissent or criticism risked to be violently suppressed. People had to be very careful expressing anything publicly. But along the revolutionary atmosphere and the collective sensation of hope and change there was also an outbreak of creativity and expressions that took over the streets. Another reason for this might also have been the closing down of social medias and communication channels by the government. This pushed people to switch from writing on the Facebook walls to expressing themselves on the actual walls and on the streets. The walls in Cairo and elsewhere in Egypt became a platform for communication and expression. The street artists responded to what was going on and just like Soueif explained, they gave a form to the collective experience, which resonated all around the city walls. The graffiti spread and people were adding and transforming it as the revolution evolved. Some events formed into symbols on the walls that were recognized by all. The image of the lion with an eye patch, for example, represented the famous lion statues on the Sixth of October Bridge in Cairo. The eye patch symbolized the many youths that were shot in their eyes during demonstrations. Or the image of a young girl dragged along the street by two policemen while her clothes were torn off exposing her blue bra, which soon turned into a graffiti with the word 'no' attached to it. This image symbolized the police violence and the collective resistance against it. The street artists started to use different kinds of influences from the Egyptian culture, such as ancient Egyptian paintings, Christian iconography, verses from the Koran and modern poetry – all merged on the walls showing the cultural richness and expressing the mood of the people and the strive for freedom. (Soueif)

Video and photography are also tools used vastly by activists in the context of resistance movements and popular struggle. *Mosireen* is a collective that was formed in Egypt at the beginning of the revolution in order to create an alternative to the governmental media channels. It is a collective of filmmakers and activists who realized the importance of citizens-based journalism in that situation. Meaning that anyone with a cell phone could be an important source of information by documenting the events. *Mosireen* organized workshops to teach people how to participate by using whatever equipment they had. They also organized the *Tahrir Cinema* where they screened footage from events in Cairo and elsewhere, since the mainstream media was unreliable. This way the citizens created alternative and independent media channels to share information and to learn what was going on.

Abounaddara is a Syrian filmmakers' collective, working anonymously since the beginning of the uprising in 2011. They call their practice an *Emergency Cinema* – emergency methods for emergency times.

Each week they upload a few minutes long movie clip, telling a personal story or a small narrative. These are not images from demonstrations or funerals, or pornography of death and suffering, but rather people enfolding their stories, thoughts and feelings in front of the camera. The aim of the collective is to create counter information to the mainstream media and present a different image of Syria and its people. (Abounaddara Films; Bramley)

Activestills is a collective of Israelis, Palestinians and internationals documentary photographers, who have been working together already for ten years. They have been documenting the Israeli occupation and the popular struggle against it, as well as other forms of oppression, racism and violence taking place in Israel-Palestine. Their subjects include the struggle of asylum-seekers and immigrants, women's rights, housing rights etc. They often present their work as street exhibitions, showing the public what is often missing in mainstream media. Their aim is to provoke reactions, to raise awareness and discussion about the socio-political situation. As they state: "We believe in the power of images to shape public attitudes and to raise awareness on issues that are generally absent from public discourse" (ActiveStills).

The common idea of all these collectives is to create an alternative media form – *counter information* to the prevailing mainstream. The idea is also to document, to create evidences of the events. The evidence can have two functions, it could be used to get justice some day, or at least it can give hope for justice, and it serves in the construction of the narrative and history of the marginalized or oppressed. As Soueif mentioned, it can prevent those in power from seizing a certain narrative and telling the story according to their interests. The works of these collectives aim to be available to all, both in the public sphere and online. An other function of art mentioned by Soeif also exist in the practice of these collectives; they are creating a form for the collective experience that others can relate to. She articulates it well when she says:

What I have seen is that the motive all the time for the art that I have seen come out of the revolution, the motive all the time has actually been to support, to describe, to articulate, to advocate, to instigate. In other words, the motive has always been political and revolutionary. And that it's in that blurry, fuzzy area between... between the work that is born out of activism and what is art that the most interesting things happen. (Soueif 00:18:25)

Performing justice

Performance and street theatre are also art forms frequently used in the context of socio-political activism. Demonstrations themselves have performative aspects when people use their bodies to amplify and express their feelings and to protest. They are manifesting their citizenship collectively and embodying their resistance and struggle.

Etcétera... is an artist collective established in 1997 in Buenos Aires. It's a street art and performance group known for its political critique and direct-action performative protests. Born in Argentina and Chile in the 70s, the members of *Etcétera...* are the second generation of *The Disappeared* – dissidents and political activist with social and communist ideologies who were forcibly abducted, tortured, kept in clandestine detention centres and often killed by the military juntas (*Nunca Más*). It is estimated that 10,000–30,000 people disappeared this way in Argentina, and thousands more exiled during the same time. Many of the members of *Etcétera...* have relatives amongst *The Disappeared* and grew up under the military dictatorship, known as the *National Reorganization Process* that lasted until 1983. This joint background established their socio-political views as well as some of their activities as a collective (Sternad 274).

In 1998 *Etcétera...* started collaborating with *H.I.J.O.S*²² – a human rights organization that was founded by teenagers whose parents had disappeared. Their goal is to raise awareness and call for justice for the *Disappeared* and their families. One of the ways to do this was organizing *Escraches* – protests that aims to expose and denounce a person for his past crimes. It is a form of popular justice and social condemnation that take place since the state institutions maintain impunity for all those complicit in the crimes of the military dictatorship.²³ As their slogan says “*Si no hay justicia, hay Escrahe!*” – If there is no justice there is Escrahe! (Escrahe). *Etcétera...* created participatory performances that became an immanent part of the *Escraches*. Both the collective and the performative aspects played an important role in creating the symbolic language and forming the political claim. As the curator and writer Jennifer Flores Sternad writes:

The symbolic and aesthetic elements of an *escrahe* are all constitutive aspects of the process of building a social consensus, representing it in the public sphere, and catalyzing the social condemnation of the individual who is being denounced. For these reasons, an *escrahe*'s meaning is immanent to its performance and therefore, the artistic actions *Etcétera...* created in *escraches* were coextensive with – not representational of, or supplementary to – *escrahe*'s social and political functions. (289)

In their work *Etcétera...* addresses not only the state terror conducted by the dictatorship but also the current ways of state oppression – they undermine the mainstream conception that counter pose the violence of the past dictatorship with the current legitimate liberal democracy. And furthermore, they expose the complicity of other fields in this oppression, especially the economic field but also the less obvious art field. Their performance *Huellas del Ingenio* can be translated both as *Traces of the Mill* and *Footprints from the Mill* (Sternad, 292–294). The work traces the patterns of the state terrorism from the time of the dictatorship until

²² *Hijos Para la Identidad y la Justicia contra al Olvido y el Silencio* [Children for the Identity and Justice against Oblivion and Silence].

²³ In 2005 the Argentine Supreme Court finally abolished the amnesty laws that were preventing the prosecution of crimes committed under the country's military dictatorship (“Argentina”).

today. *Footprints from the Mill* deals with one of Argentina's most powerful corporations, Ledesma Group, and its complicity in state terrorism. Ledesma Mill, the country's biggest sugar producer, has been accused for its collaboration with the infamous operation that took place in the northern province of Jujúy in July 1976, known as the 'blackouts'. Under the cover of darkness imposed by electricity blackouts more than four hundred people were kidnapped, imprisoned and tortured by the dictatorship. Ledesma Mill assisted by lending its vehicles and premises for the operation (Safiulina). Carlos Blaquier, the corporation's President since 1970, and his wife Nelly Blaquier are also major art collectors and patrons. Nelly Blaquier has long been the President of the Society of Friends of the National Fine Arts Museum (Asociación).

Footprints from the Mill was performed in 2000 as part as the annual commemoration of the 'Blackouts'. The collective staged an Escrache that started at the Ledesma mill and ended at the National Fine Arts Museum. They used the Ledesma brand white sugar to create footprints on the streets. One of the artists was dressed up as Nelly Blaquier and followed the white sugar footprints while holding a golden frame so that it framed her own face. Others followed her, lighting the sugar with alcohol, creating sticky traces that finally ended up at the steps of the Museum. As Sternad describes it:

[...] *Etcétera...* staged an Escrache that symbolically connected past and present abuses by the Ledesma Group, tracing the profit trail of the mill in Jujúy to the front steps of the National Fine Arts Museum ... By staging an escrache of Ledesma at the Fine Arts Museum, *Etcétera...* reframed both the history of repression in Jujúy and the function of the Museum in the postdictatorial neoliberal metropole. (291-292)

In 2005 the *Errorist International (IE)* was formed from *Etcétera...*, as an extension of their research and practice the group turned their attention towards the global terror discourse (Sternad 298-299). The first *Errorist* intervention that gained the group international recognition was called *Operation Bang!* It took place during the fourth Summit of the Americas, hosted by the city of Mar del Plata in 2005. The event was highly secured by police and U.S marine forces and attracted thousands of people who gathered to protest against the summit and the visit of the U.S president George W. Bush. The atmosphere in the city was tense.

Operation Bang! addressed the new anti-terror legislation in Argentina and also related to the increasing global terrorism discourse. In their work the *IE* investigated the role of media, state authorities and politicians in stigmatizing a certain group of people and using that for promoting certain interests. *Operation Bang!* was a staging of an *Errorist* attack in Mar del Plata. The group was dressed in stereotypical terrorist outfits, holding cardboard guns and filming the events as they unfolded. In a way they were filling the gap and expectations created by the massive security forces present in the city – they embodied the invisible threat of terror and gave it satiric tangibility. (Sternad; Navarro)

These work of *Etcétera...* and the *IE* take place in the public sphere in a performative form and in a direct action style that aims to intervene in the socio-political field. Their practices derive from theatre and

performance traditions, but these projects are not aimed at art institutions or the art audience. Later these projects have been exhibited as documentations of the actions and as a continued reflection on the subject. Since *Operation Bang! Etcétera...* has become known in the international art scene, participating in exhibitions and biennales and receiving recognition and awards (“International Award”; Errorist Kabaret).

Looking at the artistic path of many years of *Etcétera...*, we can see the shift in their practice from the margins into the centre of the art field. This shift can be seen as parallel to the general shift towards methods of participation and collaboration, and to the increasing presence of art collectives. What we see in the last few decades is more and more artists using these participatory and collaborative methods in their practices, and art practices that are increasingly shifting away from the object-making and the visual, towards art that emphasizes the process, the encounter and the experience.

Collaboration

The art critic and historian Claire Bishop defined the shift towards the social that started somewhere in the 1990s as ‘the return to the social’ (*Artificial Hells*). She marks three historical moments of upheaval and social change that were parallel to the social practices that emerged in the art field: the historic avant-garde that emerged around 1917 at the end of the First World War and with the Bolshevik revolution; the neo-avant-garde in the context of the social movements of the post-war era happening all over the world and particularly the protests of 1968 in Europe; and then the ‘social-turn’ in the 1990s, emerging after the collapse of the communism and the Soviet Union in 1989. She writes: “Each phase has been accompanied by a utopian rethinking of art’s relationship to the social and of its political potential – manifested in a reconsideration of the ways in which art is produced, consumed and debated” (*Artificial Hells* 3).

Some of the key texts, such as *Relational Aesthetics* (1998), by the art critic and curator Nicolas Bourriaud, and *Conversation Pieces: Community and Communication in Modern Art* (2004), by the art historian Grant Kester, have also contributed in defining and forming participatory and socially engaged art practices. Both authors refer to art practices that are based on inter-subjective relations and social interactions, practices that are rather process-based and that challenge the conventional relations between the artwork, the artist and the viewer. While relational art, in the words of Bourriaud, is “taking as its theoretical horizon the realm of human interaction and its social context” (*Relational Aesthetics* 14), Kester’s theory focuses on dialogue and exchange, as new forms of art practices. The big difference though between these two concepts is that relational art is usually created in the framework of galleries, museums, or other forms of art institutions and its public is consisted mainly of ‘gallery-goers’. Dialogical art, on the contrary, seeks to connect to the social and political fields and to reach the “world beyond the gallery walls” and link “new forms of inter-subjective

experience with social or political activism” (*Conversation Pieces* 9).

Bishop refers to both of these theories and criticizes them as well. She argues that even though Kester’s objective in dialogical art is to create a method of evaluation that will include both the social aspect and the aesthetic aspect, eventually he fails to consider the aesthetic part and rather focuses on the social implications. She argues that this perspective leads to a situation where any participatory art project automatically is perceived as positive and successful only because of its socio-political intentions (“The Social Turn”). While she criticizes the dialogical art of being too engaged in the socio-political field, her criticism of relational aesthetics is that it is failing its socio-political objectives. She argues that Bourriaud emphasizes the structure of the relational practice as subject matter over the quality and nature of the relations themselves, and so neglects the socio-political context. The relational art practice, as Bourriaud presents it, creates so called ‘microtopias’, where the dialogues and communications are formed in a harmonious way between people who are connected by their common interest in art. Bishop argues that:

[...] all relations that permit “dialogue” are automatically assumed to be democratic and therefore good. But what does “democracy” really mean in this context? If relational art produces human relations, then the next logical question to ask is what types of relations are being produced, for whom, and why? (“Antagonism” 65)

Bishop refers to the concept of democracy and antagonism as defined by Mouffe, in the latter’s common work with Ernesto Laclau (“Antagonism” 66), and paraphrasing Bourriaud, creates the concept of ‘relational antagonism’. She refers to art practice that similarly to relational aesthetics sets the human relations at its core, but in contrast doesn’t take the relations as the content of the work, and rather than social harmony, it intrigues contradiction, dissensus and antagonism. Contrary to relational art, practices of relational antagonism address the social and political aspects of relations and communication exactly because they refuse to become ‘microtopian’ harmonious communities, and instead reveal the social and political exclusions within society. Relational antagonism, according to Bishop, demonstrates better democracy and better politics not only because it creates antagonistic relations and foments disruption, but also because instead of fusing art and politics, it acknowledges its operational limits as an artwork and within the art field (“Antagonism” 79). In other words, similarly to the idea of Marcuse, Bishop argues that art practice can have socio-political implication only if acknowledging its limits within the art field. Therefore, the antagonism and the disruption that she refers to, are taking place only within the art field.

Between these three examples I would argue that the one that most accurately demonstrates the agonistic approach is the dialogical art of Kester. While the ideas of Bishop and Bourriaud are referring to the changes and shifts within the art field, Kester is reaching beyond that field and looking for art practices that are connecting art and socio-political activism. He suggests regarding the discursive practices as a new form

of socially engaged art.

As mentioned, collaboration is an essential part of all of the examples I discussed above. Even the works of Panahi, Weiwei and Güell are largely based on collaborations and obviously the work of the different groups and collectives as well. If we think about the examples from the perspective of relations and politics, we could say that antagonism is integral almost to all of them. I would argue that when agonistic relations are formed and art exceeds the art field, then it can become a powerful tool of socio-political change.

The example that corresponds well with the concept of Kester's dialogical art is the work of Güell. The relations constructed through her works are not harmonious microtopias between people with same interests, instead they are evoking negation and discomfort. The different socio-political statuses of people involved in her projects, as well as the socio-political context of the project, are addressed directly and become part of the work, rather than neglected or hidden. But even though the antagonism is essential to the work, Güell is pushing its operational limits beyond the art field and she is aiming beyond a reflection and contemplation of the socio-political situation and actually making changes outside of the art world. The dialogue is an integral part of all of Güell's works and that, which enables it to reach beyond the walls of the museum and become relevant in socio-political terms. As Kester writes about dialogical art, the discourse "is reframed as an active, generative process that can help us speak and imagine beyond the limits of fixed identities, official discourse, and the perceived inevitability of partisan political conflict" (*Conversation Pieces* 8).

Conclusion

To conclude this chapter, I would like briefly to re-examine the four categories – 1. The mere artistic practice as resistance to oppressions, 2. Political art that acts mainly within the art field, 3. Art practice that acts on the border of the art field, and 4. Activist art that acts mainly outside of the art field – through the question of the power and restriction of art as a tool for socio-political change. I think that all the previous examples of art practices demonstrate a certain resistive power – whereas intentions, functions and implications vary. We need to consider also that the socio-political relevance of a certain artwork or art practice is very much tied to a certain time and place.

The resistive force of art practice that takes place under strong censorship and oppression is quite prominent. The censorship and silencing of artists in a way demonstrate the power of art. Even if the fear that leads to censorship is not necessarily rational, the persecution of artists and the censorship on their work manifest the power of art. The force of these art practices lie exactly in their resistance, in their refusal to

succumb to the oppressive system, even at the risk of persecution. The act of art simultaneously becomes an act of civil disobedience, linking art history to the history of social struggle. These artists undermine the hegemonic order and create counter information and narratives through their resistance. The power lies in shifting the discourse from the art field into the socio-political field – widening the boundaries and including a broader public.

What impact does critical art have when taking place exclusively within the art field? We can consider the art field, with its institutions, gallery spaces, biennales and fairs, as a platform and stage for expressing social and political opinions, thoughts, ideas, a place of critical discourse and fruitful exchange. But this place of discourse is not free from socio-political and economic interests that are often concealed by the glamour of art. The funding sources and corporations involved in the art institutions are often deliberately kept aside from the art discourse. The danger in referring to the art world as autonomous and separate from the socio-political and economical fields is that by ignoring these ties we are playing along certain interests and instead of undermining the dominating forces and the hegemonic order we are reinforcing them.

The example of Nuria Güell shows a practice that undermines both the idea of the autonomy of art and the capitalist system. This is a good example of Mouffe's agonistic space, of a public space where different hegemonic projects collide. According to Mouffe artists have always had an important role in the socio-political field. The critical artistic practice acts in subverting the dominant hegemony and in constructing new subjectivities (Mouffe). Güell's practice challenges the idea of Marcuse that the radical and resistive force of art can be manifested only in the art field. Here the change imagined through the art practice becomes the reality (even if only for a few persons and not as an entire revolution) and it is validated as art by the art institutions. It is art and it is radical practice at the same. Stretching the boundaries of art yet more. This kind of art practice that merges socio-political interests with the artwork requires a great awareness and sensitivity. The danger here is of abusing the subjects, their suffering and vulnerability, for the sake of art and the needs of the capitalist art world; for filling the walls and spaces with so called engaged or political art.

Another example of Mouffe's idea of agonistic space and the expansion of the limits of art, is the activist art practices. Here the *battleground* is not the art field but rather the socio-political field and the public space, the streets and the media. The examples I used show how these art practices subvert the hegemonic order and challenge the autonomy of art and even the capitalist system. These examples show as well the power of the collective work, the impact of working as a group that is driven by revolutionary energies and objectives of change. The collective practice and sometimes the anonymity of the group undermine the hegemonic order of the art world where uniqueness and individualism are praised. The obstacles in these practices are that when dealing with revolution, or with resistance to the hegemonic order, they often require fast response and action. As Soueif explained, she had to put her work as a fiction writer aside and to first of

all be available to the revolution as a citizen. She did also use her artistic tools but she adapted them to the new situation and was more involved with writing columns and reportage. The socio-political struggle sometimes require a fast reaction while art practice usually requires time. With time though, and with a collective effort, powerful works can emerge, such as the work of *Abounaddara*, the *Belarus Free Theater* and *Etcétera....* The question here as well is what happens to the activist art practice once it is integrated into the art institutions? Will the artwork maintain its subversive power that was manifested in the street?

The *Abounaddara* collective was one of the participants of the 56th Venice Biennale curated by Okwui Enwezor. The collective decided though, at the last moment, to withdraw from the biennale and accused it for censoring their work (Muñoz-Alonso). *All the Syria's Futures* was the opening film that was supposed to be screened at the main event of the biennale, the Arena, following a new video release each week. This work was done especially for the biennale and refers to its title *All the World's Futures*. The two-minute video shows Bashar al-Assad walking on a red carpet accompanied by an orchestra. Suddenly the screen turns black and a text appears saying "Sorry for this technical failure. Please keep enjoying the spectacle" (*All the Syria's Futures*). *Abounaddara* planned to use the stage provided by the biennale for passing a message. The spectacle they refer to can be both the biennale, people enjoying culture and art while others are killed in wars, or the spectacle of war that is constantly transmitted through the media, and the audience watching the spectacle on their screens at home. This might have been a strong message, confronting the audience with their complicity in the war as passive spectators, but instead, as *Abounaddara* wrote in their letter to the biennale "Our first film was censored, and our remaining films risk becoming nothing more than entertaining distractions from the main Spectacle" ("Dear Venice Biennale"). *All the Syria's Futures* is criticizing the passivity of the people and in the context of the biennale this criticism could have been radicalized. Whether it was a choice to censor or a decision due to production constraints, it is clear that the curatorial team and the *Abounaddara* collective did not consider the artwork in the same way. For the collective there was an importance of the context of the work in order to have the impact they wished for – "we were confident that whatever the circumstances, the Arena would be an appropriate space to launch our films, cinematic Molotov cocktails that we have thrown in the face of the world since the beginning of the Syrian revolution" ("Dear Venice Biennale"). However, the decision not to screen the short movie in the Arena at certain times in between other artwork suggests that the curatorial importance was rather to show the work of the collective as a representation of their work and not as an actual act within the biennale.

Behind all these questions, examples and categories there is one main question floating in the background – borrowing from Godard's famous comment about cinema²⁴ the problem is not how to make

²⁴ "The problem is not to make *political* films but to make films *politically*" (Godard qtd. in MacCabe, 19).

political art but rather how to make *art politically*. So what is the difference and what does it mean to make art politically?

The language and work of Abounaddara is without doubt contemporary art. Their practice lies on cinema and video art traditions. Like a lot of activist art they distribute their work through the social media in aim of making it accessible to all. This is one way of undermining the hegemonic order both in art and in the media. I assume that once the collective was asked to exhibit in the most reputed event in the art world they had to consider how to make this shift from social media to the context of this prestigious mainstream art event. Judging from their work *All the Syria's Futures*, they were well aware of their position within the biennale. While most of their work looks deep into the different aspects of the Syrian war, this work turned the gaze onto the spectators. It was not a mere representation of a political situation elsewhere but rather it was connecting the situation *elsewhere* and *here*. Once they understood that this place and context would not serve the goal of the work, they chose to withdraw. They chose not to let the work be filling the spot for political art from Syria and by this contribute to maintaining the hegemonic order. This is one example of the difference between the adjective *political* and the adverb *politically* in the context of art practice. While the work of Abounaddara certainly is political and deals with current socio-political issues, which made them suitable for the topic of the biennale, for them as a collective it was not enough that there was a political representation since they wanted the action itself to be political as well.

In his book *Art and revolution* Raunig uses the concept of 'machines' developed by the philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari in order to discuss the relation between art practice and socio-political activism. These machines are not mechanical apparatuses, as Raunig explains, and should rather be grasped as "agents of difference, communicating vessels," and "open stream-like arrangements" ("The Many" 384). He further develops the idea of 'art machines' and 'revolutionary machines' and looks into their relations and concatenations. He refers to the revolution as an uncompleted and uncompletable process. The revolutionary machine consists out of three components: resistance, insurrection and constituent power. These components are not to be understood as linear but rather as partly overlapping and reciprocal, as he says, they "mutually differentiate and actualise one another" ("The Many" 385).

Raunig suggests four modes of relations between the 'art machine' and the 'revolutionary machine'. The first is a sequential relation. It is a linear development in which one is following another – art, revolution and then art again. This relation subverts the idea of a total separation or a total mержence of these two machines. The second is a negative relation. The both machines exists side by side but are unable to work together and rather negate one another. The third is a hierarchical relation. One machine is subordinated to the other. This can be in both directions – artists and art institution that instrumentalize and appropriate the revolution or political bodies that appropriates and instrumentalize art practices and artists. The fourth, and

most relevant for my point here, is the relations of temporary overlaps. This is a transversal concatenation of art machines and revolutionary machines, in a way that they are not incorporated into each other, “but rather enter into a temporary, concrete relationship of exchange” (“The Many” 391). In these temporary overlaps, for a moment, the art machine and the revolutionary machine are operating together. For a moment they integrate and become part of one another in the mutual movement towards the same direction or goal.

This notion of temporary overlaps is important for my question regarding the power and restriction of art as a tool in socio-political struggles. All the examples of art practice that I discussed in this chapter, as powerful resistive practices, are emerging exactly from these overlaps between art machines and revolutionary machines – the work of Panahi, of *Belarus Free Theatre*, of Núria Güell, *Etcétera...* and *Abounaddara* – they are formed from this temporary exchange and collaboration between these machines. In different ways all these artists and groups are working either directly or more remotely with some activists or with activist methods in order to create a project that is meaningful in a certain context, in a certain time and place, and sometimes for certain people. All of these projects demonstrate resistance in the creative and constructive meaning of it. Collaborative, participatory, and process based methods are an integral part of the works of these artists and groups and suggests that these methods can work as resistance to the capitalist forces as well as to different types of oppressions. Through these methods the artists are challenging the idea of the autonomy of art, rethinking it and reforming it.

“When you are in the middle of a story it isn’t a story at all, but only a confusion, a dark roaring, a blindness. It is only afterwards that it becomes anything like a story, when you are telling it to yourself.”

– Sarah Polley²⁵

In this chapter I will go through my experience in the Finnish Academy of Fine Arts and my graduation project, *Mycotoxycosis*, which was the outcome. I will do that while referring to the questions and ideas that I discussed in the previous chapters; art as a tool for socio-political change and the difference between making political art and making art politically. *Mycotoxycosis* is a documentary project, an experimental and poetic documentary first exhibited as a video installation. It is a story of illness and recovery. Through the project I wanted to bring up the social and political aspects of illness as well as the roles of science and medicine.

Mycotoxycosis started from a very confused state of being. It was created out of the urge to tell a story, first of all to myself, to be able to grasp and articulate the events as they happened; and then also to others, to tell what no one wanted to hear, to document and testify, to make information available, information that I was urgently missing, to tell the truth that was silenced, to amplify the marginalized voices. I saw how people in power positions created disinformation and false narratives. I saw how those who fell ill were manipulated and silenced. I found that there was a complete lack of open discussion and I was hoping to create a channel for this, to enable these repressed stories be heard.

The Moulded Academy of Fine Arts

I moved to Helsinki in 2010 for the MFA studies in the Finnish Academy of Fine Arts. I was thrilled about the new beginning and the opportunity to continue my studies and concentrate on research and art. I could never have imagined the way my life changed after I entered that building that, as I learned, had a very problematic history. I had never heard about indoor-air and mould problems before. The whole concept of indoor-air as opposed to outdoor-air was new for me coming from the hot weather of the Middle East. I did hear some years before from a friend who had graduated from the academy that during her studies the whole academy had to be evacuated because of mould. But at the time I couldn’t understand it and I thought it was

²⁵ (*Stories We Tell*. Dir. Sarah Polley).

some kind of overreaction or bizarre northern country phenomenon. I guess in the same way that many still relate to it today, those who are resistant enough and lucky not to fall sick.

It was a tough fall from the heights of my excitement to the apprehension that I am sick and that it is because of a building. It was already during the first semester that I started getting symptoms. They included all kinds of pains and weird, unfamiliar, sensations all over my body. The scariest were the neurological problems – loss of memory and words, the difficulty to process information or even read and understand texts. I started to notice a relation between the symptoms and the time I spent in that building. The symptoms grew worse and finally completely interrupted my studies. It got to the point that I couldn't stay in that building more than ten minutes without feeling sick. Instead of studying art I spent my time learning about mould, microbiology, the human body, and related medicine. I became aware in a very painful and shocking way about the so-called indoor-air problem and how common it is in Finland. The contradiction was that even though it seemed to be everywhere, no one wanted to talk about it or even admit that there was a serious problem. In the academy the management tried very hard to silence the issue and to create an impression that those are isolated cases with no relation to each other, rather than a common serious problem. They tried to convince everyone that the mould situation is under control, while at the same time I learned, from discussions with people, that everyone either were getting symptoms or knew someone who was ill. I was amazed to see the amount of illness in one small community.²⁶ What made it hard to understand and deal with, was first of all the falsely pacifying and neglecting approach of the management, and secondly the fact that all of those who were severely ill couldn't be in the building and were therefore easily marginalized and silenced; they were simply absent from the public sphere and discourse. The answer I got from the management of the academy was that I couldn't be sick because of the building since they have already renovated and fixed the problem. I was unlucky to be one of the first ones to fall ill after the infamous renovation. But later on, more people were getting ill and finally in 2014 the academy moved out from that building again, and another renovation began. For the reader who is not familiar and find herself confused I will shortly describe what an indoor-air problem is, or more adequately a water-damaged building (WDB) and its health risks.

A building can become water-damaged and subsequently an optimal home for fungi, bacteria and other pathogens, either because of a natural disaster like a flood or as a result of construction and renovation defects or inadequate construction design. Mould refers to different types of fungi that thrive in moist places.²⁷ Certain moulds release under certain conditions toxins, called mycotoxins,²⁸ that can be very

²⁶ At the academy, the management itself did not keep track nor documentation about the number of people who complained about symptoms in the academy's premises (de la Cruz).

²⁷ Mould reproduces by forming spores that are invisible to the naked eye. The spores spread through the air and can survive tough conditions that mould cannot, like dryness and even strong chemicals. This is its way

harmful. Regardless of all the research and knowledge, the medical society seems to disagree on the effects from the exposure to mycotoxins and other biotoxins²⁹ found in WDBs, and still there is lack of knowledge in medical studies regarding this issue. The consequences are incorrect diagnoses and lack of treatment for people who suffer from exposure to the biotoxins of WDBs. (Salonen; Money; Shoemaker et al.)

Mould has always been around but the environmental and medical problems that we are encountering now seem to be new. What has changed? Why are we suddenly getting so ill? The answer lies, at least partly, in the construction methods and materials that are used today. This combined with the capitalist-driven construction industry as well as the chemical industry that favours profits over the well-being of the people, is devastating. We are building fast to save money with no supervision on the construction sites. We are using a lot of chemicals that are pushed by the chemical industry, again without sufficient supervision. In Finland the construction industry has attracted a lot of criticism in recent years. Mostly regarding the amount of construction defects and lack of supervision on the construction sites as well as the industry's share in the grey market. Construction companies that are not keeping up with the agreed timetable are fined. Therefore, finishing on time with some construction defects is sometimes favoured over paying fines and finishing the work properly. Keeping the timetable can be especially challenging with the northern weather that has many rainy days. However, working with wet materials ensures future mould problems. (Kärppä; "Rakennusala"; Pirinen)

Another current prominent debate in Finland is the energy saving regulations that are forcing to build airtight buildings that are completely dependent on a mechanical ventilation system. Therefore they easily turn into convenient grounds for bacterial and fungal growth. Instead of saving, these buildings are more expensive in the end, because of illnesses and construction defects. In addition, the energy saving calculation is questionable when a building is dependent on mechanical, electrically operated machines that have to run constantly. We gave up old construction methods containing wisdom gathered by generations for fast and cheap construction without considering the consequences. Shortly, today we are building buildings that can poison us. As long as the constructors are not held responsible for the construction defects

to survive. Mould is present everywhere, indoors and outside. In the nature it has an important function in biodegradation and therefore it is very essential for life cycles. Mould is also vastly used in food and medicine production. ("Molds"; Money)

²⁸ Mycotoxins are secondary metabolites, toxic chemical compounds produced by microfungi that are released to the air. A certain type of fungi can produce different kinds of mycotoxins. The toxic effects of mould through food for example are well known and the connection between asthma and damp conditions is acknowledged as well within the medical world. Mycotoxins are known as well for being used in biological weapons. (Bennet and Klich; Money)

²⁹ Biotoxins refer to toxins that have a biological origin. Some organisms produce these toxins as means of survival either as predation or as fighting against predation. Biotoxins that are found in WDB consists mainly of mycotoxins and toxins produced by bacteria such as endotoxins and exotoxins. ("Molds"; "What are Biotoxins?")

that causes illnesses this is unlikely to change. (Motola, “Rakennusla” and “Hirsimokki”)

The ‘mould story’ of the Finnish Academy of Fine Arts is not an exception but rather a common story of many public buildings and working environments in Finland. The building³⁰ that stood empty for some years was already under controversial discussion before it was assigned to The Finnish Academy of Fine Arts. Some claimed already then that it is not fit for human use (de la Cruz). The building, owned by a state owned company, went to renovation in 2003 in order to be rented out to the academy. This was the beginning of the story and the initial decisions that finally caused chronic illnesses for many people. The first renovation was a fraud and was done against many guidelines and assessments conducted beforehand (Toivonen, “Senaatti”; de la Cruz). Already in 2004, when the academy moved in, people started to get ill. Regardless of the attempts to fix the problems caused by the renovation, finally the management had to admit the vast health hazard and the building was evacuated in 2006. The students and staff were spread in different premises in the city, one of them, surprisingly, was an army building left empty because of mould.³¹ Obviously those who were experiencing symptoms in the former building continued to be ill in the moulded building they were moved to. In 2008 the academy moved back into the building that was supposed to be renovated flawlessly this time, however, people continued to get ill, some students were unable to enter the building and some employees were assigned to work from home. In 2009 again a large concentration of fungi and bacterial growth was discovered in the indoor-air and another renovation took place in certain spaces (Toivonen, “Senaatti”). The people though were left to work and study in these spaces without any precautions, causing at least one severe illness case. The problems continued, people continued getting ill and the owner of the building continued to claim that everything is done in order to investigate and to fix the problems. In 2010 the ownership was transferred to the Helsinki University Properties making the Finnish Academy of Fine Arts a shareholder (de la Cruz). The problem and the responsibility for it were hence transferred from one governmental institution to another. In 2013 again sources of fungi and bacteria were found in large amounts in the building forcing to renovate again. This time, in the beginning of 2014, the school with all its staff and students were evacuated for the second time to other premises.

These are the events told very concisely. All along the years the story involved a lot of

³⁰ Known as Elannon Kortteli, the building was built in 1874 initially as a match factory, the building is protected by the Finnish National Board of Antiquities. From the early 20th century part of the building operated as a bread factory up until 2001 (“Osuusliikkeiden”).

³¹ During my interviews I discovered that this was a very common practice and a story that repeated itself. One example was in Kuopio, the city where I grew up part of my childhood. I went to my former elementary school and interviewed one of the former teachers, Maija Leena Kasurinen, who got sick there. I found out that the school was closed because of mould and a new building was built just next to it where all the children and school staff had just moved. However, the city moved other children from another school that also was being renovated because of mould, into the mouldy building. According to Maija Leena this is common procedure and there are hardly any ‘clean’ schools in Kuopio (Motola, “Koulut”).

disinformation and lack of communication between different parties involved. The students and employees were misled by the management and the property owners for many years. It involved people who were holding different and contradicting positions, putting for example the interest of real estate before the safety of the employees and students. It involved people who denied their responsibility or who – due to their silence – were complicit and aggravating the problem. It involved hiding crucial information and ignoring the repeated demands to conduct the required investigations.³² It involved corruption and lack of an outside independent investigation (de la Cruz). It involved the marginalization of the ill and denouncing them as over sensitive or even crazy. When the story finally reached the media, the rector was quoted dismissing the criticisms of the lack of action and involvement of the management saying that “those are only few persons [referring to the people who were criticizing the management], who are running their own interests”.³³ It took the management more than a year to acknowledge the amount of illnesses and the severity of the problem. All these stories repeated themselves in each and every interview I did for my project, meaning that these same methods of hiding and neglecting took place in many working environments and many public buildings like schools, kindergartens and hospitals in Finland (Motola, “Työpaikka”).

Gabriel de la Cruz, a teacher and technician in the academy, fell ill during the renovation in 2009 that was partly done in his office. He spent two years on sick leaves and will probably cope the rest of his life with severe respiratory problems. De la Cruz was the first one who really opened my eyes to what was going on and provided me with real information about the mould hazard. Together we tried to involve the Environment Centre of the city of Helsinki who was the one to evacuate the building the first time. It was without success, the owner convinced the Environment Centre that large investigations were taking place, while in reality the legally required tests of material samples from the building were not done until 2012 (de la Cruz). Since he fell ill, de la Cruz has been advocating for the rights of the sick and for transparency of information. He has written a report called *Mould Fixed With Silence* (not published yet) that concludes his years of research regarding the circumstances of the mould problem in the Finnish Academy of Fine Arts. The name of his paper reflects well the way that this problem was dealt with, at least when I was still there – with complete silence. I found out then how hard it is to fight the silence. How hard it is to confront a problem when everyone seems to dissolve in front of you. How hard it is to make a change when no one wants to take any responsibility or even say anything. I realized the power of titles and the trust people have

³² Despite my repeated demands, and the fact that indoor-air measurements were done in the building, my studio space where I complained that I feel sick wasn't examined until 2013, almost two years after my first complaint.

³³ "Suoria syytöksiä johtoa kohtaan on tullut vain tietyltä suunnalta. Ne ovat keskittyneet muutamaankin ihmiseen, jotka ajavat vahvasti omaa asiaansa," (Konttinen qtd. in Toivonen, “Kuvataideakatemia”).

in so called experts and the difficulty in revealing their lies.³⁴

It was forbidden in the academy to open the windows. The explanation was that it interferes with the mechanical regulation of the indoor-air flow.³⁵ That by itself was weird and very suspicious for me. Later I learned that it was known that there is mould in the foundation of the building, mould that was never cleaned and water-damages that weren't properly fixed. The idea was to prevent the mould from entering the indoor-air by controlling the air pressure. This was done by machines that unfortunately stopped working from time to time, meaning that then the spores could get into the indoor-air and spread around through the ventilation shafts. For my project I interviewed D. Tech. Juhani Pirinen, who at the time was the head of the *Moisture and Mould* program run by the Ministry of the Environment. He told me that this method is highly risky and not recommended, especially for inhabited premises (Pirinen). I interviewed as well Professor Emerita Mirka Salkinoja-Salonen, a microbiologist from the Helsinki University. Together with her research group they were working on creating a method for measuring the toxicity of the indoor-air opposed to the common method of measuring the fungal and bacterial growth. Her idea is that since it is the biotoxins that are causing illness, the mere measurement of the amount of fungi and bacteria is not necessarily an adequate indication for a problem and doesn't show the amount of toxins. Another argument she has brought out publicly is that the biocides, chemicals that are used to clean and disinfect indoor spaces, actually aggravate the problem. These chemicals kill some of the fungi, but the strongest and usually more toxic ones survive. The chemicals evoke the release of mycotoxins since the fungi are in a state of fight for their living space. Then the indoor-air becomes even more toxic since there are chemicals, the worse types of fungi and the biotoxins. Salkinoja-Salonen argues as well that the problem is especially grievous in Finland since biocides are commonly and largely used for cleaning indoor spaces, much more compared to other countries. (Salkinoja-Salonen; Winterhalter)

Once I started to understand the bigger picture, I realized that the real problem is not the mould, since that could be fixed, but rather the corruption and politics related to the real estate, the construction companies, the insurance companies and the state who is the owner of many public premises, as well as simply lack of education and knowledge. After many doctor appointments, mail exchange with the management,³⁶ an attempt to involve the Ministry of Environment and repeated demands to get answers, I finally found myself isolated and alone. I couldn't enter the building at all. I couldn't even meet people who

³⁴ For more about the case of the Academy of Fine Arts see for example Toivonen; Sjöholm, Hakala. All articles are in Finnish.

³⁵ Later when I was working on the project I realized that these requirements were very common in buildings with mechanical air-conditioning system. However, I couldn't find any official instructions for this and recently when I checked with experts in the field, they assured that there is no reason that opening windows would damage or interfere with any mechanical ventilation system (Eriksson).

³⁶ See Ek and Tikkanen

had been there since the spores travel with cloths and other materials. I became so sensitive to everything that I had to sleep with the windows open even in the Finnish winter. I could somehow understand employees, who were afraid to speak about their illness in the fear of losing their job, but not the students who told me they are feeling ill but were afraid to speak about it publicly. Only two of us were left in this fight, de la Cruz and myself. The lack of solidarity broke me completely and frustrated me to the point that I decided to leave in order to take care of myself. With the help of my family and friends I found a safe haven near the Dead Sea. I put all my hope in the dry desert air, the salt and the sun. And it worked. Slowly I felt how I was getting back to myself. But the feeling of injustice and the awareness that people will continue falling sick even though it could be easily prevented left me restless. I had the urge to do something more, another attempt to make the truth public, to shout the warning out loud.

Mycotoxycosis

Mycotoxycosis is a video installation with two parts, which can exist together or separately. The first part is a thirteen-minute video that tells my experiences and reflections about my illness and the case of the academy. It consists of both images from the desert, where I spent a few months to recover, as well as images from my studio in the academy where together with Professor Salkinoja-Salonen we took air and dust samples to be investigated in her laboratory.³⁷ The sound is a voiceover where I'm telling the story as I experienced it and processed it into words. The second part is constructed of video clips from interviews that I made with people from all over Finland, people who got sick in their working places, schools or at home, and had similar experiences to mine. I edited the interviews according to different subjects, such as: symptoms, the health care system, the insurance companies, the reaction of the society etc. I presented them on three monitors with headphones. The reason for the repetitiveness of the stories was to emphasize how vast the problem is and how similar negligence and silencing is taking place in many institutions. I wanted to refute the argument that I encountered so many times, denouncing these mould cases as very few and particular. I wanted the interviews to serve as testimonies of this omnipresent issue that was still absent from the public discussion.³⁸

³⁷ The results showed low amount and small variety of bacterial and fungal growth, which strengthened Salkinoja-Salonen's assumption that there were strong biocides used to clean the space. This information was not part of the video work, both because I didn't have the results at the time and because this was not the most important point for me.

³⁸ Today, five years later in, the situation has changed a lot. There is more media coverage and public discussion as well as new research coming out. In 2015 there were two feature documentaries released about this subject. See *The Canaries*, dir. Jari Kokko and *Moldy*, dir. Kee Kee Buckley and Eric Troyer.

Working with *Mycotoxycosis* was important for me on several levels. On the personal level it worked both as research and as a therapeutic tool. Out of the chaos I had to create some sense, first of all for myself, to be able to articulate the events. The second level was the community that I wanted to address, the people in the academy. I wanted to try another way to make my voice heard, without anyone distorting it or shutting me up. To tell what I had found out and make clear that there are people who are responsible for this health hazard. The third was the larger audience that I wanted to reach in the hope of making the case of the school public and showing it as an example of many similar cases. And the fourth was the ill persons that because of the nature of this illness often are isolated from the community. I wanted to make all the information that I had gathered available to those who needed it. This information was something that I was badly missing when I tried to understand what was going on and I hoped that for others it would get easier.

In the previous chapter I discussed what it means to do art politically and mentioned some features related to that, such as positionality, context, time and place. Now I would like to go back to the topic of this text and put my work, *Mycotoxycosis*, in the context of art and socio-political change. This mould battle was not a battle that I chose, but rather a battle that forced itself on me. My plans were completely different. The social and political changes that I had had in mind were completely different. But when I found myself in this mould storm, I realized that it was not only a personal problem, neither a natural disaster, but rather a human-caused problem, directly related to political and economical decisions with vast social consequences, reflecting some core problems in the capitalist society. Since I was forced to research and deal with mould anyway, I chose to do it in my art practice and to see whether it would have any impact and power to change anything.

Change is not easy. It often requires to go against the stream, against the consensus, to stand against opposing forces. It requires willpower and subversive abilities. It is also very hard to tell people something they don't want to hear. After giving up the struggle through the social channels of the academic institution I turned to the tools of video, writing and storytelling.

***Mycotoxycosis* as a postmodern illness story**

Since ancient times the practice of telling stories has been used in all cultures; in rituals, as entertainment, in education and communication and in art. Stories play an important role in the formation of collectivity and the history of the people. Stories are passed from one generation to another, stories that exists only orally, or written in books, fairy tales, family stories – all are intertwined into our lives and into our identities. Stories live in us, with us, they guide us. Stories are essential in forming both personal and collective identities. As children we grow up with stories told by the elders. We gain comfort from hearing

the same narrative over again. We learn from the characters and reflect the stories on our lives. As we grow up we continue telling stories to ourselves and to others. We tell the stories that we have heard and we form our experiences into stories to share with others. We choose the stories that will live with us and sometimes it is the stories that choose us. We learn to tell stories through the stories that we know and through the stories that we tell we recreate ourselves, we create our world, and our community.

The important role of art is telling stories, as Ahdaf Soueif said. Through a story a collectivity is formed, a sense of belonging. The story can give a form for collective experiences and articulate feelings, thoughts and ideas. Soueif sees the importance of stories on two levels: the personal/communal level and the wider socio-political level. On the personal/communal level it is important to tell and to hear the stories of the oppressed, to amplify and reinforce their voices. On the socio-political level the importance of the stories of the oppressed is in creating counter narrative to the hegemonic one (Soueif). Or in the words of Deleuze, to create counter information to the prevailing information (Deleuze). And referring to Mouffe, through the stories we can engage in the *agonistic struggle* and undermine the hegemonic order (Mouffe).

In his book *The Wounded Storyteller* the medical sociologist Arthur W Frank writes about the importance of telling illness stories. His aim is to shift the experience of illness away from passivity and victimhood and towards activity, by turning the illness experience into a story. An illness is an *interruption* in the story, according to Frank, an ill person loses her *destination* and *life's map* that guided her before and therefore she has to find a new perception of and relation to the world. "Ill people have to learn to think differently. They learn by hearing themselves tell their stories, absorbing others' reactions, and experiencing their stories being shared"(1). Frank suggests that these stories are not only *about* a body, a wounded body, but also told *through* a wounded body and that the task is not only of the ill person to tell the story but also of the society to learn to listen to the stories of the *wounded storytellers*.

The obvious social aspect of stories is that they are told to someone, whether that other person is immediately present or not ... The less evident social aspect of stories is that people do not make up their stories by themselves. The shape of the telling is moulded by all the rhetorical expectations that the storyteller has been internalizing ever since he first heard some relative describe an illness, or she saw her first television commercial for a non-prescription remedy, or he was instructed to "tell the doctor what hurts" and had to figure out what counted as the story that the doctor wanted to hear. (2-3)

Soueif and Frank are talking about different kinds of stories, but in both cases the need for stories emerges from a traumatic experience, for Ahdaf it's the revolution, the daily struggle in the streets and the violence that dissidents have to face and for Frank it's the illness. In both cases it is a rupture in the life narrative, something unexpected and unplanned, and that rupture is a call for a story, a call for rethinking through the stories and constructing a new perception as well as a new collectivity.

On the personal level Soueif and Frank both relate to the importance of the stories to be told and to be heard, the importance of telling a trauma and the possibility of others to identify and assimilate through the story. So the personal level lies in both telling and listening. As the social level Soueif emphasizes the political aspects of the stories and the importance of creating the narrative of the oppressed by the oppressed themselves, so that those in power will not take over and manipulate the narrative according to their interests. She mentions as well that it is through the personal stories, experiences and pains that the collective story is built.

Frank points out that stories are always formed in a certain context and according to certain norms. He argues as well, that the way of telling illness stories, as well as the experience of illness itself, changes with time. He distinguishes between pre-modern, modern, and postmodern stories. He suggests grasping this not as a linear development, but rather as an overlapping (4). The understanding of the pre-modern is based on the shift to the modern illness experience that requires a new terminology and perception of illness. The modern illness experience is characterized by the medical, technical and institutional take over of the illness narrative. "The physician becomes the spokesperson for the disease, and the ill person's stories come to depend heavily on the repetition of what the physician has said" (5-6). The ill person has to surrender to the medical world's requirements, both physically and psychologically, while accepting the medical narrative as her primary illness experience. Frank calls it a *narrative surrender* and puts it at the centre of the modernist illness experience (6). In postmodern times ill people are reclaiming their power and role in telling their own stories, they reclaim their voices and control over their experiences and narratives as well as emphasize the importance of that for understanding illness.

The postmodern divide is crossed when people's own stories are no longer told as secondary, but have their own primary importance. Illness elicits more than fitting the body into traditional community expectations or surrendering the body to professional medicine, though both community traditions and professional medicine remain. Postmodern illness is an experience, a reflection on body, self, and the destination that life's map leads to. (7)

The modern medicine enables people to live much longer with medical conditions than before. Illnesses that used to be lethal have today become chronic conditions. These conditions and illnesses forms what Frank calls the *remission society*. The members of the remission society are people who have to cope with illness constantly. Frank compares the modernist medicine to colonialism: "Just as political and economic colonialism took over geographic areas, modernist medicine claimed the body of its patient as its territory, at least for the duration of the treatment" (10). But people from the remission society have to cope with the 'medical colonialism' regularly. These people are increasingly questioning their place in the medical narrative. These members of the remission society are now reclaiming their voices; they reclaim recognition in their

narratives. “In the remission society, the post-colonial ill person takes responsibility for what illness means in his life” (13).

When illness becomes a story that is shared and published the responsibility is not only for one’s own life, it becomes a social responsibility as well. Illness stories are always also testimonies that reach out to the other.

In the reciprocity that is storytelling, the teller offers herself as guide to the other’s self formation. The others receipt of that guidance not only recognizes but values the teller. The moral genius of storytelling is that each, teller and listener, enters the space of the story for the other ... As a post-colonial voice, the storyteller seeks to reclaim her own experience of suffering. As she seeks to turn that suffering into testimony, the storyteller engages in moral action. (17-18)

Mycotoxycosis is an example of a postmodern illness story. It was created from a need to reclaim my voice as well as voices of others that were silenced. It was reclamation of a narrative – an aim to take control over our stories as biotoxin ill people and seize our place within society. It was also an act of testifying, turning these sufferings into testimonies, and thereby also taking on some social responsibility. I recognized the need for reclaiming the voice in each and every interview I did for the project. All the stories that I listened to were oppressed, voices that were silenced by employers, insurance agents and healthcare workers, stories that were effaced from working and studying environments and from the public sphere. I recognized in each interview the need to tell and to share, the need for solidarity and empathy.

I intentionally chose a narrative-based art form. I sensed this rupture and loss of my own ‘life-destination and map’ and I felt the need to construct a narrative, to gain back some coherence and sense in my life and to get back some feeling of control. A narrative was important for me because it has a structure; it has a beginning, middle and an end. I was craving for some order; I had to put my experiences into a simple scheme that hopefully would have a happy end. I realized the importance of telling stories through the experience of having to tell my story over and over. First I had to admit to myself that I am ill, and to explain to myself what was going on. Then I had to tell my story to others, to family and friends, to people who like me, never had heard about the problem, and I had to tell it to doctors, and more doctors, and to my professors, to the academy management, to the property manager, to the healthcare experts etc. I realized that different people and contexts required different kinds of storytelling. I had to oppose the negligence and sometimes even endure insults of students and the management. I had to endure the manipulations of the property owners, the distortions of the health care workers and physicians and I had to keep on telling my story determinedly. It was as much through the telling that the story was formed, as the experience and memory of the events. As if through telling the story I made it real, I saved it from the oblivion and saved myself from insanity. *Mycotoxycosis* was all about listening and telling. It was an important part both of my

learning and recovering processes. It was also a tool to communicate with the close community as well as with the society at large. I believe that by entering into each other's *story spaces* we contributed in creating the community of the mould and biotoxin ill people.

The trajectory of *Mycotoxycosis* and its implications

Now I would like to consider the wider socio-political impact of the work, by going back to the essential question of the context of the artwork. When I was working on the project, the subject of WDB and biotoxin illnesses were nearly absent from the public discussion. *Mycotoxycosis* entered thus a void where terms like 'indoor-air problem' were floating somewhere in the public conscious, but a deeper understanding and discussion were completely missing. In this sense *Mycotoxycosis* was on one hand created at an optimal time, when the subject was at the doorstep of the public discourse, and therefore could contribute to the forming of such discourse. On the other hand, the risk I considered was that the issue would still be a taboo and would be dismissed and neglected just as before. Luckily or not, the mould problem grew bigger and by the time I presented my work there were already so many students and staff affected, that they finally started to demonstrate their frustration and anger by organizing a walkout from the building. So at the time I presented the work there was already more awareness, which probably facilitated the reception of the work.

The context in which the work was created was the mould problem at the academy – the fact that there were employees unable to work in the premises and students unable to use the school facilities. This situation where on one hand there was an obvious problem and on the other a lack of communication was the ground for my work. My aim was to exhibit the work as part of the Kuvan Kevät exhibition. In 2013 the academy was still residing in the mouldy building. An important thing for me was to exhibit my work in the main building where the problem was; where students and staff continued to study and work and where things were continuing ostensibly as usual, despite the obvious health hazard.

Later on *Mycotoxycosis* was exhibited in two other group exhibitions – as part of *Young Artists 2013*, in Taidehalli (Kunsthalle Helsinki), and in 2014 as part of *Rauma Balticum Biennale: Crime Scene*, in Rauma Art Museum – as well as online. It was interesting to see how the same work changed in these different contexts. Of course as an installation the space is an essential part of the work, but it was not only the different requirements of each space that changed something that was crucial in the work. Even though planning the work in the main building of the academy was challenging because I couldn't be there, my aim was to make visible exactly what was effaced from the academy's public sphere. For installing the work I used a biohazard suit and mask that the academy provided for me. The idea was to bring back the ill people to the building through the work and to undermine the hegemonic order of silence – to reclaim our voices and

narratives in the very place where they were oppressed.

In this sense the impact of the work was the strongest in the first location, at the academy. Exhibiting the work there felt like the right place and time. It was dealing with a current problem and addressing the community of that specific building. I invited people to enter into my *story space*. Kaisa Viljanen from *Helsingin Sanomat* wrote in her review: “After watching the video, staying in the building doesn’t feel the same anymore”.³⁹ This physical discomfort and simultaneously feeling of empathy was partly what I was looking for in the installation. The work also evoked discussions within the community. I realized that after watching the work, people felt more comfortable to talk to me about similar sufferings they experienced. Even though I was trying to say the exact same things to people before – in many forms and situations – it seems I managed to pass my point much more successfully through the artwork. It provided the opportunity to reflect, to think, to feel, and to grasp the issue in a different way. In this sense I felt that I managed to touch people and move something also on the collective level.

During the process of my participation in the *Young Artists* exhibition, held in Taidehalli organized by the Artists’ Association of Finland, I had a growing feeling that my work doesn’t fit in. I was very disappointed to read the press release of the Artists’ Association where the spokesperson of the jury selecting the works was quoted saying; “This time the artworks in the exhibition expresses more *free craziness* than serious critical thematic”.⁴⁰ It’s not because I think artworks shouldn’t be free and crazy, but opposing this to art that aims for serious socio-political criticism was jarring. Especially these days when social criticism and activism are very much needed. I felt that this statement was reflecting an escapist view – art is for fun and for crazy people. It can be seen as a concatenation of the idea of the autonomy of the arts, the perception that art practice is separated from other social practices and therefore artists are free; free to be crazy, and free from any serious socio-political position. I found the presentation of the exhibition disturbing especially when considering the many serious socio-political issues and changes that Finnish, as well as the European societies are currently dealing with.

Furthermore, I was disappointed and not at all at ease to exhibit my work under such a statement. I was surprised that *Mycotoxycosis* was even selected. Even though the story is “crazy” I consider the work being serious and critical. In addition, I never intended or considered *Mycotoxycosis* as a product to be for sale; on the contrary, my aim was that it would be available to everyone. This wasn’t the case in Taidehalli since they charged an entrance fee for the exhibition; and the event as well as the discourse around it, were very much immersed in the art market. I felt that the context of the *Young Artists* exhibition affected my work, as if it

³⁹ “Teoksen näkemisen jälkeen rakennuksessa oleminen ei enää tunnu samalta” (Viljanen, “Homeesta Syntyä Taidetta”). My own translation from Finnish and my own emphasis.

⁴⁰ “Tällä kertaa näyttelyn teoksissa on enemmän vapaata hulluttelua kuin vakavaa, kantaaottavaa tematiikkaa” (Nuoret 2013). My own translation from Finnish.

was dismantled from its subversive force. Also the installation in the space didn't allow for the necessary time to contemplate or even grasp the three hours of interviews. I would have had to change my work if I would have liked it to maintain its power, to consider the context of the exhibition and then use that in order to make the work relevant and powerful again.

In 2014 I was invited to exhibit *Mycotoxycosis* in the Rauma Balticum Biennale. The subject of the biennale was *Crime Scene* – “phenomena of crime, violence and power, and activism and anarchy as means of realizing and implementing art” (Biennial). I thought that the subject was fitting and was happy to have the opportunity to show the work in another location in a different city. I was hopeful to reach more people and to contribute to the local debate on mould hazards. I was also very much interested in the subject of art and activism and looking forward to see how it would be dealt with within the biennale. This time, mainly because of the space requirements, the two parts of the installation were separated, which allowed them their own separate existences. For the first time I saw the thirteen-minute video of my own story as a work on its own. The ideas of activism and anarchy were absorbed by the institutionalized event and even though they were *dealt with* in different ways in the artworks, they were not really applied in the organization of the event. Again it turned out to be a good example of the “autonomy” of the art world. Again, in fact, the institution allowed itself to deal with radical political thought and social activism but at the same time ignore its own socio-political implications.⁴¹

The Internet, as an accessible platform for sharing and distributing information/ideas/images, can as well be a tool for undermining the capitalist art market and for creating and distributing counter information. In the case of *Mycotoxycosis* the Internet as an exhibition space enabled me to reach one of my goals. Through the Internet, as intended, the work became available for everyone. This was especially important for the ill people who are often environmentally and socially restricted by their illness or bound to their homes. Most of the discussions among the people fallen ill take place online. By uploading the work I reached this audience and contributed to the online debate, information sharing and peer support. This way I contributed to the creation of counter information and to undermining the hegemonic consensus on mould and biotoxin illnesses.⁴²

⁴¹ In the case of *Rauma Balticum Biennale: Crime Scene*, what made it prominent was the invitation and poster designed by Kasino Creative Studio for the biennale and the debate that they generated. The images included a dark skinned woman whose mouth was covered. This image led to a debate especially within the workshop that took place parallel to the biennale, and continued as well outside the biennale framework. It was not the controversial image and the way it was used, neither the debate that formed around it, that I find problematic. This whole incident and the way it was dealt with simply revealed the system of the biennale that was not at all an anarchist neither activist approach, but rather capitalist and hierarchical institutional approaches. For more about this debate see Korvensyrjä and al-Nawas; and Kokkonen.

⁴² All videos of *Mycotoxycosis* are available online, see Motola, “*Mycotoxycosis*” and “*Myco*”.

Mycotoxycosis – restrictions and powers

From the beginning the motivation to do and exhibit my work had socio-political aspects. My aim was to go beyond the art field and my target audience was not only in the art world. For me the work was a conscious act of resistance against a hegemonic order – a resistance to the institutional oppression, an answer to the negligence and silencing of the mould problem and the ill people, especially in the academy. I consider it a socially engaged artwork that aims at change. I now want to focus on understanding where it succeeded and where it failed as such.

The trajectory of the work with the different exhibitions, demonstrate the function of time, place and context that affects the subversive power of a socio-politically engaged artwork. I am not considering *Mycotoxycosis* as a radical action but I do consider it as an act of resistance. I don't think that the work by itself had the power to initiate change, but I think that as a part of the larger struggle conducted in the academy, and outside of it, it contributed in changing the consensus and interfering with the hegemonic order. The most meaningful change was the move out of the moulded building. But it was only partly a success, since no one ever took responsibility; people who got ill were never compensated in any way, and the building was never officially announced as a severe health hazard. But I am convinced that moving out of the building saved many people from illness and this by itself is a very meaningful and important achievement. Outside the community of the academy the work had an impact on contributing to the growing discourse on mould and its health hazards. It contributed in creating counter information and counter narratives to the prevailing ones, which neglected and undermined the mould problem and made the situation of the ill persons more difficult.

The form of *Mycotoxycosis* is a quite conventional video installation considering its form, but at the *Kuvan Kevät* exhibition in the academy the work also took the form of an intervention in the public space. Since I had to use a biohazard suit and mask in order to be in the building, the whole installation process was of performative character and drew some attention. Together with de la Cruz we organized a tour in the *Kuvan Kevät* exhibition where everyone was dressed in safe suits and masks, mainly intended for those who could not be in the moulded building, but also others, who wanted to support us. This intervention was directly related to the building and aimed to reveal that which was omitted from the public sphere and to disrupt the consensus that had formed around the mould problem. In this sense, referring to Mouffe, the installation could be considered an agonistic intervention in public space that instead of affirming the hegemonic order undermines it.

According to the agonistic approach, critical art is art that foments dissensus that makes visible what the dominant consensus tends to obscure and obliterate. It is constituted by a manifold of artistic practices aiming at giving a voice to all those who are silenced within the framework of the existing hegemony. (Mouffe 4-5)

In the two other group exhibitions this aspect of intervention as well as the direct connection to the place were missing. The work was dislocated, and even though the content of the work didn't change at all, something changed regarding the impact of the work. Instead of an active intervention it became a rather passive installation. In the context of an institutionalized and curated art exhibition the work was placed within the mainstream art world and within the "autonomous sphere" of art. But even if this autonomy is supposed to ensure the freedom of art, I felt that I lost the freedom that I had before in the graduates' exhibition, where the curatorial idea was simply to present the works of the graduating students. I could use this event as a platform for amplifying my voice. Whereas by dislocating of the work, in the other exhibitions, I felt that it lost its immediacy, liveliness, and vigour. Rather than subverting the hegemonic order it became part of an affirmative force that maintains the socio-political status quo. Quoting from the critic and theorist Gene Ray:

[...] A critical theorist is bound to see that art as whole is a stabilizing factor in social life. The existence of an art seemingly produced freely and in great abundance is a credit to the given order. As a luxurious surplus, art remains a jewel in power's crown, and the richer, more splendid and exuberant art is, the more it affirms the social status quo. (80)

I would like to emphasize, that I believe this obstacle can be overcome, if desired. By considering and understanding the specific context of a certain exhibition/event/presentation with its socio-political implications, I believe that an artwork can become a meaningful tool for undermining the hegemonic order and contribute to socio-political change. As Ray expresses it:

Surpassing art means removing it from institutional management and transforming it into a practice for expanding life here and now, for overcoming passivity and separation, in short for 'revolutionizing everyday life'. (86-87)

In the previous chapter I divided the socially and politically engaged art practice into four categories, now I would like to see how *Mycotoxicosis* fits into them. Obviously in Finland I didn't face any political censorship or oppression because of my political opinions, neither in the art field, on the contrary, I was very free to do and say what I wanted. The censorship I confronted was in a way very specific concerning the mould problem in the academy and the fact that the institution didn't want to make it public and admit the health hazard. The art field actually enabled me to bypass this institutional oppression and make my voice

heard. *Mycotoxycosis* is a work that takes place within the art field but strives for change in the socio-political field. The tools that I used are conventional artistic tools like video and sound as well as documentary methods. My aim was not solely to create a representation of a situation but to actually intervene in the socio-political field as well. In this sense I don't see it as a mere 'political work' as I defined it in the previous chapter. I believe that it did have an impact outside of the art field. The discourse that the work evoked crossed into the socio-political field – it took place within the community of the academy, in the social media and in the Internet, as well as in the mainstream press, and it raised awareness of both this specific mould case as well as the so called mould problem in general. I consider the work as part of a larger struggle that aims at recognizing the vast problem and advocating for the rights of people, who fell ill because of mould and biotoxins.

In a way, it was the personal storytelling that enabled me to connect my work with both of these fields. I turned my experience into a testimony and into a story told with images and sound. The personal story is what gave the work its force both as evidence of the events as well as a story to connect and identify with. But at the same time I see how the personal was an obstacle as well. Looking at the work from an artistic point of view and with the perspective of time, I think I didn't manage to create enough distance to the subject. When I was working with it, I was still very ill and traumatized. I was thinking a lot about the question of distance – how to express a trauma while still experiencing it. Like the actress and filmmaker Sarah Polley said in her documentary about her family: “When you are in the middle of a story it isn't a story at all, but only a confusion, a dark roaring, a blindness” (*Stories We Tell*). You need some distance to be able to create a story out of the chaos. You need some perspective to form the darkness into a coherent narrative. It is not always easy to find the right distance, the one that is still close enough to touch you profoundly and that moves you to action and creation, a distance that enables sincere expression; and at the same time far enough for deeper thought about and relation to it, that in its turn enables the transformation of the *dark roar* into an artwork. “It is only afterwards”, after a certain distance is formed, “that it becomes anything like a story, when you are telling it to yourself” (*Stories We Tell*).

Personal storytelling and documentary methods are tools that are often used in contemporary art. I believe that they can be powerful tools that aim for socio-political change when taking in consideration some aspects of both production and presentation of the artwork, as I have tried to argue in this text. Personal storytelling can work as a testimony, as evidence. It can work as a tool for empowerment both for the artist and the community. I have tried to stress that not all political art, that deals with certain social or political situations, is necessarily art that aims for a socio-political change. I also want to stress that art practice aiming for socio-political change, should consider the entire process of making art, starting from pre-production throughout the production as well as in which form and where it is exhibited and/or presented.

I approached this subject of art and socio-political change from the point of view of an artist and an activist and throughout the process of writing this essay my position has become clearer. This is important for me to mention because most of the writings I encountered and use in this text, are written by art critics and historians, where I assume the thinking process to be different. While art historians might possess a wider historical and theoretical perspective, my point of departure is my personal experiences as an artist and activist and the questions that emerge when those two worlds meet, sometimes colliding and sometimes merging, and always raising ambivalent feelings. The questions that art historians and critics deal with when encountering the intersection of art and activism are questions of demarcation of the art field and its discourse as well as the conceptual and aesthetic implications of this combination. They try to form the new artistic practices into concepts and situate them within historical and socio-political contexts. As noted, the boundaries of the global capitalist art field have grown wide enough to be able to include almost anything as art. Nevertheless, the theoretical discourse does exist, especially regarding social and political art practices, and this discourse is constantly redefining the boundaries of the art field. New artistic practices that push these boundaries always require new tools, methods and terminology. These socially engaged artistic methods, usually meant to counteract the capitalist and consumerist methods that dominates the art field, raise new ethical and aesthetic questions that theorist such as Kester, Bishop and Raunig, have been dealing with.

In this essay I looked into the art practice within the capitalist economic and political system in order to understand how this system affects and forms the contemporary art field. I suggested that the capitalist system might pose obstacles for art practice as a tool for socio-political change. The art field as part of the capitalist system reflects the built-in characteristic of that system that it relies on. Therefore, the art field vastly operates by the same ideas and values of the capitalist system. Capitalism is a system that consumes and appropriates anything that can be turned into something profitable. This includes ideas and artworks that initially intend to resist or subvert the system. Another prominent characteristic is the exploitation that capitalism relies on, exploitation of natural as well as human resources. When the driving force is to increase profits, everything else becomes less important. Operating within this framework as an artist or activist aiming at socio-political change requires dealing with great pressures and challenges, especially if trying to subvert the functions of the system itself. How do you subvert the system from within, or how much can you compromise while still keeping the subversive power of your practice? How can you be involved enough in order to have meaningful impact, but independent enough not to be totally consumed by the system? These are questions that both artists and activist constantly confront and deal with.

Another possible obstacle is the political censorship and oppression that artists and other cultural workers might encounter. As I argued before, censorship exists to different extents and in various ways in different places and political systems. Sometimes it is very explicit and sometimes it is more covert. The danger in all cases is the so-called self-censorship, when artists internalize the political and social expectations and restrictions and adapt to them, censoring in advance their own ideas and work. I believe that all of artists to some extent compromise and adapt to the system supporting them. The question we should ask when censorship becomes symptomatic is; to what extent it forms the boundaries and contents of art and culture, and not less importantly, how much space it allows for the margins as an important sphere of creation and action.

Different political systems also have different ways of instrumentalizing and even exploiting artists and art practices. I mentioned the subordination of art and culture by the state, on one hand in form of political propaganda, and on the other as tools for pedagogical or therapeutic work. Again, there are more overt and more covert examples of this. Bishop points out the parallel connection between the increasing instrumentalization of participatory art in Europe, especially in the UK, and the dismantling of the welfare state (*Artificial Hells* 5). The art practices that are supported and encouraged by the state funding are subjugated to pedagogical and other social institutions and interests.

As many theorists have pointed out, the autonomy of art is yet another obstacle when considering the relation of art and socio-political practice. Kester points at the contradiction within the idea of the autonomy of art. He claims that this autonomy is important because art is in constant danger of “being subsumed to the conditions of consumer culture, propaganda, or ‘entertainment’”. He says that “this autonomy is necessary in order to achieve an adjudicatory distance from dominant cultural, social, and political values”, but on the other hand “autonomy implies a relationship of segregation or exclusion” (*The One* 32, 38). There is a certain duality in art practice; it requires distance and freedom while at the same time seeking social connections and validation. This tension has existed throughout modern and post-modern art histories, but it increases when artists are reaching beyond the art field and looking to be more engaged in the social and the political fields.

After looking into art practice in the framework of the capitalist system and framing the possible obstacles preventing art practice from maintaining meaningful socio-political impact, I looked again into art practice from an ontological point of view. With the help of Deleuze and Marcuse I defined some characteristics of art practice that suggests an inherent resistive force. Both Deleuze and Marcuse conceptualize the relation between art and socio-political practice and both of them refer to art in relation to resistance. For Marcuse there is a resistive essence in art practice but it can be powerful only within the art field. The idea of the autonomous art is essential for the resistive practice, and when the practice exceeds the

autonomous sphere it ceases to be art and becomes something else, it enters the sphere of socio-political practice. Also for Deleuze there is an inherent resistive force in art. When he talks about an act of creation Deleuze refers both to art and to philosophy. The creation, either in the form of a concept or an artwork, has resistive potential first of all because it has the ability to resist death. The ideas and artworks can exist way beyond their creators and in this way get an existence on their own. Secondly the creation contains the possibility of new ideas, new thought and information, countering the hegemonic ideas and narratives, and therefore has the ability to subvert the hegemonic order and oppose the dominating forces. Art and resistance are not one and the same thing in Deleuze's thought, neither are they completely separated, but they rather have some fundamental qualities in common, their existences are to some extent overlapping and they have a reciprocity of enhancing one another.

The theory of Mouffe and her concept of agonistic spaces provided me with a theoretical frame to think about the possibilities to overcome the aforementioned obstacles for art practice as a tool for socio-political change. Antagonism is a central force in Mouffe's theory regarding art and the socio-political field. The social space and the hegemonic order are constantly constructed and reformulated through different socio-political encounters and confrontations. There is no reconciliation, as Mouffe explains it, but rather a constant movement and struggle that are essential for maintaining a democratic society. The role of art in her theory is in intervening in the social spaces and as part of the agonistic struggle subverting the hegemonic order, resisting the capitalist forces and contributing to the construction of new subjectivities ("Artistic Activism").

I looked into practices of different artists and art groups and analyzed their work with a socio-political perspective. I discussed, for example, the practice of the *Belarus Free Theatre*, who managed for many years to create an underground theatre scene under a very oppressive dictatorship. In their most recent work, *Burning Doors* (2016), the group stages the stories of oppression and incarceration of contemporary artists in Russia. One of the collaborators in this project is Maria Alyokhina from the Russian punk-rock band *Pussy Riot*, who performs her own story on stage (Lawson). The work of the Catalan artist Núria Güell is also a good example of the resistive force of art practice and the agonistic approach as defined by Mouffe. In each of her projects she tackles a different aspect of the global capitalist and neoliberal system with the aim of revealing its functions and creating a change. The socio-political changes that she creates are very local, but the methods are free to be reused and therefore it opens the possibility for a further change. In her projects the art practice permeates the socio-political field and vice versa, and from this intersection new possibilities arise and new socio-political as well as artistic experiences are created. The members of the Syrian filmmakers' collective, *Abounaddarra*, gathered in order to form a resistance to the mainstream media and the global distribution of images of war, atrocities and suffering. Through their practice they try to gain back

control over the representation of the Syrian war and the Syrian people. Their practice engages with the politics and ethics of image production and representation and demonstrates great resistance on several levels. They are working in a reality where people have become indifferent towards images of death and suffering that are constantly distributed across the globe. They resist and do not succumb to the rules of the mainstream media and refuse to reproduce the images of war and violence according to these. As the example of the Venice Biennale shows they also refuse to adapt to the rules of the mainstream art world and resist the appropriation of their work by it.

The art practices that I discussed in this text demonstrate the idea that art practice has an inherent resistive and subversive potential. I argued that there are some crucial things to be considered in order to enable that subversive force to manifest and act. After formulating some basic ideas regarding art practice; firstly that it always and by definition is a social and political practice, and secondly that it has an inherent resistive and subversive potential; and after looking into different art practises with socio-political objectives, I tried to formulate some conclusions about the artistic methods that can contribute to a meaningful socio-political change. I found that the most powerful works emerge on the borders of the art field and from different encounters of the art practise and the socio-political practice. I found artists and art groups that intervene in different socio-political spaces and manage quite successfully to form a dissensus and reveal that which is concealed by the dominating consensus. I found that in this intersection of art practice and socio-political practice meaningful resistance can be created and change can be initiated. Following the idea of Mouffe I would argue that the practices that I discussed above are involved in the agonistic struggle aiming at subverting the hegemonic order. These practices demonstrate resistance as a creative and constructive force.

Through the ideas of Bourriaud, Bishop and Kester I discussed the collaborative and participative methods in art practices; methods that usually aim to connect art practice to the social and political fields. These methods can challenge the idea of the autonomy of art. In the collaborative art practices the artists are seeking to work with different communities, groups or persons outside of the art field and to merge their practice with other social practices, or to bring other social practices into the art field. The real challenge is not when art is subsumed to other socio-political practices, or the other way around, but rather when the collaborative practice is redefining and shaping the idea of the autonomy of art. Collaboration can undermine the hierarchical structure of the capitalist system; it undermines the concept of singular authorship that largely prevails in the art field. Collaboration between persons and groups can constitute a strong resistance against political and other forms of oppression. It can raise a louder voice of dissent and become a powerful tool for change.

I took my work, *Mycotoxicosis*, as an example of a work of art that aims for socio-political change and followed its trajectory to see where it succeed and where it failed. The work was born out of the specific

struggle against the silencing, negligence and disinformation regarding the mould problem in the Academy of Fine Arts, but was also connected to the wider mould struggle in the Finnish society. I think that *Mycotoxycosis* is a good example of a temporary overlap of the art machine and the revolutionary machine (Raunig). For a moment, the art machine in form of my art practice, and the revolutionary machine; the mould struggle, permeated one another and worked together; in the words of Raunig, entered “into a temporary, concrete relationship of exchange” (“The Many” 391) and worked towards a joint goal of revealing the problem in its magnitude and initiating a change.

Through the example of my work I discussed the importance of the context of the artwork, and its significance for the resistive power. In the introduction to *Art and Social Change*, Bradley refers to the importance of the context for the artwork’s meaning and he says that once the situation changes the meaning of the work can change as well. “However apparently selfevident the meaning of an image or text, or the outcome of a gesture, it is always possible to imagine a situation in which that meaning or outcome might be lost or altered ... Meaning is specific, it is made in context and in action” (10). So if the meaning of the artwork is not something inherent to it but rather constructed through a context, through a situation and action, and is changeable with the change of place and time, then we can also think that an artwork can be appropriated and its meaning changed, in order to serve certain interests. This idea can also be associated with activist practice and it would be just as adequate to say that “*meaning is specific*”, and that “*it is made in context and in action*” (Bradley 10). So whether art or activism, each project or action should be considered in its specific context in order to maintain its resistive potential and power.

I am not advocating here for political art practice, and also not that art would be the best way to resist or the most sufficient socio-political struggle. I rather would like to emphasize the importance of acknowledging the profoundly complicated socio-political aspects and implications of art practices, within the global capitalist system, as well as within different local political systems, instead of concealing these aspects and implications.

This is a conclusion but also a suggestion to further think about the connections and interactions between art and activism – their differences, their similarities and especially the ways in which they can contribute to one another and work together. Throughout this text the idea of this connection keeps appearing in different ways. Deleuze describes the relation between the act of creation (art and philosophy) and activism (popular struggle) as a most mysterious and intimate. Soueif, recalling her experiences during the revolution in Egypt, concludes that it is in the undefined sphere between activist and art practice “that the most interesting things happen” (Soueif). Kester writes: “it is the tension between these sites” [the aesthetic and the socio-political], their points of overlap, corroboration, and resistance, which have been most productive” (*The One* 37). Raunig formulates the idea of temporary overlaps between the art and the

revolutionary machine. It is a specific temporary connection and collaboration between art and activism, where both machines keep their integrity but enter into a relationship of exchange and for a moment work together. I don't mean to reduce all of these ideas into one, as each of them comes from a different background and thinking process. What I want to emphasize is that when art and activist practice meet, it evokes creativity, inspiration and productivity, it forms a space of exchange and critical thinking that carries the potential of initiating meaningful socio-political change.

Referring to the idea of Mouffe, democracy is a constant hegemonic struggle and it is through this struggle that the social sphere is constantly constructed and reformed. There is a constant movement and confrontation and any reconciliation would rather be a sign of the end of the democratic society ("Artistic Activism"). Referring to Raunig also the revolution is a constant dynamic movement, a process that is uncompleted and can never become completed, it is rather a driving force that works and proceeds through the elements of resistance, insurrection and constituent power (*Art and Revolution*). I tried to show and argue above, that both the activist and the art practice are taking place in a constant movement and struggle, a constant negation and negotiation, and both strive for a reconciliation but at the same time have a deep apprehension that any real reconciliation is unreachable. Both practices meet in their uncompromising strive for freedom, that certainly comes with a price as well. Both require a constant reconsideration and redefinition, a resistive force and resilience, and an incessant reinvention of their practitioners.



Mycotoxicosis (2013), installation view, Kuvan Kevät, 2015, Academy of Fine Arts, Helsinki.



Mycotoxicosis (2013), installation view, Kuvan Kevät, 2015, Academy of Fine Arts, Helsinki.



Installing my work at the Academy of Fine Arts, May 2013. Photo by Adriana Dobrin, *Helsingin Sanomat*.



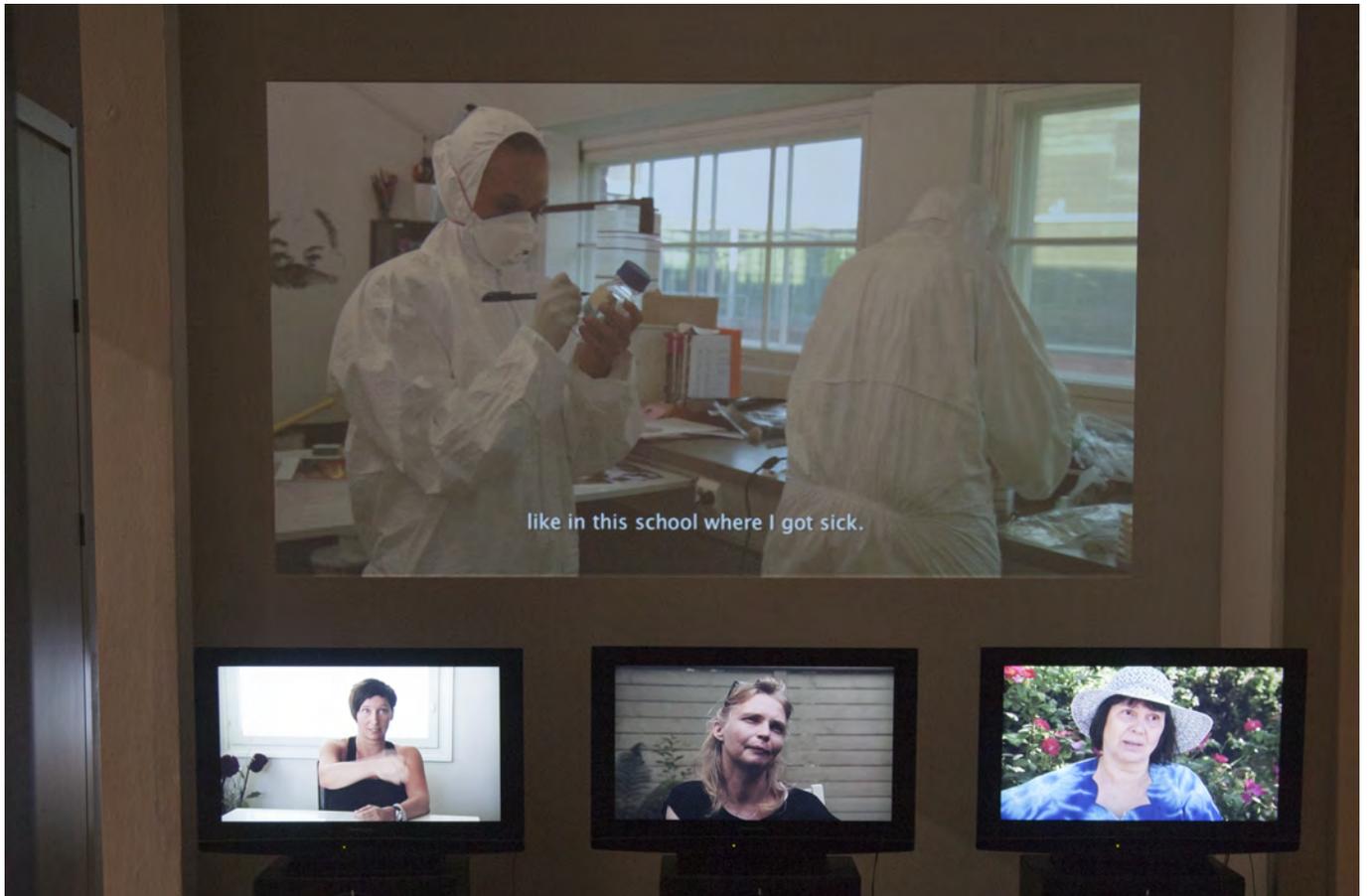
Guided tour in Kuvan Kevät exhibition, 2013, Academy of Fine Arts, Helsinki.



Guided tour in Kuvan Kevät exhibition, 2013, Academy of Fine Arts, Helsinki.



Mycotoxicosis (2013), installation view, Nuoret 2013, Taidehalli, Helsinki.



Mycotoxicosis (2013), installation view, Nuoret 2013, Taidehalli, Helsinki.



Mycotoxicosis (2013), installation view, Rauma Biennale Balticum, 2014, Rauma.



Mycotoxicosis (2013), installation view, Rauma Biennale Balticum, 2014, Rauma.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Books:

- Benjamin, Walter. "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction." *Illuminations*. Ed. Hannah Arendt. Trans. Harry Zohn. New York: Schocken, 1969. 217-52. Print.
- Bishop, Claire. *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship*. London: Verso, 2012. Print.
- Bourriaud, Nicolas. *Relational Aesthetics*. Dijon: Leses Du Réel, 2002. Print.
- Bradley, Will, and Charles Esche, eds. *Art and Social Change: A Critical Reader*. London: Tate Pub., 2007. Print.
- Bradley, Will. Introduction. *Art and Social Change: A Critical Reader*. Ed. Will Bradley and Charles Esche. London: Tate, 2007. 9-24. Print.
- Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York: Routledge, 1990. Print.
- Chetrit, Sami Shalom. *Intra-Jewish Conflict in Israel: White Jews, Black Jews*. London: Routledge, 2010. Print.
- Frank, Arthur W. *The Wounded Storyteller: Body, Illness, and Ethics*. Chicago: U of Chicago, 1995. Print.
- Hamdy, Basma, and Karl Don STONE, eds. *Walls of Freedom Street Art of the Egyptian Revolution*. Berlin: From Here to Fame Gmbh, 2014. Print.
- Holmes, Brian. *Escape the Overcode: Activist Art in the Control Society*. Eindhoven: Van Abbemuseum, 2009. Print.
- Kantonen, Lea. *Telhta: Kohtaamisia Nuorten Taidetyöpajoissa*. Helsinki: Like, 2005. Print.
- Kester, Grant H. *Conversation Pieces: Community and Communication in Modern Art*. Berkeley: U of California, 2004. Print.
- Kester, Grant H. *The One and the Many: Contemporary Collaborative Art in a Global Context*. Durham: Duke UP, 2011. Print.
- MacCabe, Colin. *Godard ; Images, Sounds, Politics*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1980. Print.
- Marcuse, Herbert. *Counterrevolution and Revolt*. Boston: Beacon, 1972. Print.
- Money, Nicholas P. *Carpet Monsters and Killer Spores: A Natural History of Toxic Mold*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2004. Print.
- Muñoz, José Esteban. *Disidentifications: Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota, 1999. Print.
- Raunig, Gerald. *Art and Revolution: Transversal Activism in the Long Twentieth Century*. Trans. Aileen Derieg. Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2007. Print.
- Raunig, Gerald. "The Many Ands of Art and Revolution." *Art and Social Change: A Critical Reader*. London: Tate Pub., 2007. 384-94. Print.
- Said, Edward W. *Orientalism*. New York: Pantheon, 1978. Print.
- Shoemaker, Ritchie C., James Schaller, and Patti Schmidt. *Mold Warriors: Fighting America's Hidden Health Threat*. Baltimore, MD: Gateway, 2005. Print.

- Shoemaker, Ritchie C., James Schaller, and Patti Schmidt. *Mold Warriors: Fighting America's Hidden Health Threat*. Baltimore, MD: Gateway, 2005. Print.
- Shohat, Ella. "The Representation of Sephardim/Mizrahim." *Israeli Cinema: East/West and the Politics of Representation*. London/New York: I.B Tauris, 2010. 105-57. Print.
- Shohat, Ella. "Sephardim in Israel: Zionism from the Standpoint of Its Jewish Victims." *Social Text* 19/20 (1988): 1-35. Print.
- Sternad, Jennifer Flores. "The Rhythm of Capital and the Theater of Terror: The Errorist International, Etcétera..." *Art and Activism in the Age of Globalization*. Vol. 8. Rotterdam: NAI, 2011. 283-319. Print. Reflect.
- Z̄niewicz, Artur, and Joanna Warsza, eds. *Forget Fear: 7th Berlin Biennale for Contemporary Art*. Köln: König, 2012. Print.

Online Sources:

- Abounaddara Films*. Facebook, n.d. Web. 15 Aug. 2016. <www.facebook.com/Abounaddara-Films-128084573918925/>.
- ActiveStills*. ActiveStills, n.d. Web. 18 Sept. 2016. <www.activestills.org/about.php>.
- Ai Weiwei*. Ai Weiwei, n.d. Web. 15 Aug. 2016. <aiweiwei.com/>.
- Alberge, Dalya. "Michael Attenborough: David Cameron Can't Ignore Belarus Free Theatre Abuse." *The Guardian*. Guardian News and Media, 30 Apr. 2014. Web. 18 Sept. 2016. <www.theguardian.com/stage/2014/apr/30/michael-attenborough-david-cameron-belarus-free-theatre>.
- "All the Syria's Futures." *Vimeo*. Abounaddara, 05 May 2015. Web. 18 Sept. 2016. <<https://vimeo.com/126950191>>.
- Anderman, Nirit. "Now Playing in Israel: Film Censorship." *Haaretz*. Haaretz, 05 Aug. 2015. Web. <www.haaretz.com/israel-news/culture/television/.premium-1.669562>.
- "Argentina: Amnesty Laws Struck Down." *Human Rights Watch*. Human Rights Watch, 17 June 2015. Web. 26 Sept. 2016. <www.hrw.org/news/2005/06/14/argentina-amnesty-laws-struck-down>.
- "Arvomaailmamme." *Perussuomalaiset*. Perussuomalaiset, n.d. Web. 18 Sept. 2016. <www.perussuomalaiset.fi/tietoa-meista/arvomaailmamme/>.
- Ashkenazi, Yair. "השרה רגב חזרה בה מהאיום על התיאטרון של נורמן עיסא." *Haaretz*. Haaretz, 11 June 2015. Web. 27 Sept. 2016. <www.haaretz.co.il/gallery/theater/1.2658134>.
- "Asociación Amigos Del Museo Nacional De Bellas Artes." *Asociación Amigos Del Museo Nacional De Bellas Artes*. Museo Nacional De Bellas Artes, n.d. Web. 18 Sept. 2016. <www.aamnba.org.ar/aboutus.php>.

- Batty, David. "Istanbul Biennial under Fire for Tactical Withdrawal from Contested Sites." *The Guardian*. Guardian News and Media, 14 Sept. 2013. Web. 23 July 2016. <www.theguardian.com/world/2013/sep/14/istanbul-biennial-art-protest-under-fire>.
- Beaumont-Thomas, Ben. "Jafar Panahi Asks for Golden Bear Winner Taxi to Be Shown in Iran." *The Guardian*. Guardian News and Media, 17 Feb. 2015. Web. 18 Sept. 2016. <www.theguardian.com/film/2015/feb/17/jafar-panahi-golden-bear-taxi-iran>.
- Belarus Free Theatre*. Ministry of Counter Culture, n.d. Web. 18 Sept. 2016. <belarusfreetheatre.com>.
- Bennett, J. W., and M. Klich. "Mycotoxins." *Clinical Microbiology Reviews* 16.3 (2003): 497–516. PMC. 26 Sept. 2016. Web. <www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC164220/>
- Biennial Foundation. *Rauma Biennale Balticum, Crime Scene*. Biennial Foundation, 09 June 2014. Web. <www.biennialfoundation.org/2014/06/opening-in-june-at-the-rauma-art-museum-rauma-biennale-balticum-2014-will-once-again-present-an-overview-of-topical-contemporary-art-from-the-baltic-sea-region/>.
- "Bienvenida a Bush : Erroristas En Buenos Aires." *Argentina Indymedia*. Argentina Indymedia, 19 Oct. 2005. Web. 01 Aug. 2016. <argentina.indymedia.org/news/2005/10/337422.php>.
- Bishop, Claire. "Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics." *October* 110 (2004): 51–79. Web. <www.teamgal.com/production/1701/SS04October.pdf>
- Bishop, Claire. "The Social Turn: Collaboration and Its Discontents." *Artforum* (2006): 178–83. *NEWS Grist*. Web. 28 Aug. 2016. <newsgrist.typepad.com/files/claire-bishop-the-social-turn-collaboration-and-its-discontents-in-2006-artforum.pdf>.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. "The Market of Symbolic Goods." *Poetics* 14.1–2 (1985): 13–44. Web. <web.mit.edu/allanmc/www/bourdieu2.pdf>
- Bramley, Ellie Violet. "Behind the Scenes with Syria's 'emergency Cinema'" *The Guardian*. Guardian News and Media, 26 Mar. 2014. Web. 18 Sept. 2016. <www.theguardian.com/film/filmblog/2014/mar/26/abounaddara-collective-syria-cinema>.
- "Burning Doors." *Belarus Free Theatre*. Belarus Free Theatre, n.d. Web. 17 Sept. 2016. <www.belarusfreetheatre.com/productions/burningdoors/>.
- Cascone, Sarah. "Gulf Labor Stages Protest at Peggy Guggenheim Collection in Venice." *Artnet News*. Artnet News, 08 May 2015. Web. 25 Sept. 2016. <news.artnet.com/art-world/gulf-labor-venice-guggenheim-protest-295899>.
- Charlesworth, JJ. "Playing Politics: JJ Charlesworth on Why Art World Hypocrisy Stars at the 56th Venice Biennale." *Artnet News*. Artnet, 14 May 2015. Web. 18 Sept. 2016. <news.artnet.com/art-world/56th-venice-biennale-politics-jj-charlesworth-295350>.

- Clark, Nick. "Belarus Free Theatre: UK-based Exiled Theatre Group Working with Kevin Spacey and Jude Law Being Harassed by Dictatorship." *The Independent*. Independent Digital News and Media, 19 June 2015. Web. 18 Sept. 2016.
<www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/the-belarus-free-theatre-uk-based-exiled-theatre-group-working-with-kevin-spacey-and-jude-law-being-10333208.html>.
- "Dear Venice Biennale." Web log post. *Abounaddara Films*. Facebook, 11 May 2015. Web. 18 Sept. 2016.
<<https://www.facebook.com/notes/abounaddara-films/dear-venice-biennale-chère-biennale-de-venise/900622536665121>>.
- Debatty, Régine. "'How to Expropriate Money from the Banks' & Other Displaced Legal Applications: An Interview with Núria Güell." *We Make Money Not Art*. We Make Money Not Art, 20 Nov. 2013. Web. 18 Sept. 2016.
<we-make-money-not-art.com/archives/2013/11/interview-with-nuria-guell.php#.Vf7-VWSqqko>.
- Dehghan, Saeed Kamali. "Iran Jails Director Jafar Panahi and Stops Him Making Films for 20 Years." *The Guardian*. Guardian News and Media, 20 Dec. 2010. Web. 25 Sept. 2016.
<www.theguardian.com/world/2010/dec/20/iran-jails-jafar-panahi-films>.
- Deleuze, Gilles. "Qu'est-ce Que L'acte De Création?" Mardis De La Fondation. FEMIS, Paris. 17 Mar. 1987. *YouTube*. Web. 18 Sept. 2016. <www.youtube.com/watch?v=2OyuMJMrCRw>.
- Deniz, Elmas. "'Mom, Am I Barbarian?' 13th Istanbul Biennial." *Art Agenda*. Art Agenda, 15 Sept. 2013. Web. 24 July 2016.
<www.art-agenda.com/reviews/%E2%80%9Cmom-am-i-barbarian%E2%80%9D-13th-istanbul-biennial/>.
- Eichner, Itamar. "Israel to Allocate NIS 100 Million for BDS Battle." *Ynetnews*. Ynetnews, 07 June 2015. Web. 13 Aug. 2016. <<http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-4665676,00.html>>.
- Enwezor, Okwui. "All the World's Futures." *La Biennale Di Venezia*. La Biennale Di Venezia, n.d. Web. 18 Sept. 2016. <www.labiennale.org/en/art/archive/56th-exhibition/enwezor/>.
- Errorist Kabaret*. Wordpress, 03 Sept. 2009. Web. 03 Aug. 2016. <<https://erroristkabaret.wordpress.com/>>.
- "EU: Seek Release of Gulf Activists." *Human Rights Watch*. Human Rights Watch, 03 July 2015. Web. 17 Sept. 2016. <www.hrw.org/news/2015/05/22/eu-seek-release-gulf-activists>.
- Frilander, Aino. "Kakkua ja huutoaplodeja: taidepoliittinen tapahtuma on raikkainta, mitä suomalaiselle kulttuuripolitiikalle on aikoihin tapahtunut." *HS*. HS, 11 Nov. 2014. Web. 18 Sept. 2016.
<<http://www.hs.fi/kulttuuri/a1305896522889>>
- Frilander Helsingin Sanomat Aino Frilander, Aino. "Perussuomalaiset: taiteilija-apurahat voisi lakkauttaa." *HS*. HS, 11 Nov. 2014. Web. 18 Sept. 2016. <www.hs.fi/kulttuuri/a1415594673829>
- Güell, Núria, comp. "How to Expropriate Money from the Banks." (2013): n. pag. *Núria Güell*. Núria Güell. Web. 18 Sept. 2016.

- <www.nuriaguell.net/projects/12/How%20to%20expropriate%20money%20from%20the%20banks_nuria%20guell.pdf>.
- Genocchio, Benjamin. "Okwui Enwezor's 56th Venice Biennale Is Morose, Joyless, and Ugly." *Artnet News*. Artnet, 28 July 2015. Web. 18 Sept. 2016. <news.artnet.com/art-world/okwui-enwezor-56th-venice-biennale-by-benjamin-genocchio-295434>.
- "Gulf Labor Artist Coalition." *Gulf Labor Artist Coalition*. Gulf Labor Artist Coalition, 26 Mar. 2011. Web. 17 Sept. 2016. <gulflabor.org/2011/for-immediate-release-100-international-artists-call-for-a-boycott-of-the-guggenheim-abu-dhabi/>.
- Haaretz. "רגב: בעולם התרבות אנשים קפוצי תחת, צבועים, תכנים וכפויי טובה." *Haaretz*. Haaretz, 18 June 2015. Web. 27 Sept. 2016. <www.haaretz.co.il/gallery/1.2663968>.
- Hakala, Jarkko. "Homeoireet ajavat Kuvataideväen evakkoon." *HS*. HS, 09 Mar. 2013. Web. 18 Sept. 2016. <<http://www.hs.fi/kaupunki/a1362732239735>>.
- Harding, Luke. "Andrei Sannikov: Democratic World Is Too Complacent about Belarus." *The Guardian*. Guardian News and Media, 23 Nov. 2012. Web. 28 July 2016. <<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/nov/23/andrei-sannikov-world-complacent-belarus>>
- Higgins, Charlotte. "Artist Draws Controversy Turning Church into Venice's First Mosque." *The Guardian*. Guardian News and Media, 08 May 2015. Web. 18 Sept. 2016. <www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2015/may/08/biennale-artist-turning-church-into-venices-first-mosque>.
- Holmes, Brian. "The Errorist International: Washed Up on a Beach in Australia." *Transform*. Aipcp, 29 Jan. 2007. Web. <transform.eipcp.net/correspondence/1170076372>.
- How To Rob A Bank*. AJ+. YouTube, 17 Feb. 2015. Web. 18 Sept. 2016. <www.youtube.com/watch?v=PJHSJ85PcmY>.
- Icelandic Art Center. *Corrections Regarding Media Coverage of the Icelandic Pavilion*. Icelandic Art Center. Icelandic Art Center, 27 May 2015. Web. 18 Sept. 2016. <icelandicartcenter.is/news/important-corrections-regarding-media-coverage-of-the-icelandic-pavilion-at-la-biennale-di-venezia>.
- Icelandic Art Center. *Statement by the Icelandic Art Center*. Icelandic Art Center. Icelandic Art Center, 22 May 2015. Web. 18 Sept. 2016. <icelandicartcenter.is/blog/icelandic-pavilion-installation-the-mosque-closed-by-police-today/>.
- "Icelandic Pavilion Installation 'The Mosque' Closed by Police Today." *Icelandic Art Center*. Icelandic Art Center, 22 May 2015. Web. <icelandicartcenter.is/blog/icelandic-pavilion-installation-the-mosque-closed-by-police-today/>.

- "International Award for Participatory Art." *E-flux*. E-flux, n.d. Web. 03 Aug. 2016.
<<http://www.e-flux.com/announcements/etceteras-c-r-i-s-i-winner-of-the-second-edition/>>.
- "Jani Leinonen." *Kiasma*. Kiasma, n.d. Web. 18 Sept. 2016. <www.kiasma.fi/en/calendar/jani-leinonen/>.
- Kennedy, Randy. "Mosque Installed at Venice Biennale Tests City's Tolerance." *The New York Times*. The New York Times, 06 May 2015. Web. 18 Sept. 2016.
<www.nytimes.com/2015/05/07/arts/design/mosque-installed-at-venice-biennale-tests-citys-tolerance.html>.
- Kokkonen, Laura. "The Crime Scene of Representation." Thesis. Aalto University, 2015. *Aalto University Library*. Aalto University, 16 Oct. 2015. Web. 19 Sept. 2016.
<aaltodoc.aalto.fi/handle/123456789/18105>.
- Korvensyrjä, Aino, and Ahmed Al-Nawas. "Musta Iho, Valkoinen Naamio." *Voima*. Voima, 08 Sept. 2014. Web. 18 Sept. 2016. <uusi.voima.fi/artikkeli/2014/nakokulma-musta-iho-valkoinen-naamio/>.
- Kärppä, Hanna. "Onko Suomalainen Rakentaminen Huonoa? Rakennusyhtiön Mielestä Ei, Professorin Mukaan Moraali on Heikko." *HS*. HS, 20 Mar. 2016. Web. 08 July 2016.
<<http://www.hs.fi/koti/a1458444542282>>.
- "Kulttuurin ja taiteen julkinen rahoitus ja ohjaus." OKM. OKM, n.d. Web. 18 Sept. 2016.
- Lawson, Mark. "Burning Doors Review – Pussy Riot Member's Charged Stories of Persecution." *The Guardian*. Guardian News and Media, 04 Sept. 2016. Web. 17 Sept. 2016.
<www.theguardian.com/stage/2016/sep/04/burning-doors-review-pussy-riot-belarus-free-theatre>.
- Lis, Jonathan. "Regev to Israeli Cultural Institutions: I Decide Who Gets the Money – Israel." *Haaretz*. Haaretz, 11 June 2015. Web. 18 Sept. 2016.
- Louvre Abu Dhabi*. Louvre Abu Dhabi, n.d. Web. 17 Sept. 2015.
<ouvreabudhabi.ae/en/about/Pages/a-universal-museum.aspx>.
- "Make Art Policy!" *Public Movement*. Public Movement, n.d. Web. 18 Sept. 2016.
www.publicmovement.org/new/make-art-policy/
- Malmberg, Lari. "'Homekoulu Vei Lapseni Terveiden' – Vihaiset äidit Osoittivat Mieltä Lasten Puolesta Helsingin Keskustassa." *HS*. HS, 06 Sept. 2016. Web. 25 Sept. 2016.
<www.hs.fi/kaupunki/a1473140219229>.
- "Molds, Mycotoxins, & More." *SurvivingMold*. SurvivingMold, n.d. Web. 26 Sept. 2016.
<www.survivingmold.com/mold-symptoms/molds-mycotoxins-more>.
- "Mosirees." *Mosireen*. Mosireen, n.d. Web. <<http://mosireen.org/>>.
- Motola, Haidi. "Hirsimokki." *YouTube*. YouTube, 25 Oct. 2014. Web.
<www.youtube.com/watch?v=ACGBIJZ4hPw&index=5&list=PLfZM3ra26cJh17S7D-BNQuP Yg1E OREsDt>.

- Motola, Haidi. "Myco." *YouTube*. YouTube, 07 Nov. 2014. Web. 18 Sept. 2016.
 <www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLfZM3ra26cJh17S7D-BNQupYg1EOREsDt>.
- Motola, Haidi. "Mycotoxicosis." *Vimeo*. Vimeo, n.d. Web. 18 Sept. 2016. <vimeo.com/70926303>.
- Motola, Haidi. "Rakennusala." *YouTube*. YouTube, 07 Nov. 2014. Web.
 <www.youtube.com/watch?v=pBbNbyt2ywI&list=PLfZM3ra26cJh17S7D-BNQupYg1EOREsDt&index=10>.
- Motola, Haidi. "Koulut." *YouTube*. YouTube, 07 Nov. 2014. Web. 26 Sept. 2016.
 <www.youtube.com/watch?v=J0S2u6tNMJs&list=PLfZM3ra26cJh17S7D-BNQupYg1EOREsDt&index=7>.
- Mouffe, Chantal. "Artistic Activism and Agonistic Spaces." *Art & Research*. Studio 55: Centre for Research in Fine Art Practice, Glasgow School of Art, 2007. Web.
 <www.artandresearch.org.uk/v1n2/mouffe.html>.
- Muñoz-Alonso, Lorena. "Syrian Film Collective Abounaddara Withdraws from Venice Biennale Claiming Censorship." *Artnet News*. Artnet, 21 Aug. 2015. Web. 18 Sept. 2016.
 <news.artnet.com/art-world/syrian-film-collective-abounaddara-withdraws-venice-biennale-claiming-censorship-297525>.
- Navarro, Santiago García. "International Errorista: The Revolution through Affect. Part 1." *LatinArt*. LatinArt, 07 Jan. 2006. Web. 18 Sept. 2016. <www.latinart.com/aiview.cfm?id=353>.
- Nelles, Jan Nikolai, and Nora Al-Badri. *Nefertiti Hack*. N.p., n.d. Web. 26 Sept. 2016.
 <nefertitihack.alloversky.com/>.
- Núria Güell. Núria Güell, n.d. Web. 18 Sept. 2016. <www.nuriaguell.net/>.
- Nunca Más (Never Again)*. Rep. Buenos Aires: Editorial Universitaria De Buenos Aires, 1984. *Desaparecidos*.
 Desaparecidos. Web. 26 Sept. 2016.
 <www.desaparecidos.org/nuncamas/web/english/library/nevagain/nevagain_000.htm>.
- Nuoret 2013. Suomen Taiteilijaseura*. Suome Taiteilijaseura, n.d. Web. 12 July 2016.
 <artists.fi/ajankohtaista/nayttelyt/nuoret-2013/>.
- Nylén, Antti. "Jokainen Taiteilija on Marttyyri Ja Kristus." *#Kulttuurinvälkysymys*. Yle, 12 Mar. 2015. Web. 18 Sept. 2016.
 <yle.fi/aihe/artikkeli/2015/03/12/antti-nylen-jokainen-taiteilija-marttyyri-ja-kristus>
- "Okwui Enwezor Appointed Director of Venice Biennale 2015." *Biennial Foundation*. N.p., 04 Dec. 2013. Web. 25 Sept. 2016.
 <www.biennialfoundation.org/2013/12/okwui-enwezor-appointed-director-of-venice-biennale-2015/>.

- Omer-Man, Michael Schaeffer. "A Letter to Our Readers: On Censorship." *+972 Magazine*. +972 Magazine, 15 Feb. 2016. Web. 25 Sept. 2016.
<972mag.com/a-letter-to-our-readers-on-censorship/117008/>.
- Omer-Man, Michael Schaeffer. "Israel's President Calls BDS a 'Strategic Threat'" *+972 Magazine*. +972 Magazine, 28 May 2015. Web. 13 Aug. 2016.
<972mag.com/israels-president-says-bds-is-a-strategic-threat/107156/>.
- Opetus- Ja Kulttuuriministeriö. *OKM:n Hallinnonala Valtion Vuoden 2014 Talousarvioesityksessä*. OKM. OKM, 16 Sept. 2013. Web. 24 July 2016. <www.minedu.fi/OPM/Tiedotteet/2013/09/budjetti.html>.
- "Osuusliikkeiden Ja Teollisuuden Sörnäinen." *Museovirasto – RKY*. Osuusliikkeiden Ja Teollisuuden Sörnäinen, 22 Dec. 2009. Web. 26 Sept. 2016.
<www.rky.fi/read/asp/r_kohde_det.aspx?KOHDE_ID=4999>.
- Persico, Tomer. "Israel's 'war on BDS' Misses the Point." *+972 Magazine*. +972 Magazine, 01 June 2015. Web. 13 Aug. 2016. <972mag.com/israels-war-on-bds-misses-the-point/107343/>.
- "Petition." *Gulf Labor Artist Coalition*. Gulf Labor Artist Coalition, 16 Mar. 2011. Web. 1 Oct. 2016.
<gulflabor.org/sign-the-petition/>.
- Phillips, Tom. "Ai Weiwei Free to Travel Overseas Again after China Returns His Passport." *The Guardian*. Guardian News and Media, 22 July 2015. Web. 15 Aug. 2016.
<www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2015/jul/22/ai-weiwei-free-to-travel-overseas-again-after-china-returns-his-passport>.
- Pileggi, Tamar. "Culture Minister Regev Gets Mix of Heckling, Silent Treatment at Award Ceremony." *The Times of Israel*. The Times of Israel, 19 June 2015. Web. 18 Sept. 2016.
<www.timesofisrael.com/amid-escalating-culture-clash-regev-heckled-at-award-ceremony/>.
- Ray, Gene. "Toward a Critical Art Theory." *Art and Contemporary Critical Practise*. Ed. Gene Ray and Gerald Raunig. London: MayFly, 2009. 79-94. *MayFly*. MayFlyBooks. Web.
<http://mayflybooks.org/?page_id=20>.
- Romney, Jonathan. "Taxi Tehran Review – Jafar Panahi's Joy Ride." *The Guardian*. Guardian News and Media, 01 Nov. 2015. Web. 27 Sept. 2016.
<www.theguardian.com/film/2015/nov/01/taxi-tehran-review-admirable-jafar-panahi-takes-to-the-streets>.
- "Saadiyat Cultural District." *Saadiyat*. Saadiyat, n.d. Web. 17 Sept. 2016.
<<http://www.saadiyat.ae/en/inspiration-details/Saadiyat-Cultural-District>>.
- Safiullina, Aigul. "Corporations vs. Human Rights: The Ledesma Case." *The Argentina Independent*. The Argentina Independent, 12 Dec. 2012. Web. 18 Sept. 2016.
<www.argentinaindependent.com/currentaffairs/corporations-vs-human-rights-the-ledesma-case/>.

- Sayej, Nadja. "Ai Weiwei Gives First Public Talk since 2011 – and Becomes a Selfie Santa Claus." *The Guardian*. Guardian News and Media, 03 Sept. 2015. Web. 15 Aug. 2016.
<www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2015/sep/03/ai-weiwei-first-public-talk-since-2011-artist-china-censorship-selfie>.
- Sevortian, Anna, and Yulia Gorbunova. *Shattering Hopes Post-Election Crackdown in Belarus*. Rep. Human Rights Watch, 14 Mar. 2011. Web. 28 July 2016.
<www.hrw.org/report/2011/03/14/shattering-hopes/post-election-crackdown-belarus>.
- Shalev, Chemi. "Netanyahu's Declaration of War on BDS Is Its First Major Victory - Diplomacy and Defense." *Haaretz*. Haaretz, 02 June 2015. Web. 13 Aug. 2016.
<www.haaretz.com/israel-news/1.659269>.
- Shoemaker, Ritchie C. *Research Committee Report on Diagnosis and Treatment of Chronic Inflammatory Response Syndrome Caused by Exposure to the Interior Environment of Water-Damaged Buildings*. Rep. Survivingmold, 27 July 2010. Web. 18 Sept. 2016.
<www.survivingmold.com/docs/POA_MOLD_7_27_10_final.pdf>.
- Sjöholm, Johanna. "Opiskelijat kärsivät Kuvataideakatemia homeongelmasta." *HS*. HS, 31 Jan. 2013. Web. 18 Sept. 2016. <www.hs.fi/kaupunki/a1359525144884>.
- SouEIF, Ahdaf. "On Art and Politics." Perth Writers Festival. Octagon Theatre, Perth. 21 Feb. 2013. *YouTube*. Web. 18 Sept. 2016. <www.youtube.com/watch?v=CkR4Zz0dPMM>.
- Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. "Can the Subaltern Speak?" *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*. Ed. Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg. Chicago: U of Illinois, 1988. 271-313. Print.
- Stern, Itay. "מיירי רגב נפגשה עם נורמן עיסא לשיחת פיוס." *Haaretz*. Haaretz, 21 June 2015. Web. 18 Sept. 2016.
<www.haaretz.co.il/gallery/theater/1.2664945>.
- Steyerl, Hito. "Is the Museum a Battlefield." *Vimeo*. Museum Battlefield, 02 Oct. 2013. Web. 23 July 2016.
<vimeo.com/76011774>.
- Steyerl, Hito. "Politics of Art: Contemporary Art and the Transition to Post-Democracy." *E-flux* #21 (2010): n. pag. Dec. 2010. Web. 17 Sept. 2016.
<www.e-flux.com/journal/politics-of-art-contemporary-art-and-the-transition-to-post-democrac>
- Taide2015*. Nuoren Voiman Liitto, n.d. Web. 24 Aug. 2015.
- Toivonen, Janne. "Kuvataideakatemia sairastuttaa yhä." *HS*. HS, 18 July 2012. Web. 18 Sept. 2016.
<www.hs.fi/kotimaa/a1342497668498>.
- Toivonen, Janne. "Se rakennus sairastutti minut" *HS*. HS, 18 July 2012. Web. 20 June 2016.
<www.hs.fi/kotimaa/a1342497605582>.
- Toivonen, Janne. "Senaatti ei vaatinut korvauksia rakennusvirheistä." *HS*. HS, 19 July 2012. Web. 18 Sept. 2016. <www.hs.fi/kotimaa/a1342586726760>.

- Tulonen, Jouni. "Miten käy kulttuurin Sipilän hallituksen vallan alla?" *#Kulttuurinvälikyysmys*. Yle, 08 May 2015. Web. 24 July 2016.
<yle.fi/aihe/artikkeli/2015/05/08/miten-kay-kulttuurin-sipilan-hallituksen-vallan-alla>.
- Tyrkalov, Max. "Lukashenko Hints at Being President for Life as Sworn in for Fifth Term." *The Guardian*. Guardian News and Media, 06 Nov. 2015. Web. 31 July 2016.
<www.theguardian.com/world/2015/nov/06/lukashenko-president-for-life-belarus>.
- Vartanian, Hrag. "Gulf Labor and Other Arts Groups Occupy Venice's Guggenheim #GuggOccupied." *Hyperallergic*. Hyperallergic, 08 May 2015. Web. 25 Sept. 2016.
<hyperallergic.com/205465/breaking-gulf-labor-and-other-arts-groups-occupy-venices-guggenheim-guggoccupied/>.
- Viljanen, Kaisa. "Homeesta syntyi taidetta." *HS*. HS, 09 May 2013. Web. 19 Sept. 2016.
<www.hs.fi/arviot/n%C3%A4yttely/a1367987576635>.
- Viljanen, Kaisa. "Taiteilija Jani Leinonen toi romanikerjäläiset Kiasmaan, mikä sai toimittajat kyyneliin." *HS*. HS, 2 Sept. 2015. Web. 18 Sept. 2016. <www.hs.fi/kulttuuri/a1441166869447>.
- "What Are Biotoxins?" *Biotoxins*. Emma Greay, 2012. Web. 26 Sept. 2016.
<www.biosciences-labs.bham.ac.uk/exhibit/whatare.html>.
- Walker, Peter, Garry Blight, Arnel Hecimovic, and Jo Blason. "Paris Unity March: Which World Leaders Are Really Committed to Press Freedom?" *The Guardian*. Guardian News and Media, 13 Jan. 2015. Web. 18 Sept. 2016.
<www.theguardian.com/world/ng-interactive/2015/jan/13/charlie-hebdo-attack-world-leaders-paris-press-freedom>.
- Winterhalter, Kati. "Miksi home on Suomessa muita maita yleisempi ongelma?" *Rakennuslehti*. Sanoma Tekniikkajulkaisut Oy, 17 Apr. 2016. Web. 18 Sept. 2016.
<www.rakennuslehti.fi/2016/04/miksi-home-on-suomessa-muita-maita-yleisempi-ongelma/>

Films:

- Bil'in Habibti (Bil'in My Love)*. Dir. Shai Carmeli-Pollak. Claudius Films, 2006. DVD.
- Dangerous Acts Starring the Unstable Elements of Belarus*. Dir. Madeleine Sackler. Prod. Madeleine Sackler. Great Curve Films, 2013. DVD.
- Escrache*. Dir. José Ignacio Lescano and Ronith Gitelman. 2002. YouTube, 18 July 2012. Web. 26 Sept. 2016.
<www.youtube.com/watch?v=iBQCXRXqPQg>.
- Moldy*. Dir. Kee Kee Buckley and Eric Troyer. 2015. DVD.
- Stories We Tell*. Dir. Sarah Polley. National Film Board of Canada, 2012. DVD.
- The Canaries*. Dir. Jari Kokko. Kinokokko, 2015. DVD.

Other:

De La Cruz, Gabriel. *Mold Fixed With Silence*. Rep. Helsinki: n.p., 2013.

Ek, Tarja. "Lääkärintodistukset Ja Sisäilmakysymykset." Message to the author. 14 Oct. 2011. E-mail.

Ek, Tarja. "Re: Ilmastointi." Message to the author. 16 Mar. 2011. E-mail.

Eriksson, Angela. "Terve Ja Kestävä Rakentaminen." Facebook. Message to the author. 11 July 2016.

Pirinen, Juhani, D. Tech. Personal interview. 28 Aug. 2012.

Salkinoja Salonen, Mirja, Professor Emerita. Personal interview. Sep. 2012.

Tikkanen, Marjatta. "Re: Home-myrkytys." Message to the author. 25 Nov. 2011. E-mail.

Tikkanen, Marjatta. "Re: Iloa Ja Terveyttä Uudelle Lukuvuodelle!" Message to the author. 12 Sept. 2011.

E-mail.