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Abstract/Summary

This master's thesis titled "SWEAT" explores the connection between emotional and personal experience in the creation of art through the lens of Finnish sauna culture. Consisting of two main chapters, it constructs my practical artistic work with philosophical reflection, examining the sauna as a space of contemplation, community, and transformation. By intertwining artistic expression with philosophical thought, this thesis aims to illuminate the influence, the deeper meanings and implications of the sauna on my artistic work.

I am offering insights into its role in my contemporary art life and its potential as a catalyst for personal and collective well-being.

The "Sompassauna" and the theme of the sauna in general, has guided me through my time at the MFA studies. It has served as a valuable real-life experience for the works I have made for the Kuvan Kevät exhibition, highlighting themes of physicality, vulnerability, and emotional transformation. By embracing the rituals and communal spirit of this Sompassauna, I invite readers to follow the journey with me and discover the rich tapestry of emotions and explorations that emerge from this and form my artistic practice.

This thesis consists of two parts. In the first part, I explore and elaborate on the key influences that have shaped my understanding and approach evolving my artistic practise. I include a specific philosophical theory of vulnerability that resonate with my artistic work, and how their ideas inform my practical interventions. The second, and no less important, part of the thesis is a chapter called "The Sauna-ABC, a sweaty and poetic journey". Each letter of the alphabet serves as a gateway to a unique short story or experiment with visual poetry, where a carefully and meticulously chosen word encapsulates a specific experience, thing or daily routines. These narratives, stories or poems are intertwined with my daily visits to "Sompassauna", representing a cherished sanctuary that embodies the essence of community within the Finnish sauna experience. Through vivid storytelling, I aim to illustrate and navigate how the sauna transcends mere physical relaxation and becomes a transformative experience as a space for emotional reflection, connection, and cultural appreciation.

The aspect of psychological relaxation is accompanied by a physical letting go. Both are based on the view of the sauna as an emancipatory space, especially for my female body, which helps to overcome societal norms regarding how we should look and behave. The sauna becomes a utopian space without any judgment — when everyone is equally vulnerable. This psychological climate of the sauna has inspired my multimedia series of works, through which I hope to raise the viewer's awareness of issues regarding the cultural and social transformation of the female body.

Come, get closer – to sweat in here, now!

The annual group exhibition of the students of the Master of Fine Arts program of the University is called „Kuvan Kevät“. The venue are all the facilities of the Helsinki University of the Arts. The exhibition ran from May 3rd to June 2nd, 2024, showcasing a diverse array of works from emerging artists.

Material facts

Nr.1

The Sauna is warm

2024

Installation: Cyanotype on fabric, two Sompasauna sauna benches, one sauna bench wrapped with Cyanotype on fabric, wood, wood board with wooden hangers, kimonos – sewn out of cyanotype fabric, wooden board plus wood – covered in cyanotype fabric, two pair of blue sandals, blue shoe covers, instructions on paper

247,5 x 250 x 150 cm

Nr. 2

Whilst among utopia

2023/24

Oil on canvas, unframed

433 x 159 cm

Nr. 3

Come closer

2024

Oil, permanent marker, oil pastel on canvas

172 x 150 cm

Nr. 4 and 5:

Installation: metal, canvas

Nr. 4

Laid-back in

2024

Oil, acryl on canvas, unframed

120 x 160 cm

Nr. 5

Flowing in and out

2024

Oil on canvas, unframed

118 x 160 cm

Nr. 6

Maniac admitting the dripping

2024

Oil on canvas

146 x 165 cm

A "mind tour" through and with my works

In the following section, I will share reflections on experiencing the exhibition.

What follows in this chapter is a detailed descriptive account of the visit of the Kuvan Kevät 2024 exhibition, where I aim to capture the atmosphere of my artworks and the emotions that marked the experience with and through them.

In this part of the thesis, I write in the present tense to create an immersive experience as I explore the exhibition. I use a specific font and carefully place images to enhance the text. The writing combines descriptive and reflective elements to provide a direct account of the experience of visiting the exhibition while sharing thoughts and feelings. This approach highlights my bodily sensations and the overall narrative that links them to the thesis theme.

The exhibition's approach is by the paintings I pass by, whereas heading to the installation. On the left, next to the entrance, there is a wooden board with two hangers and a kimono on each. This work is an immersive art installation that invites participants to engage with the space by wearing a kimono and blue slippers/or blue shoe covers. This interactive element not only enhances the experience, but also allows visitors to embody the art in a unique way by experiencing it. The box has a visible wooden structure, it's covered in fabric, adding an intriguing visual aspect, while the back of the fabric is visible from the outside. The box has the aesthetics of the back of a painting. As a recipient, it is possible not only to look at it, but also to merge with the art and become part of it.

Take the fabric "curtain" beside you and step into the work of art.

There is this blue shine glowing,

I am also starting to glow blue,

I am blue,

I am blending

I am the artwork.



Let's have a closer look, I can see all kinds of images: shapes, photographs, drawings, paintings, forms, in blue and white, negative and positive. The whole space, and me, are completely covered in these images, because the kimono is also made of the same fabric which creates a sense of unity with the artwork.



I am merging, blending with the artwork. When I look up, I can feel the light coming through the fabric and it starts to shine on me.

I sit down on the sauna bench inside. When I close my eyes, I can smell something. It's a slight smell of wood, but I can also detect another scent, a bodily scent. The bench is an original Sompasauna bench that they lent me. When I got it, it was still a bit wet from people sitting on it, I could see some wet spots on it. It aligns perfectly with the work because you get a holistic experience with almost all the senses of the body: seeing, smelling and touching.

The Sompasauna and its important role will be illustrated later in this work.

There is also a connection between the content of the paintings and the Sompasauna. It's a physical recapitulation of the experience of going there every day for almost 3 years and connecting with the place and the people there.

Slowly it starts to get quite warm, almost sweaty. Drops form on my forehead and above my lips, under my nose.

I get sweaty.



Next to it is the large painting. The cyanotype blue, the Prussian blue, is the same that I used in the large painting. There is a centre that is not exactly in the middle, but somehow separates it from top to bottom. You can see many different shades and stages of blue, which give a hint of various associations like the sky, sea, water, vibrations, swimming, waves, sweat.



Looking at the 4.33-metre-long painting, I can see the people in the painting jumping up and down and between them. The two figures that look mirrored but aren't. One on top and one upside down.

They look familiar, *but they are still different.*

The movement is different, the pose changes, *the colours are different.*

They are both naked and *don't care.*

Maybe they are one person, *maybe not.*

What I can perceive is that the figures *feel comfortable* in their place in the middle of the blue.



This image showcases the complete assembly of the works, presenting all the pieces together. Each artwork contributes to a cohesive narrative, inviting recipients to engage with the collective vision and thematic exploration. The arrangement highlights the significance of each piece while underscoring their interconnectedness within the overall exhibition.

The painting in the middle is called "Come, get closer". I mention this because it has to do with the way I made it. The title and the text written in the painting itself are a kind of invitation to the recipient to come close to the painting and have the same experience as I did. Following the "Come, get closer" painting, there is

another installation with a metal structure supporting two unstretched canvas paintings. They are hung together from the back, so it's not possible to see them both at the same time. This metal piece integrates the artworks into the space, with two curling metal wires attached at the top and side, creating the illusion that the lines of the drawings continue beyond the canvas.





On one side there is a woman.
She seems almost to be
suspended in the painting, in
the room.

On the other side
there is another
woman, bent,
lying over
something.
Flowing directions
follow the
movement.



Waves appear.
Waves come and
go.
Waves stay.
Waves extend.
Waves flow.
Waves show.

The last work in this series is a painting, which shows a woman in a sauna. The perspective shown is quite rare and may be something you haven't seen before.

There is no specific name for this particular point of view, as it captures the scene from below. However, the viewer does catch a glimpse of a sweating woman sitting in a sauna, with drops of sweat visibly trickling down. Although this perspective may be considered "uncomfortable", it is a raw and authentic representation of my reality that I am presenting to the viewer.



The inspiration came to me as I was sitting in the sauna, bent over, hands on the floor, belly on my knees, sweating profusely. I was really suffering – but in a good way, to clarify and then I imagined how I would appear if the floor was made of glass and someone was standing underneath observing.



A manual for getting sweaty, soon!

Welcome to "SWEAT". As you embark on this journey with me through my Master's thesis, I encourage you to approach the text with an open mind and heart. This work explores the complex relationship between my art and bodily sensations, emotions, personal experiences, and language, particularly within the context of Finnish sauna culture.

As you read, listen to the tone in which I might speak. It is one of reflection, vulnerability, and exploration. Imagine we are sharing the space in a sauna and talking.

I invite you to engage with the text not just as a passive reader but as an active participant in the "dialogue", as a quiet follower on this journey.

Allow yourself to open up the space of reading. This is an invitation to inner discussion—feel free to pause, reflect, and consider your own experiences in relation to the sauna themes presented. You can also allow yourself to dive into your own thoughts and visualise them. There are some questions I have thought about and would like to invite you to reflect upon them and join me in my experiences:

How would I see myself in this situation?

Has anything similar happened to me? – How did I feel?

What would my body resemble in this situation? Or even – could my body be like this in this situation?

I would like to invite you to immerse yourself in the narratives and metaphors woven throughout this work. Consider how the sauna serves as a backdrop for transformation and community, and reflect on your own emotional landscapes as you navigate the stories shared in these pages.

My body, my feelings – Representation of (my) human body

The title says representation of *my* human body, which for this part indicates that I will utilize my body and the ideas associated with it, such as performance, nudity and physicality, as a reference point to clarify the subject within the realm or context of art. The inspiration for creating art comes from my surroundings, my feelings and myself, thinking especially about

having a body, as a human being, as a woman. Here I would like to raise a question to think about:

Do we have a body or are we a body?

Do we own it? – can we?

I am very much interested in exploring my personal limits and boundaries. It's the challenge of stepping outside my comfort zone that prompts me to reflect on why certain experiences make me uncomfortable.

But what exactly is the comfort zone, and why do we find comfort in it?

Stepping out of my comfort zone isn't only about challenging myself. It's also a crucial part of my quest for authenticity in art. When I venture into unfamiliar territory—whether emotionally, creatively, or technically—I uncover aspects of myself that may remain hidden within the safety of my comfort zone. This exploration often reveals deeper truths and raw emotions that are essential for creating work that resonates with both me and my audience. It's the challenge of stepping outside my comfort zone that prompts me to reflect on why certain experiences make me uncomfortable.

In this way, the discomfort I feel serves as an impulse for authenticity. It forces me to confront my fears, question my assumptions, and ultimately redefine what it means to be true to myself as an artist. By navigating these "uncharted waters", I aim to produce art that is not only genuine but also reflects my evolving understanding of myself and the world around me. It leads me to find new ways of dealing with emerging uncomfortable feelings and transforming them into art, as I do with nudity in performances, which I will write a bit more about later in this chapter.

I often find myself questioning the authenticity of my art, and this inquiry often leads to valuable insight and growth. It encourages reflection on what truly resonates with me as an artist. Although there may not be a definitive answer to what authenticity in art entails, the journey of exploration is what deeply enriches my experience as an artist and allows me to search, develop and grow.

Performative physicality and nudity

In this part of the chapter, I will explore the origins of my desire to compensate for physical activity through performative art, and evaluate the role of nudity in my artistic practice. In the seminar after our part for the Kuvan Kevät exhibition was set up, we reflected on our work in one-hour sessions. It was during reflection that I came to a pivotal realisation: a recurring insight about my art became clear to me. Physicality, as an embodiment of emotion experienced in different ways, plays a fundamental role in my creative process and its artistic interdependence.

Taking the body to physical extremes to get the chance to be in its maximum utilisation and stepping drastically out of the comfort zone to search for new connections and interdependences in the physical and mental intertwined network.

The first step to "approach" myself in the artistic process is always to listen to my body and my emotions, including the sensations that come within my "state" of physical being. It can be any emotion that drives me towards, or rather into, making art. Reflecting on my past experiences, I have identified several key emotions and activities that have significantly influenced my understanding of physicality and emotional expression. *Joy* as a deep emotion and the *strong need* to create art is a motivation that leads me to express myself in a very free and intuitive way. While drawing, painting or any other type of producing, I try to go into the "tunnel mode" to focus and cut off the world around me. It's a form of trust and self-expression to channel my subconsciousness and inner-self. Activities such as mountain hiking and long bike rides serve both to explore and exploit my physical abilities, engaging all my muscles and allowing me to experience a sense of liberation and release. These activities not only challenge my body but also provide a means of connecting with the nature and mental core. *Anger* emerges as a strong physical sensation with a strong need to release or alleviate the feeling. This intense emotion often forces me to look for ways to approach it constructively. *Anxiety* manifests as a form of pressure that creates a sense of confinement that can be overwhelming. This emotional state often leads me to seek comfort and understanding through observing myself.

Eventually, the act of *sitting* becomes a metaphor for emptiness and contemplation. In these moments of stillness, I find space for introspection, which allows me to process my thoughts and feelings more deeply.

In these moments of reflection, I am also confronted with social "norms", especially around the concept of nudity, which could also be seen as a form of taboo. In many societies, nudity is associated with privacy, intimacy or sexuality. This can lead to the intersection of nudity with feelings of shame or embarrassment. This taboo may originate from historical norms, religious beliefs, and societal expectations of how individuals should or shouldn't present themselves. On the one hand, the taboo can promote a sense of modesty and respect for personal boundaries. Meanwhile, it can also contribute to body image issues, anxiety, and a lack of acceptance of the natural human form. Being naked is accepted and normal in only some cultures, while in many others it's inappropriate to be naked in public.

The perception of nudity varies widely across cultures, often "considered as taboo". To see it as a taboo is a complex reflection of different cultural, social, and psychological factors. Cultures differ greatly in their opinions and feelings about nudity. Being naked is a fundamentally "natural" state for human beings – we are born naked.

However, cultural influences and media – especially social media – have a profound impact on people's self-esteem. Despite these influences, cultural attitudes towards nudity reveal a wider range of beliefs and practices. Many artists push against these "boundaries" and use their art to provoke against these norms or imposed standards. One I would like to mention here is Valie Export.

Valie Export, an Austrian artist born in 1940, is a significantly impactful artistic reference for me. Through her provocative body-centred work, she "examin[es] the politics [...] in relation to its environment, culture and society" (T. Ropac kein Datum). Her Œuvre is a profound exploration of taboos related to gender, sexuality, and the female form. By using her body as a medium and a site of confrontation, she compels viewers to critically engage with their own beliefs and biases, ultimately contributing to broader discourses on autonomy and representation. Her work continues to resonate today, inspiring critical reflection on the ways in which taboos influence cultural narratives surrounding identity and the body.

She works with her body in a very unconventional way. She stretches, or rather breaks, boundaries. She uses her body as the centre of her work. She "first raises the issue of sexual

identity, and of her identity in general, in a radical way." (Béret 2013) Export "questions the (female) body as signifier and bearer of information, challenging viewers by examining the politics of eroticism, the male gaze and liberation" (Ropac kein Datum). I would like to discuss two examples of her artistic work that both deal with the theme of taboo.

The first picture shows a work called "Tapp- und Tastkino", which means "Touch cinema". It's an interactive installation, developed into a documentary in 1968. She had a box over her torso with holes in the front and a small curtain over it. She invited the audience to reach into the holes and they could touch her bare breasts. The work directly confronts societal taboos surrounding female bodies and eroticism. By inviting the audience to physically interact with her body, Valie Export challenged accepted norms about voyeurism, consent, and the objectification of women. The audience had to confront their own discomfort and preconceptions regarding sexuality and touch.



The second work, "Genitalpanik", which translates as "genital panic" was created 1969. It's a provocative performance work, which questions societal norms and taboos, particularly regarding gender, sexuality, and the representation of the female body.

By exposing her body in various contexts, she confronts the taboo surrounding women's physicality and sexuality. In "Genitalpanik", she provocatively sat on a chair with her legs spread and wore trousers that were open at the genital area. This allowed an open view of her vulva. She also held a gun, a male-dominated symbol of power, social dynamics and aggression. It challenges the viewer's perception of the female body and creates discomfort because social norms deny such a view of the most intimate part of the body.



Both pieces provoke discomfort and raise questions about voyeurism, consent, and the boundaries of intimacy. They are highlighting the taboos surrounding physical touch and the objectification of women.

Discussions all around nudity can and should lead to important conversations about body positivity, self-acceptance, and the impact of societal norms on individual self-esteem. It's crucial to navigate these complex views to foster a healthier relationship with our bodies and ourselves.

Visibility and invisibility

I will now contextualise the connection between my performative experiences and the theme of visibility and invisibility.

In 2021, in the middle of Covid and distance learning, I performed nude for the first time ever. It was for a photograph performance that was used as an assignment for a course in Austria at the University of Salzburg called "Der Körper als Kunstprodukt", which translates as "The Body as Work of Art". I made a series called "Schneepformance" – which means "snow performance" in English. I painted myself completely white and drew some organic lines on my body with black paint. This gave me the feeling of being "visibly invisible" in front of some trees on the snow. The point for me was to show vulnerability, which later became a very important theme for me, which will be elaborated on later. I was vulnerable in the sense that I was naked and had no "protection". It was cold and there was snow under my bare feet. The only protection was the paint. It made me to feel embraced as well as strong and powerful. I felt an immense amount of adrenaline and was very amazed at how the paint protected me from negative feelings.

The idea of being 'visibly invisible' reflects a complex relationship with my identity and the environment around me. By camouflaging myself against the trees, I created a visual paradox that invites viewers to contemplate the nature of their presence and absence at the same time. This concept suggests a desire to blend in, while drawing attention to one's vulnerable side and existence as a human being.

This was a groundbreaking event for me in terms of performance art. I have always been very interested and curious in not only painting bodies, but also being the focus of the artwork

itself. I had never been bold and brave enough to do that before. The seminar assignment was the best case to try it out. I felt extremely empowered and got a huge shot of adrenaline while doing it, which lasted for a long time afterwards. It was clear that I wanted to work with my body in extreme situations, again – strong bodily sensations – which eventually led me to Performance.



These two images show this particular performance. The title "Fight" shows a juxtaposition emphasizing internal and external conflicts or struggles. The viewer could see it in a physical and/or metaphorical way, where I deal with existential themes and also personal growth. "Auf Biegen und Brechen", where I point to the right picture, means something like "to bend and break". It's used in German as a phrase to express that you really want to achieve something with a strong will and it doesn't matter what obstacles come your way.

The fact of being visible or not is not something we cannot really influence. It's better to think of it as a state of mind. I refer to this in a metaphorical sense in a social context – in terms of the experience of being seen (or not seen). Visibility and invisibility are crucial for me, also in the context of feelings towards it. In this case, I don't want to go deeper into this intervention

of feelings to write about it completely, so I asked Chat GPT about this association and was presented the following statement:

"The concept of visibility in a social context often transcends mere physical presence. It encompasses how individuals perceive themselves and how they are perceived by others. This idea can be understood as a mental state, where being "seen" or "unseen" relates to feelings of recognition, validation, and belonging. When someone feels visible, they often experience a sense of connection and affirmation from their peers. This visibility can manifest through active engagement in conversations, acknowledgment of contributions, or simply being included in social circles. Conversely, feeling invisible can lead to isolation and a sense of disconnection, even in crowded environments. This metaphorical visibility can be influenced by various factors, including social dynamics, personal confidence, and the willingness of others to engage. For instance, individuals who express themselves openly and assertively may find it easier to be seen, while those who are more reserved might struggle to gain recognition, regardless of their actual presence. Ultimately, understanding visibility as a mental state encourages us to reflect on our interactions and the environments we create. It highlights the importance of fostering inclusive spaces where everyone feels acknowledged and valued, thereby enhancing the overall social experience for all individuals involved. " (asked 08.09.2024)

The paragraph from Chat GPT seems to hit the nail on the head for me, which is why I would like to use it here in my work. For me, it's about the interconnectedness of emotions that are evoked in a social context or in some social environment.

Sauna

The Austrian sauna was the only one I knew before I came to Finland for the first time, and I didn't really like it there either. Because it differs from the Finnish, I want to list here some "Do's and Don'ts" about Austrian sauna culture:

- Talkativeness inside sauna, which is "prohibited"
- Nudity, which is authorised – no access with bathing clothes
- Temperature, which is about 80°C maximum (called Finnish sauna)

- Scents and aromas, which infuse the whole sauna, for example hay, meadow or also birch branches soaked in water, as well as any kind of fruit like lemon, berry etc.
- "Sauna masters" are throwing water on the stove and waving towels, fans etc. to distribute the heat

In Helsinki, however, I developed a fascination for sauna culture. The more I went to the sauna, the more I became absorbed. The sauna routine awakened in me an incessant craving for the extremes, hot and cold. As a woman, it is an important (performative) act for me to face my own nakedness, and I do it every day. There is also an interesting transformation happening in(to) sauna that I want to go deeper now. The sauna itself allows for transcendence and the exploration of physical and psychological boundaries. To explain this, I would like to go deeper into the part of transcendence and transformation that leads to the utopian space that will get explained in the next paragraph. The act of entering a particular space creates a shift in "realities". The sauna "becomes" its own new reality to enter. The sauna is a transformative environment. The immersion in the steam, as well as the heat, creates a change in consciousness. This shift can lead to a change in the mind (and body). As human beings, we are very vulnerable in there, naked, or almost naked. Exploration can bring a confrontation with discomfort or a kind of pain, especially in a hot sauna, that accelerates profound psychological insights and epiphanies. The sauna creates a utopian space. The entrance resembles a threshold of permeation, where the inner world separates from the outer world and reinvents itself.

Through the shared use of the sauna, *together*, a collective change and consciousness merge of entities is given. This change of realities is created through osmosis, where I point out the interaction and exchange of individuals and their influences on the *inner* and *outer* world. The qualities of the inner and outer worlds can influence and reshape each other. In the sauna, the experience of a fusion of sensations and emotions can lead to a reinvention of the self. This can happen both in the act of surrendering to the heat and in the shared experience with others. This reflects the most performative aspects of my work, where vulnerability leads to transformation and new understandings of identity.

Do we create our own space within the sauna?

How important is individuality in a shared space?

Is the sauna a space for emancipation?

Photo-project

It all started with a photo project for a seminar called "Performativity in Photography". It was an analogue photo project in which I spent a week photographing people on a bench outside the Sompasauuna after a sauna session. I was introduced to the Sompasauuna just a few weeks before the seminar in autumn 2021. The project was to show these people in their vulnerability and purity. Otherwise, it is difficult for people not to wrap themselves in other things and "dress up" or embellish themselves. Attributes that we use in everyday life to distinguish ourselves from others dissolve. It started with the photo below on the left side, a man called Sami. He was one of the first people I met there and talked to, when I was there to *research* and *explore*. One by one I asked people if I could take a photo of them after a session, sitting in front of the sauna, with a borrowed analogue camera from the university. I was interested in the factors of "not being beautiful" and "being sweaty" in a photo. I sat with them together in the sauna and took a photo afterwards, when they came straight out of it. I wrapped myself quickly in a towel, no glasses on, because they get steamy immediately, and shot the photos, one after every sauna session, because it was really important to capture the sweatiness, as well as the "purity" and authenticity of the people, also in the act of doing it myself in those performative circumstances.



The photos themselves turned out really interesting, more than I expected. What you can see is a blurred glimmer throughout the photos, which could be interpreted as a "sweaty effect". This coincidence, because of my bad eyesight – I didn't see any focus – perfectly aligns with the theme I was exploring. The photos are also not all very straight, which is due to my approach with the camera. Taking the shots while simply wrapped in a towel, I focused on capturing moments quickly rather than adjusting any settings accurately.

I took three photos of each person: one without flash, one with the flash pointing at the sky and one with the flash directed to the subjects. Only the one with the flash directed at the people came out good. This is because they present all elements at a similar level of "interest". Each part of the composition receives equal attention.

In all images, the blue sauna dominates the frame, covering the biggest area of the photo. At the top, there is a window through which the viewer can glimpse the other people who are *in* the sauna – some with their backs turned and other entering or going out of the sauna. In the centre, there is a person sitting on the usual bench relaxing and cooling down.



As a woman whose body doesn't fit the conventional standards of beauty, sitting naked in the sauna every day is a very important act for me.

What is the standard of beauty?

Normative standards of beauty are both conformed to and commercialised, as evidenced by the corporate world that sells us curated images of idealised beauty.

Where does normativity come from?

I believe that my presence embodies the experiences of many women, and I feel a sense of "feminist responsibility" to engage in this practice regularly. Although each day brings its own challenges, I remain committed to this ritual, because it empowers me and strengthens my sense of self. My commitment to this empowering ritual is exemplified by my visits to the Sompasauna, a special space which I write more of in the following chapter.

Sompasauna

Now let me introduce you to Sompasauna. The sauna is located on the eastern shore of Hermanni, next to Kalasatama. It's a free sauna open to everyone, 24 hours a day. It's an association with an official board that rents the place from the municipality. The name comes from the former place that was on the half island "Sompasaari". Soon, in the autumn of 2024, they will move to a new place, to the island on the east coast of Helsinki —Mustikkamaa.

Sompasauna has about 400 paying members and approximately 120000 – 180000 visitors a year, according to the database. The money needed to maintain the place is raised through membership fees and the deposit on bottles and cans collected on site. No one is employed. The place is run by the people who visit it. All the people involved do all the volunteer work for the common good, for the sauna. There are the everyday tasks such as:

- Betting water into the canisters (from a water source around 500 metres away),
- Bringing wood (which is possible with a trailer and an agreement with the surrounded constructions to get the wood from there)
- Chopping wood and dismantling pallets
- Cleaning benches and saunas inside
- Painting and repairing broken things

Sompasauna was the first and almost only sauna for me in Finland. I fell in love with it after my first visit in autumn 2021 during my first exchange semester. Another exchange semester

college brought me to this place, the Sompasaua. People are singing, there is a lot of interaction - I was immediately hooked and the more I went to the sauna, the more I fell in love with it and the whole idea of the sauna.

There are three saunas, each with a nickname and a different temperature range. "Temppeli" with a range of ~70-80°C, "Kolmonen" with ~80-100°C and "Kappeli" with ~100-120°C. My sauna of choice has always been the hot sauna — "Kappeli".

The people who go there every day are called "regulars". They often do most of the work to keep the place going and alive.

Sweat and other hidden layers in the shared space

In relation to my experience in the sauna I have observed some interesting things, which I will explain and summarise in this chapter. In many conversations with Finnish people in the sauna, I came across some situations and aspects that I wanted to know more about and at the same time questioned. It may also be an advantage not to be born into this Finnish culture. Many things that were new to me were normal for the Finns. As a foreigner, gaining a different perspective allows you to compare cultures and apply this insight to the sauna traditions. Ultimately, it opened my eyes to aspects that may become internalized and overlooked by the Finns, who are more familiar with them.

In our daily lives, people use certain attributes to "differentiate" themselves from others. It could be a symbol of status, money or success. These visible traits tell us about someone's individual lifestyle, social standing or material wealth. This display can be used to gain respect and recognition in their communities. In the sauna, however, all these distinctions are gone and no longer important. An environment is created that is equal and free from any implications about someone's status or wealth.

The sauna I visit, Kappeli is the smallest of the three. In this hot sauna, your seating position is crucial. If you take on the role of the "driver," you'll find yourself sitting next to the stove, guiding others through their sauna "adventure." With this role comes also the responsibility of managing the "löyly"—the Finnish word for the steam created by pouring water over the hot stones. This term was one of the first Finnish words I learned, and it holds a special significance in sauna culture.

At times, when you recognise many unknown faces, people even warn others about their seating choices, as the corners of the sauna retain the hottest löyly. In this intimate space, the collective experience is shaped not just by heat but by the mindful actions of each participant.

In this communal atmosphere where some choices influence the sensation of heat and steam, the "unspoken taboo" around *sweat* highlights the juxtaposition of intimate shared experiences and societal norms.

Sweat is vital to life, but it's a social taboo and people feel uncomfortable talking about it. On the one hand, sweat is a natural and essential bodily function that plays a crucial role in regulating temperature and maintaining health. On the other hand, social norms often make talking about sweat a source of embarrassment or shame. According to a study by Laukkanen et al. (2015), sweat is produced at a rate of 0.6 to 1.0 kg per hour in sauna temperatures between 80°C and 90°C.

The climax of the experience lies in the relationship between *body contact* and *sweat*. I have come to appreciate something truly remarkable: the experience of sitting together in the sauna, side by side, skin touching skin. There is this sense of acceptance and nobody questions or worries about it. It feels like this utopian reality with a "filter". If you imagine the same close physical situation, but in a metro. When someone randomly touches you with their sweaty legs and arms. People are disgusted by other people's sweat. But the really interesting thing is though that in the sauna no one really cares, it even becomes natural.

I've been researching a lot of research on sweat and the psychological link with disgust, but I haven't really been able to find any significant details or studies on the subject. It seems this topic hasn't really been researched yet. That's why I asked Chat GPT (09.09.2024) this crucial question, and it gave me the answer with some aspects I would like to mention. One is from an evolutionary point of view, where sweat is associated with stress or fear. Another is social and cultural. Disgust is often culturally conditioned, and sweat can be perceived differently in different societies. In addition, individual differences can affect these perceptions, for example, a person with a heightened sensitivity to body odours may feel more uncomfortable.

Health benefits and physiological/psychological effects of sauna

Through my regular visits I have noticed many personal health benefits. I have researched and read several studies on the subject and will discuss some results in the following chapters.

The research of Laukkanen et al. (2015) indicates that more frequent sauna bathing is linked to a “lower risk of sudden cardiac death (SCD), coronary heart disease (CHD), cardiovascular disease (CVD)”, and overall “mortality”. Additionally, “long-term sauna use has been” correlated with reduced “blood pressure” and improved left ventricular function, which may contribute to a “decreased risk of cardiovascular disease” (ibid).

The outcome of the study shows a reduced risk of death with up to 63 %, if you go 4 to 7 times a week. Studies by Podstawski et al. have shown that exposure to saunas has a significant "increase in vigor with a simultaneous decrease in tension, depression, anger, fatigue, and confusion" (2024, 1, para. 4)

The physical and psychological effects of regular sauna use, including a significant reduction in the risk of death and improvements in mental health and well-being, resonate strongly with the concept of vulnerability. They show how participation in these shared experiences can build resilience and a sense of connection to our inner selves, a theme I will explore further through Judith Butler's theoretical framework.

Inner states of being (or non-being?) – Vulnerability

I have been interested in vulnerability for a long time. Ever since I came to Finland, I have been very interested in the connection of sauna and vulnerability. It is almost undeniable that vulnerability is inherent in human beings. In the following section I will explore the theoretical background of vulnerability, derived from Judith Butler's writings.

"The boundary of who I am is the boundary of the body, but the boundary of the body never fully belongs to me" (Butler 2009, 54). The quote from Judith Butler gives an insight into the philosophical topic she deals with. We are not the masters of our bodies. It shows the indispensability of the interdependence of the self and "the others". The interdependence reflects the complex relationship between our individual identities and the influence of social and cultural contexts. The suggestion is that while we perceive our body as a personal boundary that defines who we are, this boundary is constantly shaped by interactions with and from others, as well as by societal expectations. Our sense of self is not created in isolation

but is shaped by relationships, experiences and the perceptions of those around us. This interdependence emphasises that our identities are formed in conjunction with others and illustrates the idea that we exist in a web of shared human experiences and connections. It's relevant to address the topic of vulnerability in this context, as it is about breaking down conventions and removing taboos from the body in its diversity. It is important to write and talk about artists who critically engage social thinking.

I am interested in artists who confront their own naked body and deal with it in an artistic way. As humans we are under social pressure to "live up" to ideals. The over-shaping of the body, especially the female body, creates an imbalance of social and self-imposed norms. This aspect is and has always been present in all my artistic thinking and work. The body is something that is inherent to the whole of life. The contemplation of us or myself is really something indispensable and strongly anchored in my process. I will show two more artistic references. I have chosen Sophia Süßmilch and Jakob Lena Knebl because these two artists work with their naked or painted bodies, which I would like to show in this work and relate to the theme of vulnerability and the sauna.

First of all, I would like to introduce Sophia Süßmilch; she was born in Munich, Germany, in 1983. She seems very pure, cheeky, and does not mince her words. Süßmilch uses her body as a tool for performances to bring feminist issues into society with a lot of irony and sarcasm. She is also a painter and works with video. She furthermore collaborates with her mother in her performances.

Through the lens of the topic of vulnerability, Süßmilch's work invites audiences to confront uncomfortable truths about gender, identity, and the female experience. Her straightforward use of her body as a canvas for expression reveals a profound vulnerability, as it challenges both societal norms and personal boundaries. The irony and sarcasm she employs serve not only as a method of critique but also as a means of disarming her viewers, creating an accessible entry point for difficult conversations.

Süßmilch's dynamic collaborations with her mother further emphasise the theme of vulnerability as they explore familial relationships and comfort within the context of feminist dialogue. This collaboration speaks to the complexities of womanhood, where generational narratives and shared experiences intertwine.

In this work “Selbstportrait als 70er Jahre Feministin“ on the next page, she has two long tubes on her breasts that create an extension of one of her own body parts. This addition serves not only as a physical alteration but also as a metaphorical commentary on the ways in which societal expectations stretch and reshape the female form. The tubes create a striking visual effect, transforming her body into a sculptural object that challenges conventional ideals of femininity.



The juxtaposition of the familiar—the human form—with the surreal—the long tubes—underlines the conversation around vulnerability and the connection with strength. Süßmilch's work becomes an embodiment of both, forcing observers to confront not just how they see her, but how they view their own bodies in relation to societal norms. The subject, herself in the photo, provokes the viewer to deal with and think about issues of identity, femininity, and the ongoing pressures to conform.

Süßmilch's work is a poignant reminder of the strength found in vulnerability. By exposing herself and engaging her audience in this way, she challenges preconceived notions and fosters an environment for reflection and dialogue, ultimately enriching the discourse on feminism in contemporary society.

The second artist I would like to mention is Jakob Lena Knebl, an Austrian artist born in Baden in 1970. She and her partner Ashley Hans Scheirl are an artistic duo. Their artistic collaboration is a vibrant exploration of identity, gender, and the interplay of personal and cultural narratives. Their work often combines different media, including sculpture, installation, and performance, to challenge conventional boundaries and provoke thought.

I chose these two particular works of Jakob Lena Knebl because her painted naked body is very much present in "Richard" and "Chesterfield". In her work, the exposure of the body transcends mere physicality and becomes an intimate invitation for the recipient to confront different layers of intimacy, exposure, and strength. Her exploration of the naked body resonates with the themes of vulnerability, identity, and self-expression that I explore in my thesis.

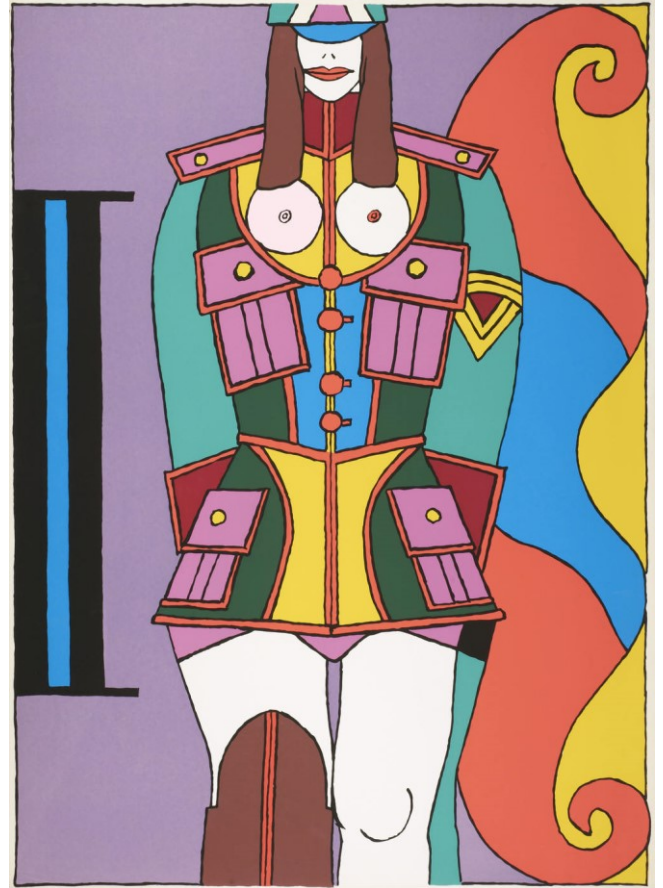
By displaying her naked body, Knebl actively challenges societal norms of idealised representations of the human form or shape. This provokes critical thinking and encourages recipients to reflect on their own feelings of vulnerability—whether they manifest as shame, empowerment, or something in between. A dialogue about how we perceive our bodies and challenge our cultural narratives around self-image is forced within ourselves or with others confronting those works. Her work reframes vulnerability as a source of strength and empowerment, advocating for a more compassionate and accepting view rather than presenting vulnerability as a weakness.



Knebl often disrupts conventional perceptions of vulnerability by combining her body with unconventional materials. In "Chesterfield", the artwork above, she creates a space in which the familiar, such as the Fauteuils itself, and the surreal, such as the illusion of the armchair as colour on the naked body and the cushions on the arms, coexist. Her voluminous body is painted as a seat cushion with buttons. She often uses art and design history as references. In this case she relates to the Design classic, the Chesterfield sofa. They "are one of the most renowned sofa designs in the world [and it is] defined by rolled arms, low [curved] back, deep button tufting" (Saxon 2022), whereas she implements all those features in this performance photo work.

In the work "Richard" you can see in the left photo below, she refers to the artwork by Richard Lindner titled "Changing Sexuality" (right photo below), which is one artwork of a diptych. Lindner's work captures the tension between societal norms and reflects the changing perceptions of sexuality at the time of its creation and the evolving landscape of sexual identity. Knebl's account and relation of his work includes an examination of how personal

and collective identities are constructed and perceived. The way her body is painted shows the fluid transitions between the attributes that are "classically" connoted as female and male, such as the uniform or the long pink hair. Knebl wears it almost as a superhero costume, with the illusion of a black bandana on the eyes and a big belt around the belly.



These two artists present a form that deviates from normative and conventional standards of beauty and chasing the topics of vulnerability and nudity in a provocative way.

Referring to the mentioned artists and their handling of the naked female body itself is something so crucial for me. My art, thematizing nudity, body-image-issues, it's essential to evaluate the introspection of the effect of the subject on the recipient. In my paintings there is a lot of room for interpretation and possible visual adaptation, because of the different levels of abstraction and openness inherent in them. The vulnerability

I would also like to look more closely at the issue of vulnerability and its components.

In Judith Butler's framework, the concept of vulnerability can be seen in a "relationalen Sinn" (Stöhr et al., 2019, p. 221). The relational sense, as this quote translates, means an inherent connection to our interactions and relationships with others and the social contexts in which we exist. Rather than seeing vulnerability as an isolated characteristic of individuals, Butler emphasises that it is shaped and influenced by the relational dynamics in which we engage. It emerges from our connections with others and is deeply intertwined with social events.

This perspective means that the experiences of vulnerability is no "individuelle Eigenschaft" (Stöhr, et al. 2019, 232), which means it's no personal or individual characteristic, but significantly influenced by the environment, other relationships and support systems that are available to us. For example, an individual's vulnerability can be enhanced or diminished by their social environment, which includes cultural norms, power structures and wider societal conditions. Therefore, Butler suggests that our identities and experiences of being vulnerable are constructed through our social interactions and shared experiences, highlighting that vulnerability is fundamentally a social phenomenon (ibid).

In this way, vulnerability encapsulates the essence of our human experiences—encompassing suffering, strength, and resilience—shaped by our relationships with others and our involvement in a complex network of social relations. By recognizing vulnerability in this relational sense, we can gain a deeper understanding of how it operates within societal frameworks and the implications it has not only for individual identities but also for concepts of solidarity and social justice.

The discussion of vulnerability is often viewed negatively, linked to weaknesses or the potential for injury. However, Butler contends that this perspective should be reevaluated. She advocates for a positive interpretation of vulnerability as an essential component of resilience, empowerment, and other positive traits, serving as a counterpoint to the negative perception of the "weak." For Butler, particularly in "Frames of War", vulnerability is a victim status that is influenced by social and political contexts. Individuals are vulnerable not in isolation, but through their connections with others and within a social structure. Butler highlights how certain groups, usually minorities, are often made more vulnerable by systemic inequalities, making their victimisation visible and urgent. Acknowledging this structured vulnerability, she argues, is essential to support empathy, solidarity and political action in response to suffering.

The concept of vulnerability can be divided into five sub-areas: physicality/corporality, performativity, political agency, recognition and dependency, where I am going to explain them in short statements and conclude in the end.

- Physicality

Physicality, as part of vulnerability, surrounds the embodiment and awareness of the body. The human body is exposed in a network of relationships, which influences its existence and actions. This interconnectedness expresses that physicality and must be understood within social frameworks and historical contexts. Butler views embodiment as central to vulnerability, as the body experiences both suffering and pleasure. Furthermore, the body is shaped by social and political forces that allow us to exist. A key element of physicality is performativity, which extends the understanding of the relationship between the body and vulnerability.

- Performativity

Performativity is closely linked to physicality and is determined by social influences and interdependent relationships. Butler also considers this performativity in the context of vulnerability and resistance. Social positioning and the resulting recognition play a crucial role. The way we express ourselves can assign societal values and identities to individuals and can be both supportive and harmful. Butler emphasizes the necessity of critically questioning language to promote the use of being more inclusive of how we address each other.

- Recognition

Recognition is central to the concept of vulnerability. Humans are social beings whose identity emerges from the process of being recognized by others. How we are addressed by others affects our social standing and whether we feel attacked or accepted. These processes are uncontrollable and deeply rooted in social structures and norms. Butler argues that an active struggle for recognition is necessary and that education should raise awareness of social inequalities.

- Dependence

The section on dependence discusses the essential relationships between individuals. People rely on social connections that are necessary for survival. This dependence creates a fundamental vulnerability, as loss or separation can have strong impacts on individual well-

being. Butler argues that we cannot exist without the care of others, which highlights intentions and the importance of relationships.

- Political Agency

Butler articulates a theory of political agency based on collective actions. Bodies gathered together can make political claims or requests and challenge the conditions of their existence. Political action manifests through physical presence and the impact of media content. Butler sees vulnerability not as opposed to resistance but as an essential component of it. Critical awareness and openness are central elements that shape the understanding of political agency and indicate the necessity of collective and shared responsibility.

In conclusion, the exploration of physicality, performativity, recognition, dependence, and political agency reveals the intricate relationship between the human body and social constructs of vulnerability. Butler's framework emphasizes that our bodily existence is not only shaped by external relationships and historical contexts but also intertwined with the recognition we receive from others. Vulnerability is portrayed as a shared human condition rather than a trait of specific groups, highlighting the interdependence inherent in human relationships.

The concept of performativity underscores the importance of language and social practices in shaping identities and social positions. Engaging critically with these elements fosters a deeper understanding of how societal norms influence our experiences of recognition and value. As individuals, our actions within social contexts can either reinforce or challenge existing power dynamics.

Ultimately, Butler's insights call for an awareness of our collective vulnerability and responsibility. They encourage us to embrace vulnerability as a site of potential resistance and political action, advocating for a more inclusive and compassionate society where recognition and care for one another are paramount. By acknowledging our interconnectedness, we can work towards a future that values human dignity and fosters the conditions for collective empowerment and agency.

"Here I come" - The essence of Qualia

There is also another thematical concept that is very interesting to connect with my work. Once I had a studio visit and the professor told me that he could see a strong connection of

my work and the Essence of Qualia. The expression Qualia comes from the phenomenology and is often used "to refer to the introspectively accessible, phenomenal aspects of our mental lives" (Tye 2021).

This following statement presents the Qualia-concept.

"The phenomenal contents of consciousness include the experienced sensory qualities that refer to the external world, but also experiences that relate purely to the internal world, such as feelings, thoughts, pain and so on. Each sensory modality – such as seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting or touching – has a broader or narrower spectrum of typical qualities that are completely different from those of all other sensory modalities" (Anthrowiki 2021).

It seems that Qualia is something which is "between the lines" and not as easy to grasp as a "usual" visual experience. It goes deeper and tries to explain and include hidden structures, thoughts and probably room of interpretations of a special occasion, such as being a viewer of an artwork.

The connection between the concept and qualia could have a number of different points that I would like to contextualise such as subjective and embodied experience, emotional resonance and the perception of my Art.

On the one hand, there is subjective experience. It's the main road used for the ground of artistic creation. Qualia focus on the personal, qualitative aspects of experience. These can be sensory experiences, such as how it feels to experience colour, pain or cold. My exploration of vulnerability through physicality, and their exposure, as well as paint on my body evokes strong sensory experiences. The way I *perceive and embody* the sensation of the extremes, which is mostly very cold (in the snow), as well as very hot (in sauna), the *visual impact* of your painted nude body and the *feelings* of strength and protection through it, are all very subjective qualia that inform the essence of the character of my performance.

Conclusion

In this master's thesis titled "SWEAT," I am intertwining the personal and collective experiences that can be found within the Finnish sauna culture, highlighting its impact on the artistic practice. This exploration transcends into mere physicality and dives into the psychological, cultural, and emotional realms by reflecting upon how the sauna serves as a transformative space for vulnerability, community, and self-acceptance and -reflection.

The thesis serves as a personal narrative on the role of the sauna as an emancipatory environment, particularly for women, where societal norms regarding body image dissolve, creating a utopian room of authenticity. In order to engage with the themes of nudity, performativity and vulnerability, the philosophical insights of Judith Butler argue that our identities are continually shaped by our interactions with others, particularly in shared spaces where we confront our human existence.

In order to also reflect on the Kuvan Kevät 2024 exhibition I participated in, the artworks I showed, which was a large installation including five paintings and a cyanotype sauna installation, I improved and developed more than practical artistic skills on a professional level. I also experienced an expansion of my capacity for self-reflection, constructive feedback and the ability to express and present my own artwork and to evaluate the ideas and backgrounds behind it. It also involves working intensively with several people who are ultimately responsible for the exhibition, the curator, the technicians and the organisers.

Throughout my general post-media artistic practice, as presented in the thesis, including painting, drawing installations as well as photo projects, the recipient is invited to reflect on their own bodily perceptions and emotional states. The sauna, as presented in this work, becomes more than just a place for physical relaxation, it becomes a stage for introspection and the social interconnection in a community. A question of belonging and emotional liberation is raised. It also highlights the need for discussions around nudity and vulnerability that challenge cultural taboos and encourage a re-examination of beauty standards. By capturing moments of raw authenticity and the openness of the human experience, it supports a wider acceptance of body diversity and personal narratives within the art world.

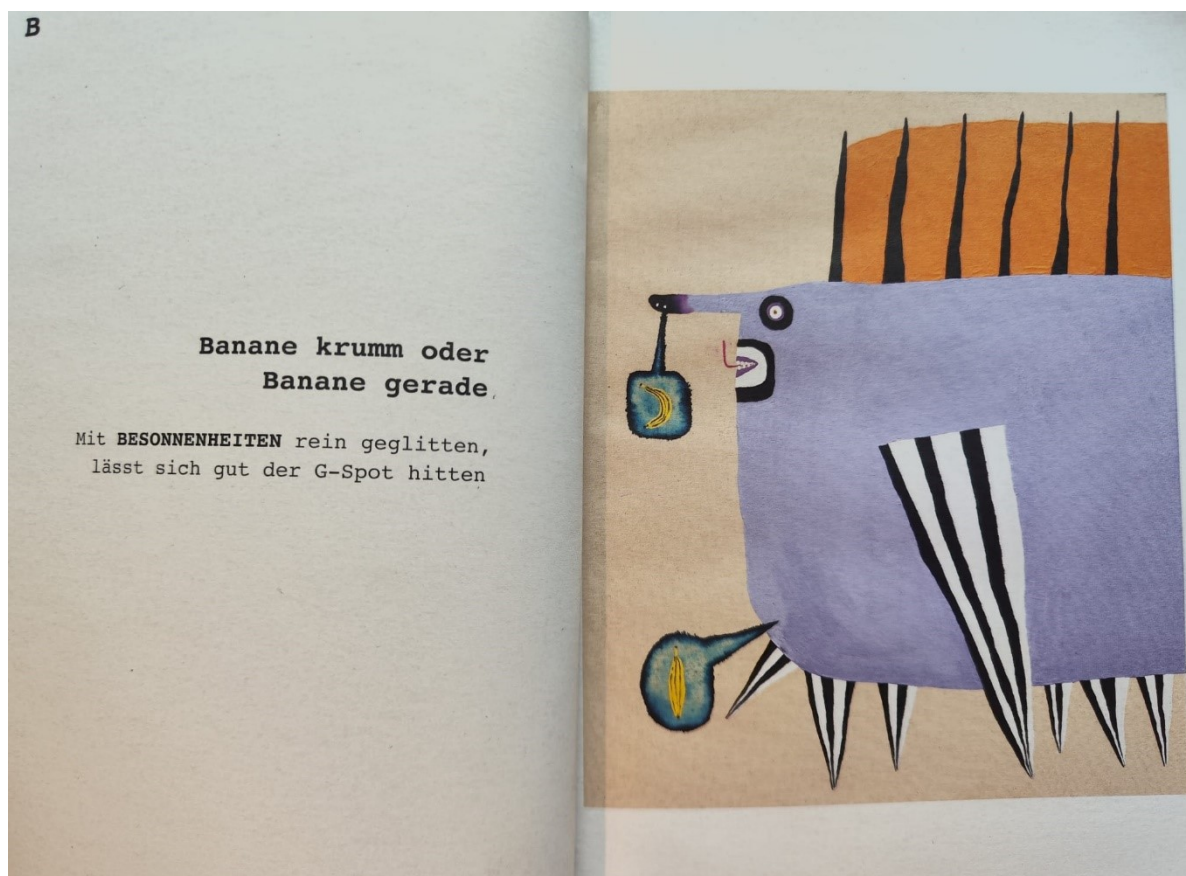
The "Sauna ABC", which is in the appendix, appears as visually poetic and imaginative manifestation of the journey, encapsulates the essence of her exploratory work, inviting

readers and viewers alike to engage with the intimate narratives of human experience underlying the seemingly mundane act of sweating.

All in all, the thesis "SWEAT" could be seen as a "manifest" to the power of art as a medium for transformation, self-healing and collective understanding of the interconnectedness of our physical experiences with deeper psychological realities. It's a synthesis of philosophy, personal affirmation and artistic practice that not only enriches the discourse on vulnerability, community and art, but also rethinks the confrontation with our own bodies and emotional landscapes in relation to the spaces we share. In doing so, it calls for reflection on the consciousness that holds the profound complexity of identity, intimacy and human existence.

Sauna ABC – a poetic and sweaty journey

The Sauna ABC is an idea that has been influenced by two books that I would like to describe in more detail. The first book is called "Das ABC der klugen Entscheidungen", which means it's the ABC of smart decisions. It's a book by Sophia Süßmlich that she made for the Marianne Defet painting scholarship that she got. It has very short texts for each letter of the alphabet on the left and a painting of hers on the right of each double page.



The second book I am referring to is called "Janosch: Wörterbuch der Lebenskunst", which translates as "Dictionary of the Art of Living". A friend of mine showed it to me many years ago. Janosch is a character in a series of children's books. This one is a bit different, it is actually very useful wisdom, but also quite funny, but in a more adult kind of humour.



Aber ja – aber nein!

Länger als diese Wortschöpfung sollte die Rede des Lebenskünstlers nie sein. Fragt man ihn in einer Unterhaltung nach seiner Meinung, sollte er sie einfließen lassen: »Aber ja doch! Aber nein!!« – Dadurch hält er die Reden seiner Gesprächspartner in Fluss und wird, weil er weiter nicht durch eigene Reden stört, hoch geschätzt. Währenddessen sollte er langsam und stetig weiter essen, sonst werden die Nudeln kalt.

Aber wozu denn das?

Philosophische Grundsatzfrage, welche sich der Lebenskünstler stellen sollte, bevor er etwas beginnt, was ihm Arbeit verursacht, oder bevor er sein Verhalten irgendwo irgendwie darauf auszurichten gedenkt, um jemandem zu gefallen. Oder gar, um geliebt zu werden.

Abhängigkeit

Ist einer der sichersten Wege in die Verelendung. Je größer die Abhängigkeit, umso größer die Entfernung zur Kunst des Lebens.

(Siehe auch unter *Unabhängigkeit*.)

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Appendix

The Sauna-ABC: A Poetic and Sweaty Journey

A VANTO

On a Thursday evening, it's around 17:00 o'clock. I go for a walk to Sauna, it's January. Markus and Juho told me to come to the shore on the south side of the Sompasauna, there is a rare specialty today. They made a "Rauniot kiuas", 6 or 7 people are here. This kiuas, which means stove, is made out of a big pile of found natural stones, rauniot means ruin, because of aesthetic similarities. In the middle, there is a small hole with a grill for the fire. It got heated it for about 6 hours.

When the "stove" is ready and hot, the embers get taken completely out. It needs to get a first "wash" with water on the surface now so the black ash dust goes away. A wooden structure frames the spectacle. Everybody helps now to get the tarp over this formation, big stones to weight it down.

It's windy.

Everyone gets their clothes off and jumps under the tarp to sit on the bench (and table) inside. The first scoop of water.

The next coming.

Amazing.

The wind whistles loud and the plane is flatteringly heavily.

But it's still quiet.

Ready for the cooling! White, all along.

Snow, ice, everywhere I can see. A small round shaped hole in the middle of the frozen ocean. It's called Avanto, the "open form". The ice bath. When you feel like it's too hot to handle anymore inside, you are craving for those 0 degrees of water. Walking fiddly on the ice towards the open sea, trying not to slip. The skin is steaming like smoke streams out of humans. Getting out of my flip-flops. I leave the towel at the bench which is on the outside, towards the sea.

The others do it. Putting themselves into this hole and into the water, I feel a little anxiety. I pull myself together and get my whole braveness out. I don't even know how deep it is underneath. Grabbing those two sticks with my hands and drag my body down into the hole.



B

IKE

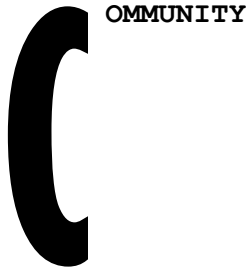
Having this pink box at the back of the bike. I put my bag, which is always quite full, with Sauna things on there. My "equipment", which I always have with me are: two towels, working gloves, a Sauna hat, sandals and a bottle of water.

I take my bike. Every day. Put my whole stuff on the backside, then I am ready to go. Riding alongside the shore. The sun goes down, I can see it. The left side of my cheeks get a little glimpse of the autumn sun and warm it a bit.

*My new orange jacket and some light pink trousers meet the shallow
yellow and pink shine of the sun.*

The roadway is always quite bumpy and the closer it gets to the winter; it's getting more and more dangerous on the ice road.





Helping each other, keeping the place alive, TOGETHER! That's the "mantra" of Sompasauna.

If people don't work from their own motivation, the place couldn't exist.

It's merging a lot of disciplines

TOGETHER.

People who can paint. People who can built. People who can construct. People who can organize. People who can saw. People who can write. People who can date. People who can play. People who can sing. People who can change. People who can see. People who can find. People who can run. People who can work. People who can translate. People who can have fun. People who can gather. People who can replace. People who can feel. People who can labour. People who can level. People who can assign. People who can project. People who can slog. People who can effort. People who can laugh. People who can search. Perform. People who can operate. People who can function. People who can go. People who can exert. People who can industry. People who can behave. People who can guide. People who can create. People who can generate. People who can bring. People who can make. People who can catalyse. People who can encourage. People who can breed. People who can promote. People who can introduce. People who can start. People who can develop. People who can launch. People who can initiate. People who can forward. People who can cultivate. People who can seed. People who can foster. People who can nurture. People who can nourish. People who can enact. People who can inaugurate. People who can solve.



DIPPING

I can't stand it any longer, quickly out of the heat. I drag myself on the ground, head down, forwards towards the door. That's where I need to get out. My back is burning.

Just don't slip now.

The decision is made, quickly run down the steps, slam the door open and get out.

Your whole body is steaming as if you've been boiling in a pot for a long time. Your skin pores are wide open and hungry for the cold. Cooling off is waiting ahead. The journey is the reward, they say. Walking carefully on the soaking wet floor, aiming for the water. In the sandals, it almost feels as if some sharp stones are pinching the soles. Sandals are taken off on the side of the shore, towel hung on the wooden beam. Toes are the first to touch the water. Climbing down the ladder rung by rung directly into the water.

Immediately turn around and swim into the vastness of the ocean to be the first to take in the cold water and admire the colours of the sky. A soft pink pours over a rich orange, which fades towards the north. It seems as if the sky is glowing and carrying pink clouds. The dark blue night hangs over it, turning almost black behind me. The water reflects what is happening, as if the horizon is tearing open a second utopian reality and the same human events are happening there in reverse. Back to the shore.

Still in the water, hands clutching the ladder. My head is still warm. I close my eyes. I feel my pulse, it becomes more and more intense by every beat. The more I focus on it, the slower it gets.

The heartbeat makes my whole-body tremble.

A warm film of water forms around my body, like a protective layer. If I move even a centimetre, the layer sloshes away and my skin touches cold water again. Gentle waves carry me gently towards the shore.



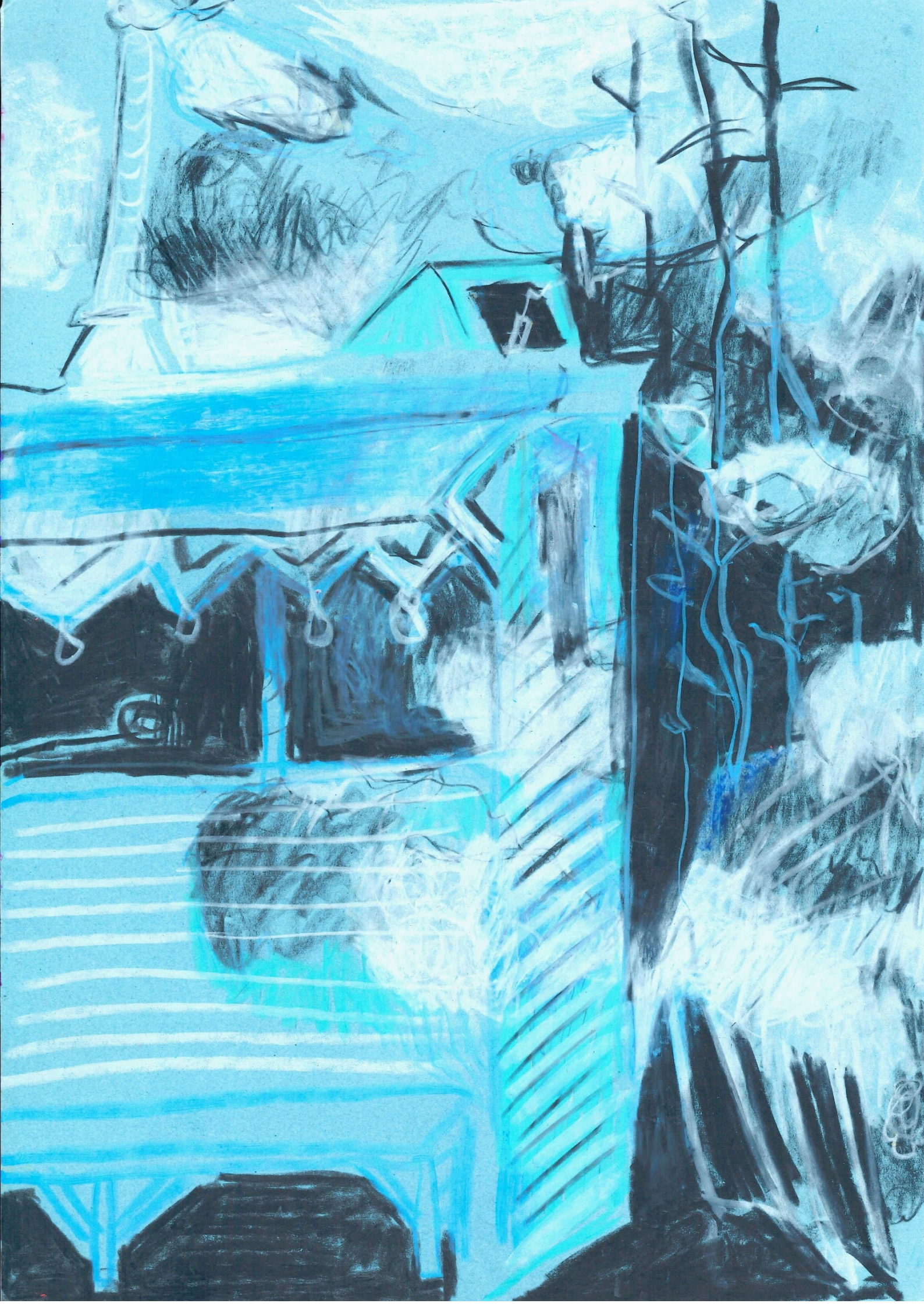


»cannot wait till the
sauna is ready!

»the waiting, it gets hot*

»there is a reward for you
& me.

»can[not] wait!



FUNDAMENTAL FIRE

clicking,
tickling.
flicking,
sticking,
nicking,
clucking,
clacking,
picking,
kicking,
beating,
battling,
whooping,
twisting,
tripping,
turning,
needing,
tempting,
supporting,
clogging,
soaking,
sizzling,
seeking.



G

LOWING

...as. Gl...

... Glow on the roof. The fire is flickering out of the chimney. Sometimes very wild and far out. I never know when there is too little or too much wood in the stove, it's a philosophy.

... batteries.

Glow of the stars that are around in heaven. It doesn't actually always show like that. The city lights pollution prevents it sometimes, so the sky is not even dark in the night.

Glow of the lights, which are hanging around. But only work with batteries. They give a little warm brightness into the black surround...

...undings. Glow

Glow of the candles which are on the floor and show you the way. Flickeringly reflected on the little ponds and the water. We get this warmth. That lights on my body when I go close to it.

...eries. They

...give a little warm brightness into the bla...

...northern lights on the sky.

G

Glow of the lights, which are hanging around. But only work with batteries. They give a little warm brightness into the black surroundings.

Glow in the stove when it lights up the dark room of sauna. You can see it already from the window outside.



The Sauna is too wet. We need to close it. We can also check the Stones, how wet they still are, if you can take them into your hands, it's too cold. The "professionals" always try to get the best Sauna they can get there.

Toni takes the bucket out of the Sauna and getting all the people out, if possible. The heating is way faster, when the Sauna is empty than full with people. Probably the people take all the heat in, when they are sitting still inside. We had a few comparisons; it really is faster when empty. Putting the red bollard in front of the Sauna door, which associates, it's closed for now.

Don't go in.

Regulars from time to time make a deep cleaning. That means putting out the benches. Someone brings seawater in two buckets, put a bit of pine soap in there and brush the benches. The floor inside gets washed too, they float it with tap water and then it gets carefully wiped out.

Nobody needs to arrange. People know what to do.

Other people running around, asking when it's gonna open again. It needs to dry up, best way, when completely and no spots on the floor. Wet Löyly is something what only few people really like. Majority likes it hot and dry.

Jere says to me: "There is no smoke from Kappeli coming". Smoke is gone. Fastly putting wood into the stove. Checking the "mittari", the thermostat. It's 105, let's keep it still around 10 minutes closed. Seems like it's a philosophy of how much wood, when to put it and which size the logs should have.

Meanwhile I am cutting some wood. Someone shouts my Name "Daniela come!" - "We are opening!".

We are gathering. The one who closed it takes usually the bucket with water and takes it in, is the driver. Everyone follows. One is asking if there is still place "Yks mahtuu".

It's full now





TERATIVE

Following the sound of

the company's
central report

to report



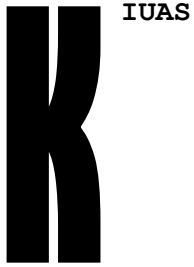
J

oy

1000 times joy.







From the outside it must sound almost like a cult.

We are talking about the L
stove, called kiuas in E
Finnish, all the time. It's almost our holy grail. Is it T
too wet, and the `
stones too cold S
,we need to close H
the sauna to heat A
it up. There is V
always a risk of E
people get -ting angry A
of annoyed with us, H
because we close O
the sauna to dry it and heat it up. T
The person in charge usually feeds the S
stove and keeps it closed. When it's A
ready though, We tell everyone around, that U
the hot sauna is ready just now. "Kuuma sauna N
on valmis" is the one person yelling, who A
took care of the sauna to heat it up. Now let's take sauna. !



ÖYLÖ

The "driver" is the person sitting next to the stove. Everyone has their own way of throwing löyly. People complain a lot, especially those who are not regular visitors to Kappeli, the hot sauna. There's even a nickname for it, "crematorium", just an anecdote.

Löyly literally means steam, but it's used to describe the act of throwing water on the stove. Obviously, a bucket and a scoop are part of the Löyly. The handle of the scoop is actually a beautiful piece of natural wood.

The scoop is the sceptre of the sauna.

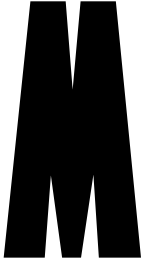
It's all about the löyly. In a communal sauna there is a lot of bargaining. How much to throw until everyone is "satisfied". The löyly is very different, depending on different factors.

A very hot (~120°C) and dry sauna needs only a minimum number of stones.

If the stones get too wet, the löyly doesn't evaporate fast enough and the steam/room becomes too wet.

Too wet, we have to close.





INDSET

free
you
teach it
worship it and
yourself not self
holding
as round catch
ti zith breath



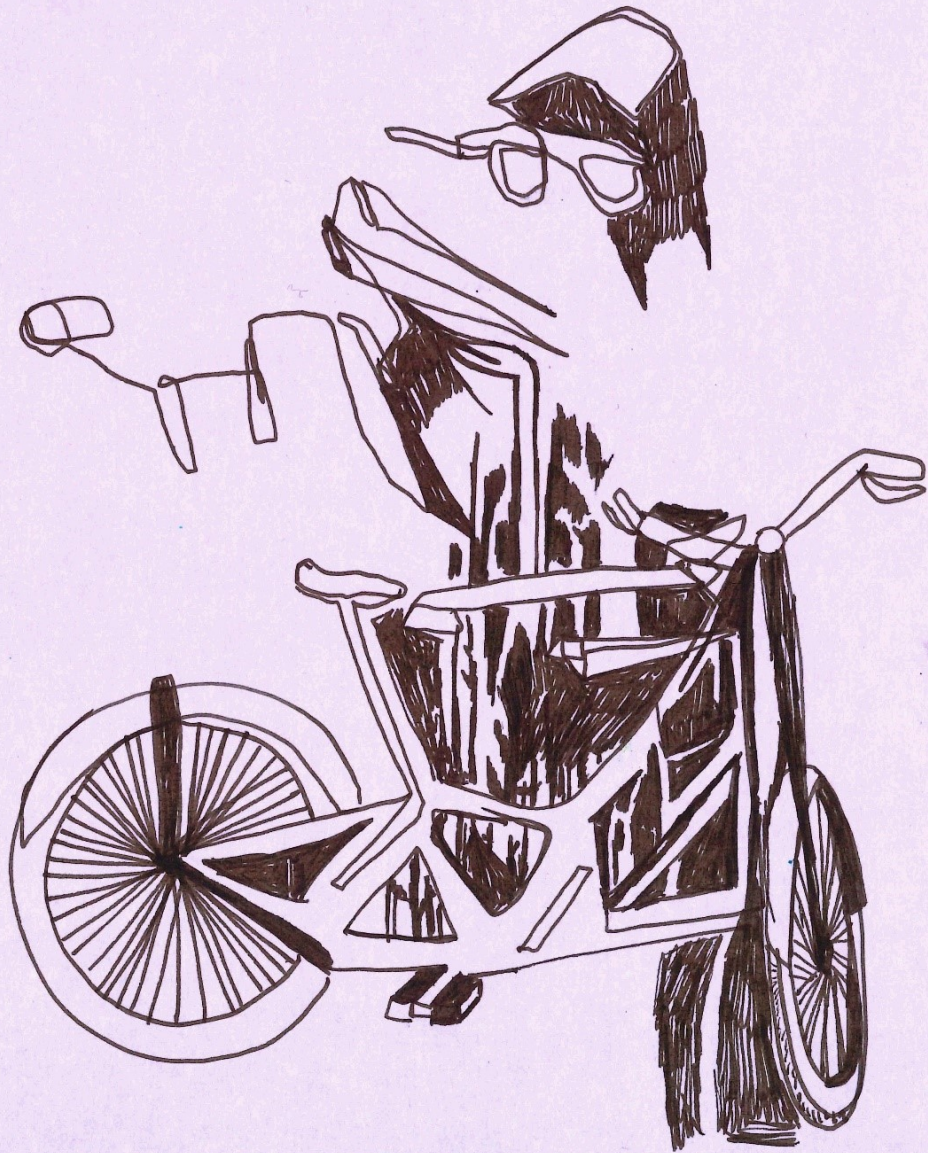
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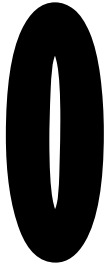
OIDANKEHÄ

It is not as if
you are holding
yourself free

at the
charge

and worship
it of yourself,
teach it





VI KIINNI

CLOSE THE DOOR!

SHUT THE DOOR!

WIND GETS IN, CLOSE IT!

IT GETS COLD; SHUT!

CLOSE IT!

PERKELE, OVI!

VOITKO SULKEA OVEN?

ÄLÄ PIDÄ OVEA AUKI!

OVI KIINNI, KIITOS!

PIDÄ OVI KIINNI!

LÄMPÖ KARNAA!

SAUNA ON PARASTA, KUN OVI ON KIINNI!

PIDETÄÄN LÄMPÖ SISÄLLÄ!

ÄLÄ PÄÄSTÄ KYLMÄÄ ILMAA SISÄÄN!

SULJE OVI; NIIN SAADAAN LISÄÄ LÖYLYÄ!

PAREMPI OLLA ILMAN VETOA!

OVI!

KIINNI!



P

IANO

The open stage, in the middle of the area contains different music instruments for everyone to use.

Different musicians hop up and off to make music, often together. It's a collective place for music.

Often random people and jump in and sing, dance, rhythm or whatever together.

I am sitting on the bench outside with my back on the wooden construction of the stage. The stage wobbles, especially if the concert player hammers into the piano.

Vivid!

It's loud and lively. There are lots of bands, or band members, like from "Bändi" or "Musta Koiri" who are regularly at the Sauna and they just start to sing and/or play an instrument.



Q

QUANTITY

COUNTLESS
COUNTELS
COUNTLE

countl

count

cuo

co

c



R

ATS

A scream. Someone got scared.

It was a rat.

One more. They can be anywhere.

Another rat scurrying from one shelter to the Sauna.

A scream. Someone got
scared.

One more. They can be
anywhere.

It was a rat. One more. They can be anywhere. Another rat scurrying from one shelter to the Sauna. A scream. Someone got scared. One more. They can be anywhere. Another rat scurrying from one shelter to the Sauna. A scream. Someone got scared. One more. They can be anywhere. Another rat scurrying from one shelter to the Sauna.





TEMPERATURE

Getting out of my white slippers, put them on the right side onto the wood there in the corner

Walking downstairs, carefully, don't want to slip, because that happened to me already once and I don't want it again. The hands at the railings, I have to walk quite fast actually with a lot of weight on the hands, because otherwise the hands and feet get stuck on the ice. The toes first can get a glimpse what's to come now. From 120 degrees inside the Sauna down to 0 degrees inside the water, whereas outside it's minus 20 degrees.

The whole body inside the water, the big wall of ice is scratching my back a little.

I can feel the sharp ends of the ice cutting towards my skin. I count from A to Z, that's my tactic of feeling the time I use in there.

My body starts tickling.

The feet start to get numb, a little. The skin all over my body is changing colour and texture. It's called the "Sauna tattoo" or "tiger skin". The more you go to the hot sauna and burn your skin every time, a little bit.

This skin pattern stays more and more, longer and longer.

I talked with Ria, she works in the pathology. We talked about her skin; she loves very hot Sauna. She told me it's red blood cells with come trough the veins. If you don't go to Sauna for a few weeks, then it will disappear again.

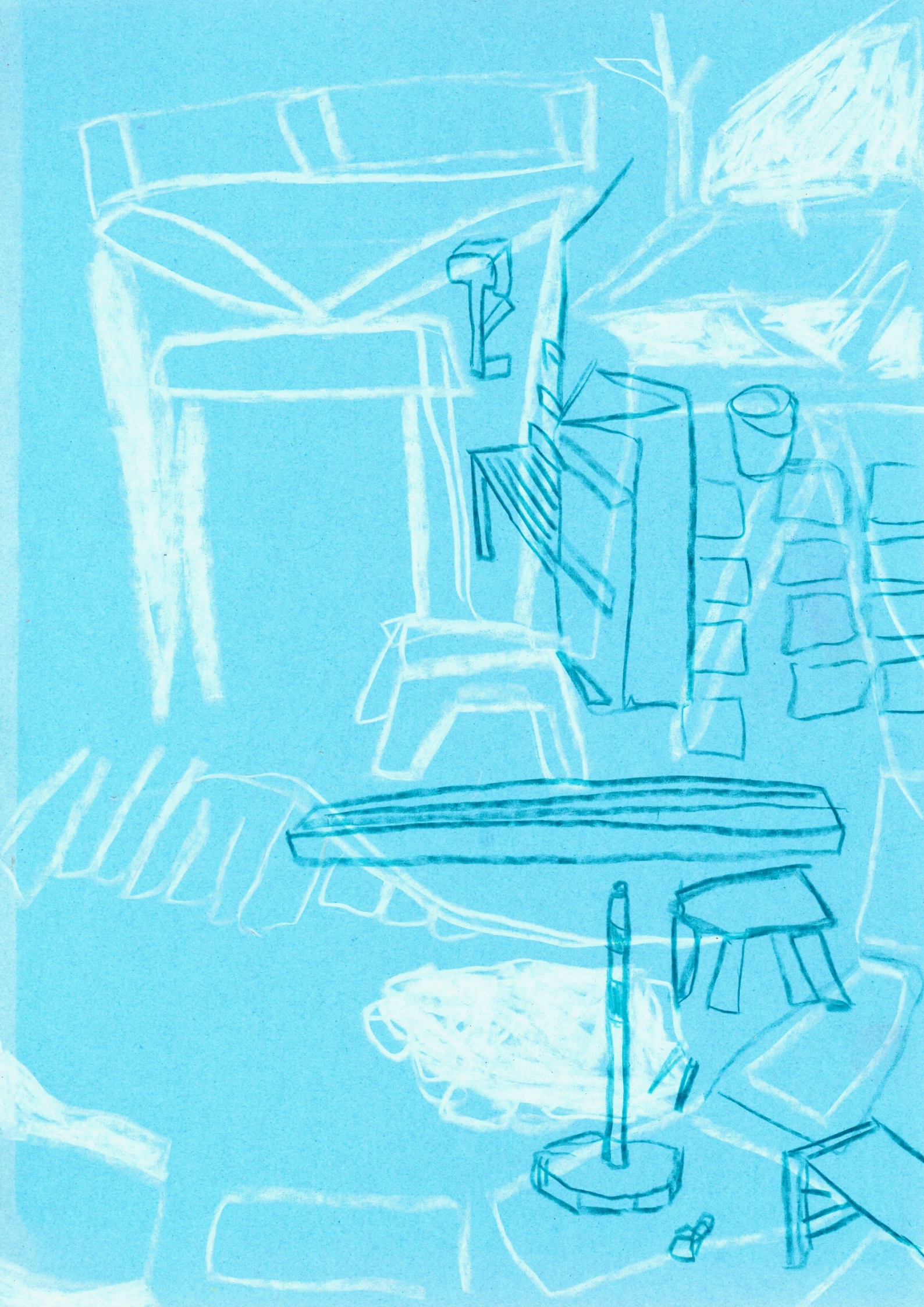




NDRESS

g n a h « »] « » t h i n s s e g e
 y o s i . h t s s e g e
 u r i n

i s i s
 s i t o u a
 t n a
 c e r e h s
 o l d u r e



V IHTOA

Slap,slapping each other.*

The birch branches,*

»Slap,slap,slapping slap.«

Slapping me from back

to neck,slapping the

Aromas out of it.*



WOOD

Bringing wood from the constructions around is fine, there is an agreement with the Sompasauna. With the trailer on someone's car, it's ready to go. Getting to the construction next to Kalasatama, today.

Sompasauna needs masses of wood. Saunas are almost running 24/7. Is the storage full, it will hold for maybe 3 or 4 days, maximum. It depends also on the season.

The Sauna is busier in Summer, so way more wood is needed then.
There are different tools for making wood.

There are axes for chopping wood.

There are saws for sawing wood.

There is a hammer for dismantling wood.

There is a "Sahapukki" or sawhorse where to put on the wood.

There is a self-built metal construction for breaking wooden boards.

You can use all types of wood to burn. One kilo of wood pulp gives off always the same amount of heat, no matter which type. There is a difference in the quality, how much it weighs per cubic meter. The heavier the wood is, the higher the calorific value of the wood, which means, the better and longer it lasts to burn. Birch is the

We can burn wood with nails. We can burn wood from pallets. We can burn wood directly from the trunk. We can burn wood

We cannot burn wood with vanish. We cannot burn wood with construction foam. We cannot burn wood which is glued. We cannot burn wood-oriented strand/structural board. We cannot burn wood which is medium density fibreboard. We cannot burn plywood. We cannot burn wood with any chemicals. We cannot burn wood with wood glue. We cannot burn wood with color. We cannot burn pressure-impregnated wood.



Y Why?

Da.

Hier.

Woher noch.

Später auch.

Hier und Da, da.

Da und hierher und
später wieder dann dort.

Es spielt keine Rolle, wer du bist.

Du bist, was du denkst. Oder glaubst es so.

Auf dem Weg ins nackte Geschehen, lass uns gehen.

Du verfällst ins Grübeln, ob das so geht. Vorahnend auch.

Verrannt, gebrannt, getarnt, charmant ist es hier, woher kommts?

Hier dämmerts mir mit Füßen treten, ins kalte Nass treten, Komm herein.

Raus und aus damit, Entledigung mit Entschädigung im anderen Gremium.

Eingepfercht in mitten anmutiger Gesell*innen. Verändert diese Stimmen.

Regelrecht glimpflich der Anblick der erhabenen Gestalten. Unverändert.

Gefühlt ummantelt, schmilzt ihr Antlitz dahin. Schmelzen ist richtig.

Ohne Schmutz und ohne Bangen ist ein Schutz zum Anfangen.

Das Wasser in all seinen Zuständen, verpufft, zertreten.

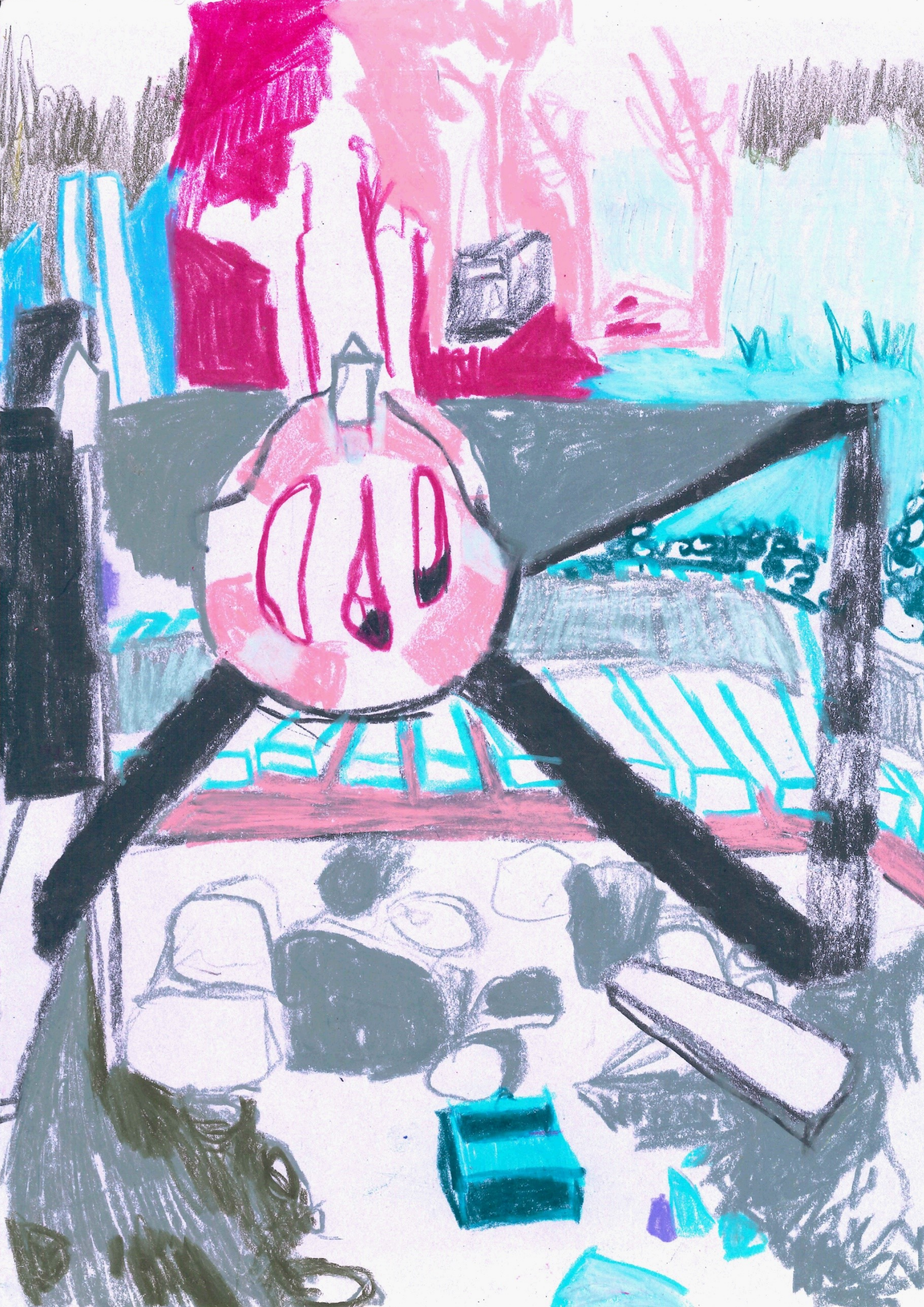
Hagelt Klirren, durch Knochen und durch Wangen.

Schweiß an Schweiß als nasser Naseweis.

Tiefend und Schweißreibend.

Zweigen und Neigend.

Ohne Leiden.





ANADU

**Xanadu as an idealised retreat
in the mythical paradise
of leisure
and rejuvenation in the
sauna.*



Z^{EN}

Zen synchronises in
sauna as a zapping,
zen—liik zany zone.
Zen for the sake.
Zestfully*

