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THESIS

Frameworks

subjects to change

IIRO NÄKKI

THE MASTER'S DEGREE PROGRAMME IN CHOREOGRAPHY

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ABSTRACT

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The artistic section is produced by the Theatre Academy. ☒

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This written thesis is an analysis of my artistic thesis work *provide* from 2017. The thesis outlines a multiplicity of frameworks included in the making of *provide* and situates those frameworks into wider discourses. In doing so, the thesis presents the analysis of one's own artistic work as a form of self-reflection that both generates understanding and, simultaneously, re-structures the original artistic work.

The oldest included parts of this thesis were written in May 2017, the most recent chapters being from March 2018. The structure of the thesis starts from the most recent, moving towards the oldest: the text proposes a return towards its initiative. However, this flow of time is not exact. Old chapters have been re-written and more recent chapters have been built on some of the very first texts. Through its structure, this thesis presents its own writing process as one of continuous re-writing, reflecting the artistic process of its analysis.

Both this thesis and the artistic thesis work *provide* are then similar in that they both contain a possibility to pay attention to the complexity of time and to address the transformation from a place to another. They both try to contextualise their situation, and to understand the frameworks they operate in and through. These frameworks are presented as a fragmentary, yet creating coherence in their interconnections.

In the first section Themes, Methods, Interests I open up two central interests of *provide* and this analysis: the process of artistic creation as building a place for choreographic work to appear in, and acts of re-enactment as a means to research ideological realms of text or performance. The first of these interests I discuss alongside texts of Edward S. Casey and Marc Augé. The latter I discuss through all the artistic creations realized during my MA studies in the programme of choreography.

In the middle section I discuss *provide* concentrating on spatiality and score. I attempt to situate the piece in the genealogy of installation art and to depict the dramaturgical whole of the performance in relation to the spectator alongside texts of Claire Bishop, Kirsten Maar and Christian Teckert. I also decompose the work to present its segments one at a time.

Towards the end of this thesis, I open the thought context of the work, building on William Forsythe and Hans-Georg Gadamer. The text is concluded with a "speculative preface" written before starting to work on *provide*.

KEYWORDS

Frameworks, place, space, spatiality, installation, body, memory, ideology, re-enactment, re-embodiment

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THOUGHTS

I felt all but lucid when trying to come up with conclusions for my thesis. I have had a more or less clear framework for writing, gathering the text around my artistic thesis project *provide* (2017). This is by far the longest performance analysis process I have ever been engaged in. I might be someone who enjoys concentrating on one thing at a time. Making *provide,* I did not feel like I could concentrate on "one thing at a time"; these "things" were too elusive. In its making, the work felt as if it was reaching out to a multitude of directions.

The same feeling of trying to catch "elusive things" was present in this writing process as well. Perhaps working on an analysis is similar to what it was to work with the subject of that analysis. It feels like this thesis has a very concrete framework – that of *provide* – yet no viewpoint*,* no consistent lens through which to proceed. Rather, the place and the state I have been in while working on this thesis became something like that of *provide,* with a multitude of directions inside certain frameworks.

Perhaps trying to list the main observations so far could be helpful? I have been:

- describing an artistic work that (in the manner I propose) reminds of the Gadamerian concept of hermeneutics,
- reflecting on a mode of working that constantly addresses the basis of its decision-making processes (and pondering how this manifests in the outcome),
- trying to make personal sense of what André Lepecki might have described as a "*will to reenact*,"
- imagining creating (*a space* into) *a place* for the choreographic work to take place and reside in,
- thinking of this created space (and the performance taking place in it) as something that encourages the spectator of the piece to slowly "come to understand it", taking the audience through various strategies and

identities of modes of spectatorship and participation (in perhaps even unconscious ways),

- writing about the *dramaturgical difficulties* of resolving relations between multimedia installation, gallery, and live performance occurring alongside one another, speculating on different *modes of spectatorship* involved in those relations;
- asking questions about the contradictions between freedom to move within the space of the performance and mechanisms that were used in controlling that 'freedom',
- trying to tap into a phenomenon of "*complex time*".

There were also topics that I would have *liked* to reflect on but, for some reason, did not. They include: an analysis of *translation* in *provide*, the importance of *references* for the piece, the piece in terms of Agambenian concept of an *apparatus*, and thoughts on the creation of *place* in the framework of Gaston Bachelard's *poetics of space*. I also wanted to write about working on provide from an ethical point of view. How far is it reasonable to stretch the frames of one work?

The feeling that I "never got there" is a constant afterthought within most of my processes. In artistic processes just as well as when writing, it feels as if my time is spent in establishing a framework, which then gets presented over the work "it is to contain." Perhaps, the framework becomes "the work".

I have a tendency to make past choreographic works re-appear in more recent ones, *provide* being no exception: the piece became a branch in the lineage of my previous solo work *Mass and construction* (2015). André Lepecki writes of "body as archive," body as a site where "onto-political "re-writings" [...] take place, including the re-writing of movement, including the re-writing of the

archive itself" (Lepecki 2016, 128). I have treated this writing process with a mindset of "*reenacting the work it analyzes*". As this thesis will be frozen still and stored and archived, I wonder: is it possible to incorporate into writing of a thesis the possibility of accessing potentialities of the (past) work in the *body of that work*? My work has been a quite self-entangled one; the possible "onto-political re-writings, including re-writing the archive itself" have (mostly) concerned re-writing a s*pecific* body (my own). Could it be possible to "keep the process of re-writing" alive in the body of this text, in a similar manner than in the body of mine? In short, I wish I could keep on (re-)writing…[1]

Taking this writing process as a *re-enactment* (or *translation*) *of the work it analyzes* requires also another kind of consideration regarding the body of this text. How to organize this body in relation to the one of *provide*? For this reason, I start with these words of "conclusion", and overall reverse the order of chapters in the printed version: the outcome is presented immediately, and proceeding chronologically, the reader will arrive finally to the oldest "body parts" of this writing process. For me, this kind of structure proposes a return, similar to *provide*. A reader might want to go another route and start from the end of this body, finding out if that makes more sense. The chapters do not follow a particularly clear inherent logic anyway. Rather, they reference each other here and there, resembling the arrangement of *provide,* which also

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[1] Notes, end of February 2018

Writing a thesis feels connected to fears of insignificance. In trying to examine something that is in motion I reach out to grab onto something, and all of it becomes intangible, like liquid. A concern arises: was all that motion in fact only vibrations on the surface? Could it be that there was perhaps nothing concrete lying under that surface? Is a text just reflecting a vibrating surface?

"A vibrating surface" could be just as good as any other possibility, regardless of its intangibility. It moves beyond reach and yet it can remain in memory, not as a whole object with clear outlines, but in its reflections.

If "co-existing" could appear alone, then could its presence be sought from reading and writing?

contained many “body parts” presented as separate yet encouraging an understanding of the piece to be formed through contemplation of interrelations between those parts. This “forming an understanding” did not so much equate to forging the piece into an “interpretation of”. “Understanding” (in the manner described by Gadamer) was rather “making sense of the experience as it appeared in its framework and historical context”. Maybe then this “textual body” could, as well, be taken as a process of re-writing (and reading) as “making sense of.” After all, it feels like I have been re-writing the first drafted frameworks repeatedly.

THEMES, METHODS, INTERESTS

Place and sanctuary

In the book *The Fate of Place. A philosophical history* Edward S. Casey gives a beautiful account of the Christian creation myth, discussing whether something had to *be* for the creation process to reside in and mold. In his account, working with the vertical and depth dimensions in splitting the "skies above and below", forming the horizon, and gathering "waters in one place to make dry land appear" all together make the whole myth readable as sculpting the space, as creating differences and working things into something else (as opposed to making something appear out of nothing). Could these thoughts be regarded as a poetic interpretation of creative process, not as a deity, but as artists making *places* through works of art?

An audience member of *provide* might have come across a recorded question posed by Casey: *"to create 'in the first place' is to create* a *first place. Perhaps it is true that in the beginning was the Word. But is it not equally likely that in the beginning was a place; the place of creation itself? Should we assume that the Word presumes a place and brings it into being? Or does not the Word itself presuppose a place?"* (Casey 1998, 7.) This question that Casey brings up in the context of the Christian creation myth became very relatable to me already before my process. I came to think of an economy of artistic practices that requires one to make "nomadic works" able to tour, works that may be taken to different locations, works that are to be created virtually anywhere a studio can be found in and sometimes (if "successful") these works get described as "creating a fascinating world of its own". As a performer, I mostly encountered situations in which the materiality of the space is considered *after* the choreographic work has advanced to a certain point (I pertain to this order even if "choreographic work" might *appear* to advance "alongside" constructing the space), in so that the scenography and space best *serve the performance* they are to contain. For this project, I wanted to work the space

into something that would initiate me, to put most of the effort of a "choreographer" into building a space *in which* to materialize bodily practices.

Entering the space in the beginning of the working process, I already had a vague, preconceived idea of *what will be*. I knew the materials (or *mediums*) the space would host would be already filmed video works and certain bodily practices. The rest was still unclear, including the spatial setting in which the filmed video material would become displayed. Regarding the "entrance into creation", the moment preceding the process, Casey writes:

> *"[For] if there is a cosmic moment in which no things yet exist, it would seem that places could not exist at that "time" either. Although places are not things in any usual (e.g., material) sense, they are some kind of entity or occasion: they are not nothing. If, at this primeval moment (which might last an eternity), absolutely nothing exists, how could anything like a place exist, even if that place was merely to situate a thing? Such a situation is not only one of nonplace but of no-place-at-all: utter void."*
>
> (Casey 1998, 3.)

Indeed, the "entrance into the space of creation" in my case (either) was not an entrance to no-place-at-all. In my disposition was a black box studio made suitable for creating and showing staged works of theatre and dance, situated inside an established institution with its own discourses and a long genealogy of performances that once took place in that space. Still I enter a space that is seemingly empty (or rather, cleared of anything "extra" prior to my arrival) and required to be filled through "creative acts". Could the studio then at least be a case of "nonplace"?

Non-place (fr. *non-lieux*), a term popularized by anthropologist Marc Augé in 1992, is making reference to places that somehow lack the power to be called "places": it describes a kind of "place" that is devoid of history, identity and relations. As Augé points out no such thing as a "pure non-place" can exist - reminding of Casey's paradox regarding "creation taking place in utter void" - but the tension between place versus non-place is subject to constant

(re)formulation; whereas *somewhere* can never exist as a complete non-place, the reproduction of *a* place is never-ending. Augé defines the relation between place and non-place as one of ”receding polarities: the first is never completely erased and the second never totally fulfilled - [they are] palimpsests on which is ceaselessly re-written down the blurred play of identity and relation.” (Augé 1992, 77.)[2] Could this negotiation process especially well express the kind of space that a dance studio is: a space in which *the place* becomes as erased as possible to give room for new identities and relations, (*an)other place(s)*, to be imagined and constructed? And could this be one look into what the act of creating art or choreographing dances is?

I formulated my relationship towards this requirement of imagining and creating that is being presented by the dance studio at the end of my BA studies. I characterized dance studios as follows: ”...non-space, a dance studio, that is exactly a non-place: it is empty, its [floor] covered with material that doesn’t otherwise exist, there people do what they otherwise wouldn’t...” This previous formulation clearly is in contradiction with what I am writing now (admitting the studio having attributes of *a place* – a history and an identity of its own). However, the feeling of arriving into the emptiness of a studio is ever more familiar. The requirement to create *the place anew* comes accompanied with another requirement, that of taking into account the requirements of *that place*, staying aware of the reality that can never be completely erased through (re-)creation.

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[2] Augé, 1992. Translation mine and slightly different from the official translation by John Howe (1995). The original translation seems to contradict its context.

Original translation goes as follows: *Place and non-place are rather like opposed polarities: the first is never completely erased, the second never totally completed; they are like palimpsests on which the scrambled game of identity and relations is ceaselessly rewritten.*

The main problem, I think, arises in translating the word “[*polarités*] *fuyantes*”. Much rather than “opposed” I would, in Augé’s context, read “receding”. I read Augé as creating room for constant negotiation, where this supposed “polarity” fades away.

That negotiation of places and non-places comes into play in making decisions regarding the aesthetics of the dance studio. Whether to (or, did I have intentions to) completely submerge into the new place under construction, or to reveal the underlying place as it is? I was trying to imagine a midway of creating an aesthetical space that accepts theatricality in the *new place* of identity and relation that becomes constructed while still including the reality of *that place* into the sphere of that newly created place. The place of *provide* was, to me, both imaginary and real, both trying to accept an alternative variety of potentialities, relations and meanings and laying out the reality and preconditions the work was subjected to by its institutional frameworks. The piece, I believe, offered a possibility for the audience to sink into its proposed world, especially in relation to sound through enclosing oneself from the surroundings by putting on headsets and watching the space as atmospheric. On the other hand, coming into contact with texts, recordings or discussions about the making process and material costs and institutional conditions that the work was required to fulfill brought one back to the "reality" that the piece appeared in.

If I took my "site of creation" as a non-place, a terrain of "scrambled game of identity and relations", the question became also to concern the kind of identity[3] that I would assume and manifest through constructing this site anew. Gradually throughout the process, I filled the space with objects of personal interest or relation to me, considered different relations between these objects, and came out with several identities rather than one. These identities I then molded into several performances (or "dances"). What the audience comes to see then is this game of identity and relations, where the space and these performances speak back and forth. The created place is private, and yet shared with the audience. Starting from a position of a spectator, the audience also travels into a place of participation in the form of an audience discussion

[3] Nevertheless, I do not intend to describe the process as a "quest to discover one's identity", but rather as a contemplation on the relations between frameworks, artist and work of art; rather than asking "who am I?" I ask, "how did this place come to be like this"?

towards the ending. Their presence became part of that game of identity; and the sanctuary I built became public. Speaking with the audience, I had a feeling that through speech the audience gains power in a place I had made first of all for myself.

A *sanctuary* might have been a possible way to describe the nature of the place I was constructing, in the senses of "a safe and private place for reflection." Knowing that an audience would enter this place (and making the score of the performance, in the end, dependent on their participation), I could feel reluctance to immediately "confront" the audience as a performer; I felt I needed time to get comfortable with them and built the dramaturgical score in a way that granted me this comfort. Although the audience was given the permission to get close and to touch (things), the space was organized in a way that, in practice, hindered these impulses and rather guided the audience towards the edges of the space. Through the time that audiences spent inside, they generally assumed a little more freedom of action (of self-placement, touch, and finally speech) as well as I grew more comfortable with their presence. A coming together of sorts could have been seen in the dramaturgical score of the performance. At the beginning, each member of the audience was wandering around and engaging with things of their choice; they then more collectively witnessed me performing live; and finally, we all confronted each other in a rather non-theatrical audience discussion situation. Building gradually into direct contact felt to me, as a performer, avoiding a possibility of being intruded.

The creation of this place was by default meant to be a place shared with the audience, and yet I felt sensitive about sharing it. I think the reason was that I had been working towards a place that would reflect different corporeal "places" I had visited before, and as a result, would make me reflect, embody (and reflect on) those visited "places". Building towards a space that would work in a loop of this kind with me felt like a private task of contemplation, and

I was worried about the moment of sharing it. Would the audience see any meaning to any of it? And did I even think they ought to?

Framing praxis as ideological

The objective of most of productions during my studies in the study program of choreography has been to look for and try to identify traits and solutions often present in my own work and thinking, speculating their source, and establishing possible connections to historical artistic or philosophical approaches. Bluntly put, I have been engaged in a task of self-reflection. It was a task for myself that I formulated in an essay at the end of my BA studies, and this reflection continued throughout my MA formation. This ”self-reflection” has been going on through deconstructing written texts, analyzing and reconstructing past dance performances and creating performance processes centered around their own making, of which my thesis work *provide* is a sample.

The word ”ideology” stuck throughout the studies in my vocabulary. Ideology, in the original sense of ”the science of ideas”, was an Enlightenment era concept by a French philosopher Antoine-Louis-Claude Destutt de Tracy that linked the sensations people feel when interacting with the material world to thoughts that form after these interactions. The term now becomes more associated with Louis Althusser, a rather controversial Marxist thinker, and with formation of social subjects and power relations. I have no overall understanding of the widespread discourse that has revolved around the concept since 1970, and have wondered whether ”ideology” in the first place is a suitable term to be used in my artistic work. However, I have faced the problem of not finding too many alternatives.

To try to describe it, the kind of realm I refer to as ”ideological” in my artistic work could be ”that which is re-enacted with action”; not so much ”the imaginary”, ”the beliefs” or ”ideas” as in themselves, but the way acts of interest, creating, socializing, gesture, touching, choice and so forth reinforce and re-create one as an agent acting them out. Creating artistic processes affirming interest in their own acting out as forming and manifesting “ideology” feels a

task that makes forming viewpoints, choices and acts themselves an entangled and complicated procedure. The creation process itself sometimes feels as gaining its own agency of interpellation, making its maker a subject again and in need of explanations. The demands of artistic work in ethicality, coherence, awareness of reference and the impossibility of formulating satisfactory explanations make it at times difficult to advance and for me create a tendency to resort to simplicity in spatial, structural and temporal artistic solutions. A tendency that seeks for control over the materiality and structure of works that, in their abstractions, are uncontrollable.

”Ideology” could also mean to refer to something that enables being in place as a conscious experience, conscious not only of the fleetingness and concreteness of the moment but also as the subjective sensation it appears. I sometimes imagine that it could be ”walked through”, as if it would tie the air together, or that when touching a wall it lingers there. Walking or touching with a quality of actively mapping the reference this experience invokes or creates in a perception of experience; if I should swap the term ”ideology” for something more, say, neutral, ”memory” could come close. Maybe a memory relived, commemorated, reflected on or forgotten with each step?

Enacting [a source]

During my studies between 2015 and 2018 I have created a total of six choreographic works (*provide* included), five of which could easily be seen in terms of the title of this chapter. These pieces, excluding the first (*Mass and construction*, which I will separately come back to) have taken as their starting point either a written text, image, or a past performance. The aim of these productions has not so much been to explore and materialize a “new” concept, but to explore the conditions and corporeality that is suggested by the selected text and imagery (or was proposed through a specific choreography). *provide* was a special case in that it contained performative and textual reflections of

both past choreography and written sources; however, *provide* did follow in these terms patterns that are quite similar to the rest of my recent works.

Corporeality of a source image was explored in *Cola* (2016). *Cola* took as its source a then in Helsinki on-going advertisement campaign of the Coca-Cola Company, in which we could see a woman refreshing herself with a cola drink, strongly leaning and arching her back, drinking from a bottle raised above her head. With two dancers[4], we took this image and reproduced it, finding its proposition oftentimes resulting in quite hilarious and messy outcomes of cola bursting out of our facial orifices. Around this simple realization of how absurd this serving proposition used to sell the beverage was, we staged three short public performances in the Helsinki Railway station. With simple spatial and performative differences between the three, we explored the boundaries of a performance event in the public space, objectifying gaze of advertisement, public shame, and ownership of the public space in a humoristic manner.

Corporeality, as explicitly suggested through a written text, was explored within *an unnamed choreography for five dancers* (2016), using as its source a book of physical education by Georges Hébert, written in 1920's France. This book, an object of interest to me for 15 years already, introduced a set of physical exercises of "natural movement" designated to form a subject into a movement *généraliste* with an urge of service towards the society. The outcome of this work was an adaptation of the movement system for dance performance context. The interesting part of the process, for me, was to gain information on how the explicitly present ideological realm that these exercises were designated to introduce to a subject became perceived by the dancers. During this process, the system's inherent values clearly clashed at some instances with those of the dancers', and provoked emotional responses. Some dancers also made observations about how their mindset "hardened" towards tasks of the everyday during the process also outside of the rehearsal times.

4 Outi Markkula, Katriina Tavi

A similar approach was taken in a larger scale production also within the Theatre Academy of Helsinki. *A Total Work of Art in C major for four dancers on a red carpet* (2016) was a piece realized with four dancers, a choreographer, a scenographer, and designers in light, sound and costumes respectively in the framework of a course titled *TAKO,* the name originating from the abbreviation of Tanssi Kokonaistaideteoksena (or, Dance as a Total Work of Art). Due to the concept of a "total work of art" perceived as obsolete and old-fashioned by the Academy, this shorter and more obscure title (TAKO) had replaced the former full-scale title of the course entity. However, the Wagnerian concept of a total work of art was still explicitly referenced in pedagogical material. Within the working group, we took the framework of this course entity as the object of interest, using as our source the written and spoken instructions provided to us through our respective education programs. These instructions were substantially different in content and sometimes contradictory in terms of their relationship towards the aims and nature of this co-production, the outcome to be expected, and the attitude these instructions proposed in terms of working hierarchy. Our outcome was articulated as a monument for the course entity, however remaining within the individual process of ours and displaying no explicit reference the course as a whole, apart from the performances name beginning *A Total Work of Art*. Instructor feedback pointed out that our title "did not refer to the course now called TAKO which is implying no reference to anything Wagnerian."

The relationship to source within these above three productions was somewhat similar. Each choreographic work tried to *follow the instructions suggested by the source*, and I would like to claim that *each source was making a proposition to act in a certain manner*. The only source ambiguous was that of *Cola,* as we all inherently know that we are not exactly supposed to act out the advertisements we see. Maybe re-enacting this particular proposition was still justified, for the ad in a very simple corporeal way pleaded to the need of enjoyment and "freedom" characteristic for the company's imago. Clearly it did

not involve a physical risk, and we did not initially perceive the impossibility of that suggestion. This last sentence also summarizes the relationship of *naïveté* to source that all these three projects had in common; re-enacting the source before criticism. *Cola* was easily readable as a critique towards commercialization taking over the public sphere and advertising industry proposing false imagery and sexualizing especially female bodies. Through its humoristic setting, the project could easily be identified as a case of anti-advertisement. Certainly, these aspects of the work were also "true" and recognized by the working group, but they were meanings the work *gained* during the process, having not much to do with the initial intentions of the project. Similarly, *A Work of Art in C major for four dancers on a red carpet* was a process of trying to follow the given instructions and find out implications provided through the framework (the *source*). Yet it became at times perceived as a critique towards these instructions. These were projects that tried to re-enact their source "as they become perceived" without malice, but even though – or perhaps rather, just because – they appeared alongside their source, they became perceived as criticism. Both invoked a controversy of some sort. In both cases, a naïveté of trying to take action proposed by external suggestions *as they appear presented* and making a proposition of how this action could be carried out brought forth different complexities within their respective sources.

In the case of *the unnamed choreography for five dancers,* a same kind of approach was at play, for the composition was essentially arranging manners of locomotion dictated by the written instructions into movement patterns consisting of running, walking, jumping, crawling and wrestling. As a soundscape, interviews of people closely related to the specific movement system was used. The selected interviews were of certain figures that could be (and mostly *are*) acknowledged as having "inherited the will" of this particular system of natural movement by Georges Hébert, having created out of it a contemporary practice of their own (controversially, in one of the cases, specifically *because* of inheritance disputes with the descendants of the author). Although different in form, all of these modern, adapted practices (to me, at

least) seem to share a very similar value system to the one that Hébert explicitly claimed the practice of his system of physical education was supposed to transmit. These values, I thought, became visible as a collection of attitudes towards the surrounding environment, institutionalized education, meaning of labor and ethics.

Re-embodiments

While *Cola, unnamed choreography for five dancers* and *A Total Work of Art in C major for five dancers on red a carpet* each had a source on paper, passages of text and/or an image, two of my choreographic projects used an earlier choreography as their source. *Kaareutuva* (2016) was a re-creation and an adaptation of *Docendo* (2013), while *provide* was based on *Mass and construction* from 2015.

Mass and construction was my first project in the MA program of choreography. The piece was a solo composition in which I worked with stones, carrying them, forming a sculpture out of them and exploring gravity and verticality in myself in relation to that sculpture. I remember clearly a point in the process, when I was asked a certain question: would I choose to approach the work as an "autobiography" of sorts, or a "composition"? The meaning of that question to me was whether I liked to make choreographic choices based on meanings to be included in (and to be read from) the work, or whether I rather liked to make these decisions based on time, space and their arrangement.

I chose the latter. I already had the space and the materials I was working with; I tried to work with the space and those materials without bringing "meanings" into my decision-making. Surely various meanings and even symbolic images came forth regardless. Could it ever be possible to make performances that do *not* bring up readings and associations? However, I tried to neglect thinking

about that while making decisions concerning the performance. I took *Mass and construction* as a piece that I could return to later, to take a look at the "meanings" I later would perceive while watching it. Maybe then I could see what kind of thinking could have led into the arrangement that was supposed to be formed through "only thinking of the body and materials in relation to duration and space"? I was trying to situate the "meaning" of the work in the compositional arrangement, and leave the reception of the work out of decision-making process. Thinking back, this setting seems silly; what is this separation of meanings and composition? Still, *Mass and construction* now feels like a fitting point of departure in relation to the processes of self-reflection that followed it.

When taking up and re-embodying a choreography from a few years back that process already feels much older. The corporeal experience does not exactly seem to match *that time*; memory of muscle tonality, posture, quality of touch, everything seems different. Perhaps it is true that dances are impossible to archive as they occur or reproduce later; that the moment indeed is gone in an instant and its fleetingness cannot be captured by any technology; that the second performance never is exactly like the premier. Yet, the first and second performance still feel like being *of* the same world, differently than in their later re-enactment. Re-embodying those performances gives a sense of how the body is an organism in transformation; it also feels like opening a small window to reflections of both past and present from in another perspective. A whole setting of potentialities opens, and the nature of work produced at that time reveals something of "that time", of the nature of thinking that "used to be". Although the re-embodiment does not guide one into re-living (nor revolution), it opens up a broader memory of a world that gains familiarity not *in* the past, but *through* the present.

To go back to a memory does not necessarily feel like dwelling in one. Could the dwelling be avoided in a distance created by time, the alienation in recognizing resemblance? The value of re-embodiment to me has been in what it tells of the

responses my body gives in relation to bodily practices of “that time” and their contribution towards the creation process of a world of meanings I find within the concrete present. How the embodied tonality of “hardness” I felt appeared alongside the time when I felt strictness towards my occupations and others; how the quality of touch feels connected to my determination towards an end. Is it so that I create the power that physical exercises and their discourses have on me when thinking that just as much as I create them, they reform me?

SPATIALITY IN *PROVIDE*

White cube, black box and installation

provide was a commissioned work for Dance Theatre Minimi located in Kuopio and supposed to be presented in their Sotku stage. Also, being my artistic thesis work, I had the possibility to use a studio space inside the Theatre Academy of Helsinki during more than two months and to organize preview performances in the space. The Studio 3 of the Theatre Academy happened to be the same one that customarily hosts choreographic works of the Academy's MA program in choreography, also mine in 2015. Sotku stage in Kuopio was also familiar to me due to past visits resulting in this commissioned work. These spaces in Helsinki and Kuopio were both black boxes of almost equivalent spatial measurements and technical properties. Essentially, both are spaces for performance events that have dance arts strongly represented in their program planning.

Artists in the 1960's and onward in the site-specific movement and also the Judson Dance Theater artists experimented with and also, in the 1970's, gave specific attention to gallery spaces and museum architecture. Artists such as Daniel Buren, Mel Bochner and Hans Haacke concentrated on site-specific art examining art institutions and their architecture in connection to socio-economic practices and ideology. Trisha Brown's works were amongst the first performances by a choreographer to be displayed in a museum context (Maar 2014, 95), although earlier Judson Dance Theater works had already been showed inside gallery spaces in the early 60's. Choreography and dance in museum context, occupying traditionally fine art spaces, have been extensively theorized. In *provide* the situation was reversed: instead of a choreographer bringing a work mediated through bodies into a white cube, here an installation of physical objects in a gallery-like setting was constructed into a black box.

In the program sheet, I described *provide* as "installation, gallery and dance". To the term "installation art" Claire Bishop gives the meaning of "…the type of

art into which the viewer physically enters, and which is often described as 'theatrical', 'immersive' or 'experiential' (Bishop 2005, 6.)" To her, the factor of importance then lies in the experiencing spectator as a body that comes into direct contact with the work not as a collection of individual objects, but as an experience of interconnectedness of those objects in relation to each other and their environment. In these terms, was *provide* clearly leaning towards either installation art or gallery exhibition?

As a "site of exhibition" (excluding the live performance aspect), I have been trying to figure out whether either calling the work "a gallery" or "an installation" alone would have been a clear choice. The work indeed was supposed to be "physically entered"; it was "theatrical" in its lighting and sound design, contained at least a possibility of immersion for the spectator, and was designed to be experiential. A spectator had a possibility to also physically come into contact with the objects of the space, as the audience explicitly had been given upon arrival the instructions to "move around as they wish and touch anything if they wanted to". All these traits suggest a possibility to situate the work into the genealogy of installation art. In contradiction, the setting of objects was at the same time designed *not* to be entered, but to be observed from a distance. A key principle in designing the spatiality of the piece was to subtly guide the audience to position themselves towards the edges of the space and to *circulate* the objects rather than to *cross* the space.

The space was "centralized", so that the most dominant element of the space was a big white cube slightly off center and the other objects took their places quite evenly around it. Three video works were cast on the sides of the cube, and the optimal viewing distance for these short films was around four to five meters away from the screening surface. At a distance of approximately five meters away from each screen, headsets containing soundscapes and recordings were hang from the ceiling for the audience to listen to. Through spatial setting, the audience was suggested to *stay out of the center* of the space and to situate itself at the walls and edges of the space.

All objects (or artefacts) on display were framed very precisely with profile lights and highlighted with low pedestals covered with smooth white fabric. The aesthetics of this display created a distance between the audience and the objects; even though the audience was given a freedom to touch anything they wanted to, they were mostly hesitant throughout the duration of the performance and many of them were left wondering whether they indeed could or could not touch the displayed objects. The manner of display of the objects went so strongly against the given instructions that most members of the audience spent the whole duration of the piece without physically making contact with these objects. For me personally to see some audience members at the very end assuming the liberty to get close, to touch, and to feel the weight of the objects was peculiarly relieving, specifically because I felt that they had *slowly* taken that liberty. Those acts signified to me that they had come to sufficiently acquainted themselves with the space and that they were in terms with the fact that as they were watching, they were also being watched by others; and as the space in a way felt private to me, those actions felt like "coming closer to me" as well. Perhaps a direct contact with the space and the work *was* an aim that the work contained and straight away gave "permission" for, but in a slowly unfolding manner. At the same time, a direct contact was not something that necessarily would have to happen. In *provide*, the installation encouraged to inhibit the liberties expressed upon entrance. This inhibition was further reinforced by the material arrangements of the work and the sociality of a performance situation.

The work was in between lines of an installation of art and *installation art* in terms of inclusion and exclusion (whether and to what extent the audience members would make a choice to be "surrounded" or "immersed" in the work, or to stay "out of it" as much as possible) and also on the level of manner of display. As laid out above, the display of the objects was rather familiar and resembled a classical gallery, by creating distance between the object and the observer and hindering the immediacy of engaging beyond gaze. The objects

appeared highlighted in an otherwise dark space, each having a very slowly proceeding lighting effect that made them appear almost like floating if watched closely and for a long time. The objects *needed* to be watched individually and for a long time to get to see this; they were in that sense individual objects for the gaze (as suggested by their display), and to see them as such would require a shift of attention away from the rest of the space and the easily eye-catching video works with strong colors, towards a single detail. On the other hand, these objects appeared in a web of connections between each other, and these connections between objects were mostly easily recognizable and literal; the same rock that appeared in a video work was also on display, a piece of railroad beam was presented alongside a video shot on a railroad bridge, and a print-out translation of a book covered a wall alongside the original, actual book. Further towards the end the piece also required audience participation in a discussion; the work was, in this sense, insisted to be regarded as a "singular totality" as Bishop puts it, and presupposed an embodied viewer engaging in participation beyond that of an "observer" (Bishop 2005, 6.)

The audience negotiated their relation to the space while inside the installation. The constellation of objects, sound, and video formed an organism to be thought in its interrelations, and also in its durational entirety. The arrangement asked for attention and patience towards each part of the organism separately. To me, the relation I formed to the whole differed from the relation to the separate fragments of that whole. While working, I spent a great amount of time sitting in front of each individual object on display, trying to tune into the quality of experience they gave me when observing or touching, made adjustments, and sat down again. While working with the overall spatiality as a system, my attention shifted towards contemplation of the setting, towards trying to form "a map" of the relations between objects in the space. This "map" was perhaps based on "association" rather than "deduction", but it nevertheless felt consistent. As the work was designed to be navigated through and viewed from multiple perspectives, different "mappings" (of this kind or other) surely occurred to the audience members. Maybe the work could

be seen as activating its audience through the offering of a possibility for these mappings to happen.

Choreographing spatiality

Within the process of *provide,* the role of space was central, and concrete working on what maybe could get called "scenography" amounted far higher in total than the working hours spent on working with what could get called "choreography", (if choreography is seen as working with "movement of bodies in space"). As I cannot assume the identity of a "scenographer", I instead assume that the space was "choreographed". In reference to what I have defined as "choreography"[5] (*how aware can one be of the influences that framework - personal experiences, external conditions, materiality - has over the creation process of a work of art*? And *how to make use of that awareness as material for the performance*?), what were the chosen tools and approaches in *provide*?

Leaving out the live-performance sequences and actual human bodies present in *provide*, the space still contained a setting of objects consisting of several artefacts and their pedestals, video material, text, lighting, and sound. The setting was mostly constructed with materials with a close relationship to the context of the work (text materials from the creating process, artefacts that either appeared at some point during the process or preceded it but had particular power of influence upon this creative process). The materials were then arranged and framed in ways that could evoke in a spectator a sense of connection between the materials and, by doing so, make them aware of the relation that the work had towards *time*. Could the arrangement of materials at the same time work both in linear and in irregular manners in regard to time? The space was such that psychological readings were practically unavoidable, given the amount of symbolism on display and some quickly perceivable

5 See section "Choreography" in chapter *Thought context of the work*.

narrative patterns (i.e “a man is carrying a stone through a city”), but there was no specific, over-arching narrative or succession between the materials – the mapping of connections could have been realized in any order. I thought of the space as containing tensions between symmetry and asymmetry, past and present, individual materials and interconnected ones, inclusiveness and exclusiveness.

Thinking of spatial parameters within the context of this work, I could attempt to list the site of *provide* consisting of the following: its materials, the spatial setting of the elements, a spatial realm of internal references, outer references, and the physical spaces the work occupied – the Theatre Academy in Helsinki and Sotku stage in Kuopio. All in all, the work consisted of two aesthetics, one inclusive, one exclusive.

Spatial references

To me, a meaningful part of *provide* took place within relations between different objects and their placement in the space. I also thought that the dramaturgical shifts that occurred within the overall arch of this performance altered these relations in a conscious manner, although, as the work had no absolute fixed audience seating, these relations unfolded in varying order and some of them, at least for some spectators, never became established in the first place. These relations were used as compositional material; they were supposedly framing an aesthetic experience; they served to bring forth connections between past and present; and they functioned through juxtaposition. In organizing these connections, I was creating the studio space into a place of my own, as I was looking for a composition that would feel coherent to *me*. Yet I cannot exactly say why particularly *this* kind of spatial structure felt “more coherent” than any possible other.

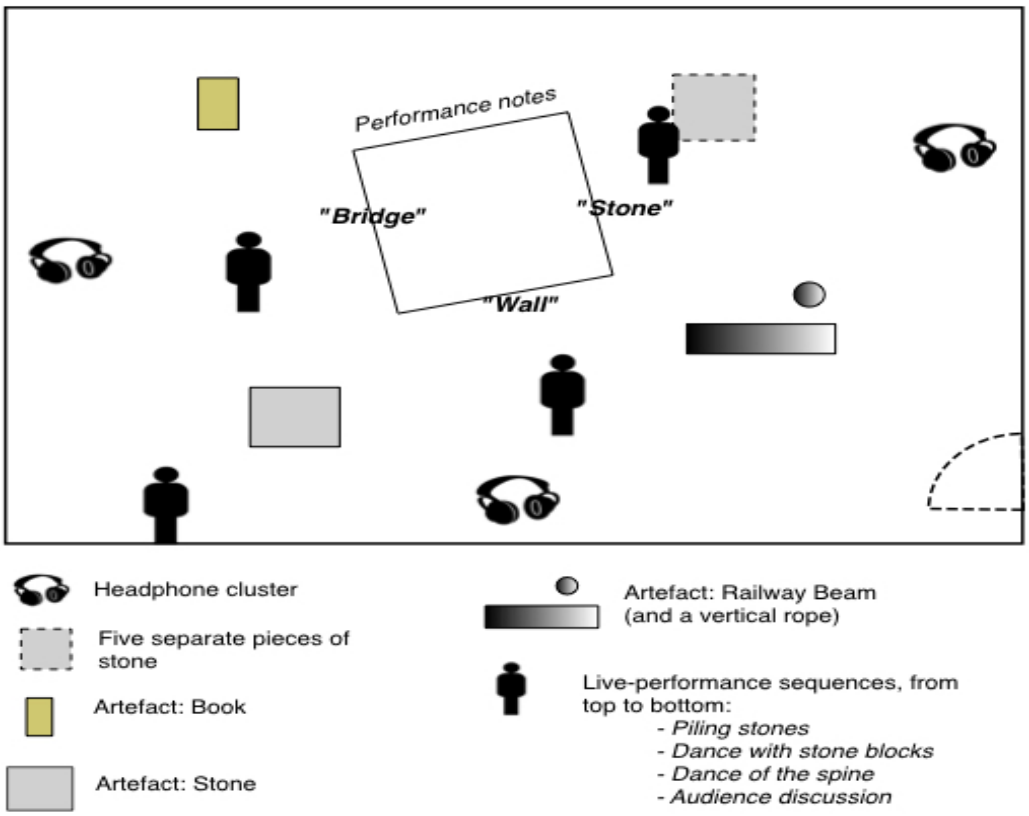

Figure 1, spatial configuration. This first figure displays all the elements at their approximate spatial locations. Video titles are located at appropriate sides of the central cube. The four live-performance sequences appeared in the listed order.

As a dramaturgical whole, the arrangement of the space followed quite simple symmetries (Figure 1). The space could be seen as consisting of squares or rectangles: the central cube, the framed objects in the space, and even the live-performance situation locations. However, inside the four-sidedness of the space a multiplicity of triangles was created. The headset clusters formed one. Whereas artefacts had their figure framed against white pedestals, the “five separate pieces of stone” had no pedestal and in this manner, were also separate from other objects on display; the artefacts (Book, Stone, and Railway Beam) formed another spatial triangle. Videos on display occupied three sides of the central cube. *Audience discussion* was a conflicted part of the whole, residing both within the dramaturgical arch and separated from it in audience experience.

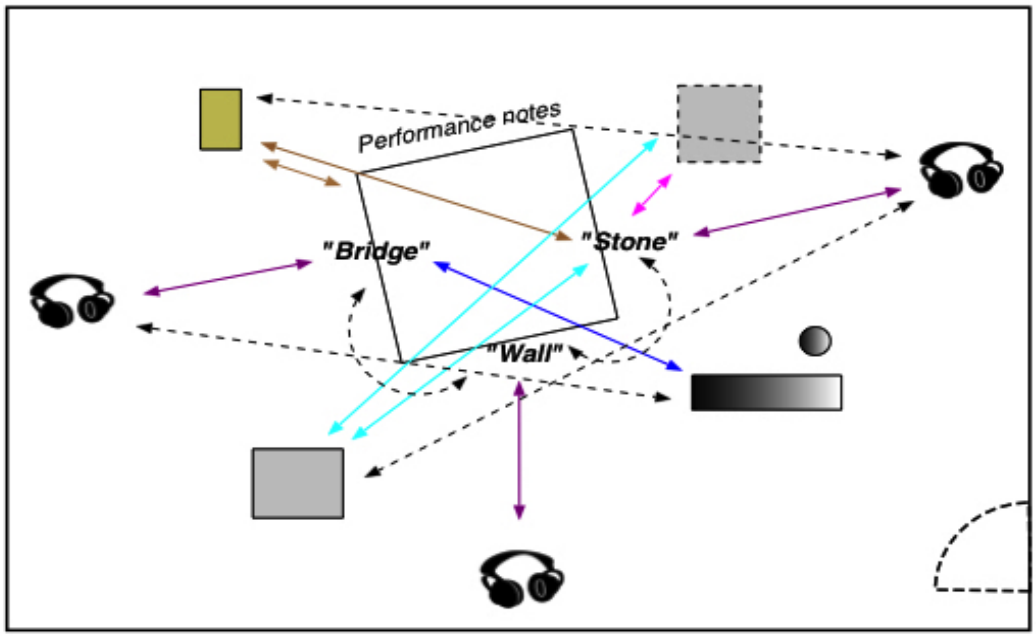

Figure 2, spatial references. This second figure suggests a set of spatial relations at the start of the performance, when the space functioned as a "gallery" and no live-performance sequences affected the relations of the space.

As a "gallery space" - namely at any moment without an ongoing live performance taking place, and particularly at the beginning of the piece – I imagined the space as consisting of a system of internal references. Certainly, connections between the elements of the space were made by the audience outside and beyond the proposal I am making. However, in *Figure 2* I am trying to map the *internal references* as I felt them. I leave out from this illustration the references made by the "*Performance notes*" wall, since the wall made direct reference to virtually every object present. This illustration also shows as trajectories the fashion through which the railway beam, for instance, was connected to a certain location in the space as well as to the "Bridge" video. The projector light was spread out in a way that it leaked over the corner of the central cube and illuminated the beam; the same method was used to establish a connection between Stone (both as artefact and as a video) and the Book (…forming another thematic triangle of their own).

This illustration of internal references also clears out another manner through which the “Wall” video assumed a special role within the work. As a center-placed piece, the video could be seen in a juxtaposition with “Bridge” *or* “Stone”; nevertheless, the “Wall” had no direct reference to another physical object of the space. In my mind, its counterpart was found in the “*performance notes”* wall – the other referring to everything past and present, the other to nothing in particular.

This proposed system of “internal reference” was activated in different ways through live performance sequences. These sequences created new connections, faded away some and reinforced others; the four sequences granted the space three fundamentally different forms I’m attempting to illustrate in Figures 3, 4-5, and 6.

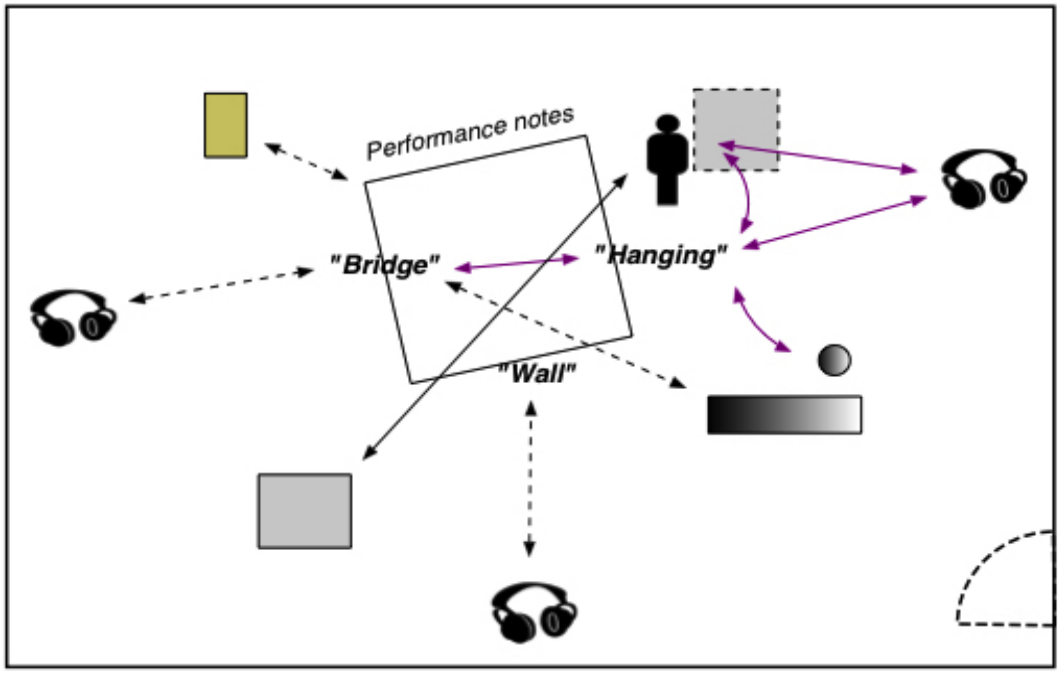

Figure 3, Piling stones. “Stone” video has been replaced with “Hanging” and a live performance sequence takes place. Some new references are being made; some connections become emphasized; and a few are lost in the immediately present. The gallery still pertains to its “gallery” identity.

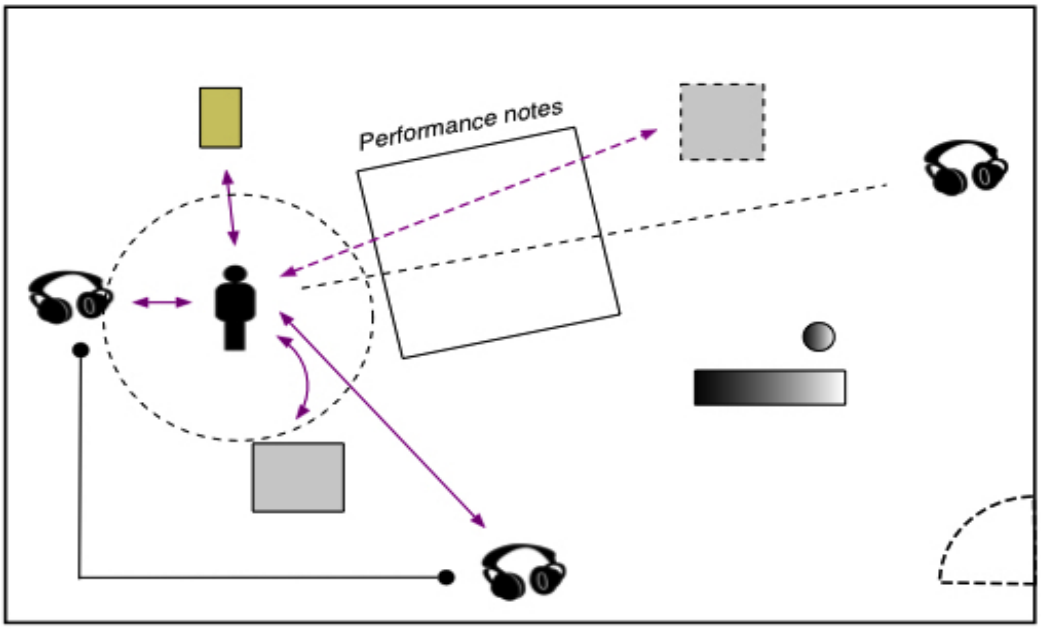

Figure 4, Dance with stone blocks. The "gallery" of the space gives way for the live performance sequence; light and video is faded away. "Working with stone" forms another thematic triangle between Artefacts (Book & Stone) and the previously worked "five separate pieces of stone". The Headset clusters connect for the first time to a performance situation and assume the same sound material instead of looping individual recordings.

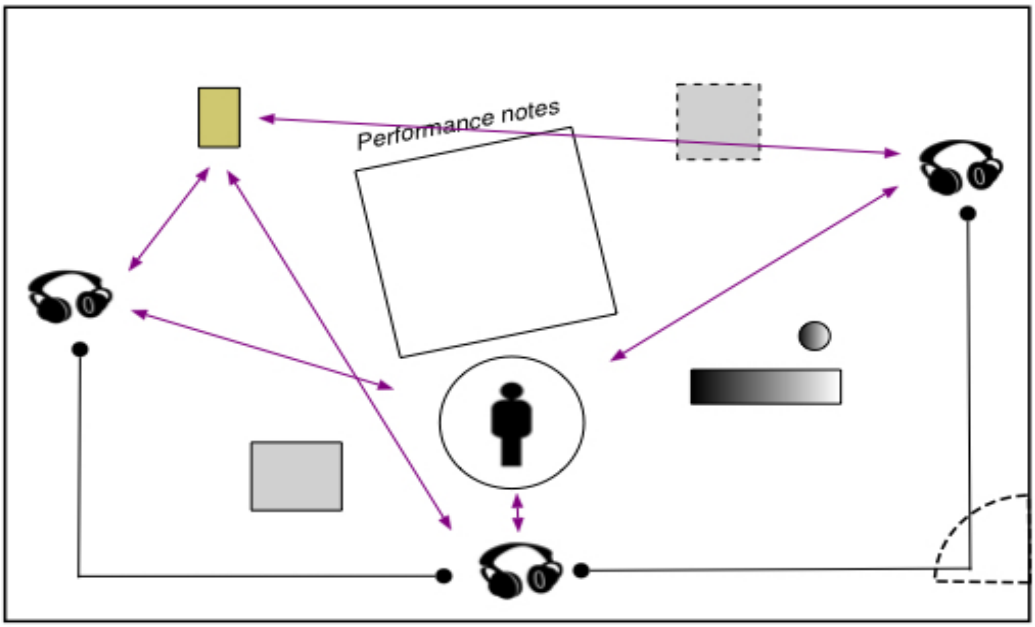

Figure 5, Spinal dance. Similar to the previous live sequence, the performance dominates the space. The text that appears in the space in the form of an Artefact (the Book) appears also through the headsets.

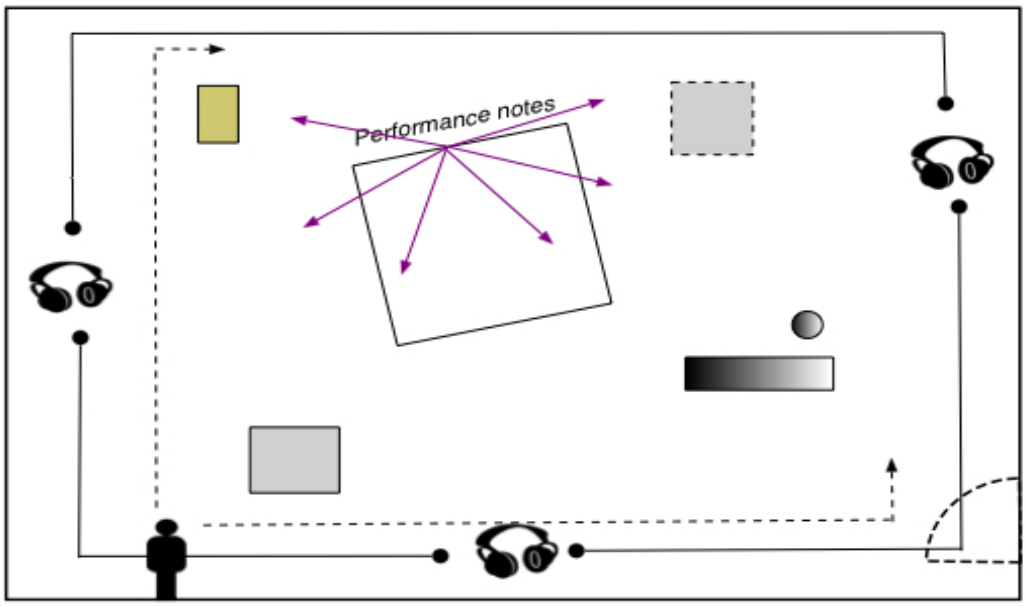

Figure 6, Audience discussion. The live performance situates itself in a position of "looking from the outside". The Headset clusters "enclose the gallery space from the outside" as well, making reference to also the on-going audience discussion. The central cube is plain but highlighted through lighting, inviting to read the "Performance notes" wall.

Within each of the live-performance sequences at least a slightly different set of connections between elements of the space was proposed (Figures 3-6). Whether these illustrations are more or less accurately paralleling individual audience experience is of course impossible to tell. However, I believe they in a broad sense represent also the atmospheric changes within the dramaturgy of the performance. Outside of these illustrations falls of course an innumerable number of other possible connections – and how to visualize in this form the way the relations of the space (permanently) change after each of the live performance sequences? How to illustrate the ways in which an element meddles in the experience of the future?

(S)CORE WORK IN *PROVIDE*

In this section, I discuss the performance structure in *provide* and separately analyze each of the fragments that constituted my work as a performer. These fragments consisted of three video works and four live performance sequences, setting *provide* apart from fine arts genre, towards a combination of video installation and live performance. These elements brought change, motion and color to the otherwise dark space filled with immobile objects, and granted these objects the realm of interconnections they formed.

The dramaturgical structure of *provide* was composed of a seemingly static spatial duration interrupted by live performance sequences. Spectators got guidelines, a program sheet and a personal pillow from the choreographer/performer upon arrival. The space was opened twenty minutes before the announced beginning time of the performance, and audience was encouraged to enter immediately upon their arrival. The reason for this was to grant the space a more gallery-like feel. The “exhibition” was already ongoing when audience arrived into the theatre, and it stayed active until audience had exited the building. The choice to take audience in individually as soon as they arrived was one of the suggestions that related to the space as a gallery, with live performance not filling it, but taking place inside its duration.

When entering the space, the audience had freedom of placing themselves, which was further encouraged by the personal pillows given to each member of the audience at the entrance. The “installation” was already active, consisting of three video projections casted onto sides of a big cube occupying the center of the space. The cube was surrounded by four objects, three of which were highlighted by white pedestals and all tightly framed with cold profile lights. Three walls, each facing their respective video projection, were hosting five headsets each, hung from the ceiling with ropes and hooks. The fourth wall was entirely covered with notes, images, e-mail exchanges and other information

concerning the work and process of *provide*. According to the given guidelines, the audience was free to explore the space, to touch anything if they so wished, to place themselves anywhere and to exit when they so wished[6]. Upon arrival, they also received a copy of the program sheet for the performance.

This free-to-move-around gallery setting consisting of the cube, three video pieces, three clusters of headsets plugged into the videos, four highlighted artefacts with a very, very subtly changing lighting design, and performance notes was the underlying "gallery score" of the whole performance. The stability of the space was then interrupted to various extent by live-performance sequences, totaling four. The video works were titled *Stone*, *Bridge* and *Wall*; the live-performances (performed in this order) were named *Piling Stones*, *Dancing with stone blocks*, *Spinal dance*, and *Audience discussion*.

After the last live-performance (Audience discussion) the gallery setting was not anymore restored to the original state, as was the case in-between live sequences until then. Instead, the central cube remained blank, only highlighted with light glowing through the white fabric covering it. The headsets were now looping three completely new audio recordings, which were listing the materials, costs, and working hours invested in the work.

In the following chapters I will interpret the dramaturgical means and separately discuss each of the video works and live performance sequences in *provide*.

[6] The audience did however not just randomly exit. Not everyone stayed until the "end", but they exited when they were reminded that they indeed could. Whether out of curiosity, respectfulness or social protocol, the majority of the audience only exited when they deemed the performance "finished".

Dramaturgical whole and spectatorship

What kinds of perceptional shifts and possible spectator positions were assumed inside the dramaturgical arch of the work?

I tried out different ways to solve the problematics of combining installation art, gallery, and live performance throughout the process. Developing the dramaturgical enfolding of the work proved to be a difficult task. Whether to keep the space open for entrances and exits at any time, functioning more like a gallery or like an installation – or whether to fix the duration in the manner of a performance? Should I keep "performing" inside at all times? How the attention of the viewer could be guided between performance sequences and the space; should the performance be highlighted over the space? I tried for a long time to keep the space open for spontaneous entrances and exits, and to perform alongside the installation. After all, I felt like I had to opt for a more performance-like structure, with a beginning, clear cuts between times of exhibition and performance, and a more or less "clear end". This seemed to make the viewing experience more comfortable and clearer in the sense of guiding the attention towards an active performance moment. The score structure also resulted in spectators staying inside for the entire duration rather than leaving half-way through thinking that they already had seen everything there was to see. This score structure also created transitional seams; these seams formed in the moment where the exhibition turned into a performance and vice versa. They were observable in the fading of the video projections, dimming of the overall light and heightening of the luminous intensity in the specific spot for a performance to appear in; but also, as dramaturgical seams or transformations within the viewer's modality of perception.

I think these seams required a shift in the spectator's relation to the space and to other spectators. The audience was entering a space open to exploration, individual trajectories and choices regarding the usage of time. They were, however, also seen by other audience members; while the arrangement guided

the attention of encircling audience members towards the *center* of the space, they could also see others from anywhere. They were able to learn from each other about the possibilities that the space presented, but also to form a heightened awareness of the self. What Christian Teckert calls "the observed and self-disciplined subject" became true, for example, when an audience member was careless taking a headset off, pulling the plug out accidentally and crouching to find a way to fix this error. The space required awareness and behavioral care. Spectators were "at the same time subject and object of a controlling gaze – a visitor permanently *on display*" (Teckert 2014, 115.)

Within dramaturgical seams, the audience shifted towards a more collective attention of a performance. This shift was tricky, for the installation was on-going also during these performances: starting with possibilities to freely explore the space, the spectators now assumed a more static position of a dance performance audience, and their curiosity towards the space as a place of *exhibition* was momentarily receding. The collective attention was guided towards a single performer. Although the performance took place in close proximity, I thought that a traditional "fourth wall" was at play between myself as a performer and the spectators. I did not make contact with them during these performances, and the audience was framed out of the sphere of the performance by lighting design; although surely aware of others being present, by being immobile, the audience could probably be quite certain they were not pulling attention of the others towards themselves. From a modern model of a *gallery*, the space turned into a modern model of a *theatre* and the qualities of an installation (in the sense of being able to physically enter the work) faded towards that of a black box where dances appear to contemplative audiences. If what Teckert writes about the ontology of a "white cube" can be applied to a "black box" as well, his account could also be applied to the dramaturgical shift inside this transformation: "time and space, in the sense of historical or local context, [thereby] step into the background, and the preconditions of perception are absorbed into the invisibility of the ideological equipment of the institution" (Teckert 2014, 117.) Maybe in this case the "historical and local

context stepping into the background" was even more literal, for the gallery space fading away was specifically concerned with these very things; history and local context. At the same time the audience assumed a more collective identity through a common focus of attention. After each performance (excluding the last one, a discussion with the audience), the space was again activated anew, and the audience assumed their previous relation to the site as a gallery/installation.

The last seam was a long fade out of the video works resulting in a call to participate in an audience discussion. With the audience, we formed a round and I initiated the discussion, although I did not guide it further. I had trouble finding a fitting way to initiate the discussion, finally deciding to simply ask the audience if they could share their experience regarding the duration and structure of the performance. The discussion mostly went on quite organically from there. This part of the performance allowed direct contact between the audience and the performer, to a point where the performer was one among the audience taking part in the same round of discussion.

In this round, the identity of the work was being negotiated in various ways. Sometimes the audience asked me specific questions, which I could not answer; sometimes the work as a whole was criticized as un-meaningful, repetitive or even "unacceptable". With one full audience, we hardly even had a common language, making the situation more dependent on single words accompanied with body language and expressions.

Kirsten Maar writes of the traditional theater in relationship to an assumed "shared situation of the spectators" along these lines: "…theater [as the traditional place where dance has been performed over the last two centuries] does not so much serve an executed or practiced community … In its antique version, it refers to another aspect – not of community but a space of negotiation - …" (Maar 2014, 106.) The dissonance the work gained through an integrated audience discussion - I feel - was more relatable to constructing a

situation for and allowing negotiation to happen within spectators (and myself), rather than “making us a community”.

Psychological and sensory realms of reading

The space of *provide* contained objects that, when framed as art, gained their significance through different strategies. There were objects that were brought from somewhere else and stood there as themselves, highlighted by light and their manner of display. A stone, a railroad beam, rocks, and a book were displayed in a rather minimalistic manner, and could be regarded as separate floating objects acquiring a viewer’s attention one at a time or in different juxtapositions. In contrast, there were other things of a more psychological quality. Video works on display were applying different approaches to the narrative. They appeared alongside with poetry and formed connections with certain other objects in the space. The videos showed me both as the performer and as the designer of the space, at work with movement and dance, and as the person who transports the objects that now are present.

I wanted *provide* to appear in a minimalistic setting but to be perceived in a manner *not* akin to minimalism. I had no specific description for the kind of perception I was looking for, but described it as, for example, “bordering understandable, remaining floating”. I think the space actually came to be physically quite minimalistic; it was comprised of white polyhedrons and simple objects. Upon this geography of the space something else was then casted; light and sound, video projections and audio recordings. Both required the viewers to take distance from the objects. The video works were optimally observed from approximately four meters away, and the headsets were placed approximately at this distance. The video and recordings implied meanings and encouraged contemplation not only in relation to themselves alone, but in relation to the objects of the space as interconnected; the actual stone being transported here “in this manner” on screen, or the railroad beam now sitting

in the studio potentially being from “that place” appearing on a video. Focusing on listening and watching a video work was a way to both forget the sociality of the gallery space, to detach from the rest and to enclose oneself into one specific part of the installation; and at the same time, readings and connections were casted and forged upon the whole of the space.

Claire Bishop writes of 1960’s debate regarding differences between minimalism and “environment art” (or later, “installation art”) that at the time the debate practically concerned what I read as different understandings of spatiality. The minimalists argued that in their work, the pieces should be more important separately than the space they appeared in in its whole; their exhibitions were not to be seen as “one thing”, but as a collection of things. In this way, they were opposing environment art of the time, of which Bishop writes: “…art characterized by a symbolic and psychologistic *mise-en-scène*. Such pieces adopted precisely those aspects of the Abstract Expressionist legacy that Minimalism sought to eliminate: the narrative, the emotive, the organic. Indeed, anything remotely connected to the psychodramatic tendencies of the Happenings stood for the precise opposite of the Minimalists’ literal ‘what you see is what you see’ aesthetic” (Stella according to Bishop 2005, 55.)

I feel like I can relate to this rejection of the symbolic, the narrative, or the psychological. Still, they just might be some of the possible words to characterize that which I described as “bordering understandable but saying nothing”[7].

[7] This change of phrasing marks one of the differences that occurred during the re-writing process of this thesis.

Video works

Stone

A video titled ”Stone” was one of the three short films on display at the core of my artistic thesis work *provide,* the other two being titled “Bridge” and “Wall”. ”Stone” had a narrative of picking up a piece of stone from Suomenlinna island, carrying it to the island port and taking a ferry to mainland Helsinki, and transporting the stone towards the Theatre Academy through the metro. The editing of this video followed the script of this trajectory, and its style was supposed to lean more towards documentary than that of the other two. Spatially ”Stone” was the dominant visual element upon entering the space of *provide,* and the actual stone was also put on display at the other side of the gallery space. The headset plugged into the video transmitted the original sound from the video material, minimalistic musical composition and, predominantly, a recorded passage from the book ”*The fate of place. A philosophical history*” by Edward S. Casey. This passage was repeated, echoed and blurred in various ways in relation to the dramaturgy of the short film.

The video was very recognizable as a journey from point A to point B, made difficult by the weight of a rock that I carried and that I occasionally lifted off for moments of rest. The actual performance took between four and five hours to complete, and the accumulation of fatigue is easily recognizable. The actual arrival to destination was only partially recorded and left out of the video, because our filming was interrupted by the attendants of the Theatre Academy for concerns stemming from the rights of filming inside the building.

The video with its recorded text makes reference to Albert Camus’s 1947 essay ”*Le Mythe de Sisyphe*” along with creation myths, notably that of the Book of Genesis, as discussed by Casey. The act of carrying a rock through the city was a small, personal act of paying homage to Georges Hébert’s philosophy of natural movement. The references of rite, myth and spirituality were reinforced

in a descending manner at three moments in the film: when passing through an arch upon arrival to the port of Suomenlinna; resting at the Helsinki Cathedral square; and descending to the subway through a corridor with decorations resembling cave paintings on its walls.

The first of these instances (the arrival to the port) was composed with a fixed camera centered with the arc, and a character with the rock on his shoulders turning into a silhouette when passing through the arc, re-emerging from the shadow when arriving to the end of the tunnel. This image – at least for me - was so overwhelmingly loaded with cultural meanings that whether or not to include it into the film became a valid question - and yet the moment felt too *crucial* to let go of it. This specific moment proved difficult also in terms of sound design. The sound design of the video, making use of altering left and right speakers to echo text sequences overlapping each other, was decided to completely blur the comprehensiveness of the text at this very instance. As the image gained highlighted symbolic value in the overall dramaturgy of the short film, any solutions including comprehensive text felt overly imposing. To me, the image became a clear reference to the myth of Sisyphus as interpreted by Camus (highlighting absurdity and importance of banality and effort). The second instance (of resting with the Helsinki Cathedral in the background) was relatable to the presence of Christian religion through the text material. The short appearance of cave paintings was a fitting connection with the natural method: carrying a stone was one of the exercises proposed by the *natural method* to simulate the daily labor of humankind as a tradition of physical education.

In the context of *provide,* the video was supposed to raise into awareness the creation process of the piece. As the same stone was easily recognizable both in the gallery space and in the video, this particular object's appearance here becomes important. How would the video or the stone come across to the spectator without the other? The video was a means through which it was communicated that every appearance in the space has a (recorded) history. This

connection between the object (an object fully in the present) and it's conveyed history (the video as a medium of recording) was the first very apparent thematic upon entering the space; it was meant to instantly lay out the fashion by which the space was built to connect highlighted objects (or instances) to their recordings (or conveyed history).

Bridge

A video titled ”Bridge” was one of the three short films on display at the core of my artistic thesis work *provide,* the other two being titled “Stone” and “Wall”. Situated towards the back wall of the space, “Bridge” was the last video work to be perceived by the audience upon entering the space. The work shared worlds with both other video works, and was the only one with no explicit attached text to it. The short film was shot at a (currently out of use) railway bridge in Vantaa.

In terms of praxis, “Bridge” was closely tied with “Stone”. In place of carrying a stone as in “Stone”, “Bridge” consisted mostly of climbing or balancing (or more so, “residing”) in places of height, both being practices encouraged by *hebertists*[8]. Although “Bridge” did not in itself contain direct reference to hebertism, the screen area was partly covered with print-out pages of hebertist writing. This surface was built so that it flowed from behind the screen's leftmost edge, where these pages created a background layer on top of which a collage of performance notes had been constructed. The video surface of “Bridge” was the place where this “background” came through and to the forefront. However, it was designed so that the video projection made the text merge into the video's milieu, the movement of the video appearing to travel inside and through the text. The arrangement encouraged briefly feeling out the text's thematic but forgetting a need to actually read, instead taking the text as a background for the action depicted through the video recording.

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8 Fr. *hébertiste,* someone who follows the code of ”the natural method of physical education.”

“Bridge,” however, approached filming differently compared to “Stone”, which was staged and filmed in a more documentarist manner. “Stone” had a clear narrative of traveling through space (or through places). Interaction with surroundings was not planned beforehand, everything was recorded and nothing was repeated. On the contrary, “Bridge” was concentrated around a sole location. The final video was taken in one shot; however multiple shots were taken when practicing the score. The first try-out created a sketch of spatial trajectories and gave information about possible filming angles and durations. As the film was entirely shot with a drone, the flight trajectories and adjustments of camera angles had to be rehearsed in-between takes.

This resulted in a very different mode of working than the one at play when filming “Stone”. The work contained something more “choreographic”, as different trajectories and angles were used to bring the location’s properties out. The dramaturgical shifts in “Bridge” were more those of “close/far, low/high” than those of “locations traveled through”. The railroad bridge was taken as an entity consisting of graphic elements drawing straight lines contrasting with the curving river flowing underneath it, the blue-painted metal against the green environment surrounding it. The structure was seen as honeycombed from close, allowing movement through its structure, and a solid, clear and immobile entity from afar. I thought that the architecture of the bridge both stood out from and, at the same time, merged into the landscape. The performative score of “Bridge” consisted of following the railroad to the riverbank, climbing up on top of the bridge, climbing down and hanging from its lowest elements, climbing back up, lying down and feeling out the empty space underneath. While “Stone” depicted a travel through *different* “space-entities” (i.e. the arch, the ferry, the metro, the city) and “Wall” happened on a single surface without its surroundings, “Bridge” was exploring a single architectonic location as in its landscape.

All three videos had a different scale of relating to the space, and were given keywords – “documentary” for “Stone”, “poetic” for “Wall” and “phenomenological” for “Bridge”. The way “phenomenological” was interpreted in this case was based on Edward S. Casey’s account on Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s *Phenomenology of perception* (1945) and sense of “inhabiting space” through one’s body, this “inhabiting” signifying the difference between being *of* the space rather than *in* space (Casey 1998, 231.)

Wall

A video titled ”Wall” was one of the three short films on display at the core of my artistic thesis work *provide,* the other two being titled “Stone” and “Bridge”. While these other videos were situated on opposing sides of the projection surface cube, “Wall” was situated in-between them (being in an opposition not with another video work, but with “performance notes”, a wall serving as a huge program sheet). Immediately visible at the entrance to the space alongside with “Stone”, this video had a very green-and-yellow filter on it. In contrast with the light-blue filtering of “Stone”, the corner between the two videos became strogly reinforced.

Following no articulated visual narrative, “Wall” consisted of moving a hand over the worn-out green paint of a wall. The paint made a rustling sound falling off, stuck to the fingers and palms, and gave the hands a deep green glow. The hands were bathing in bright daylight entering the space in stripes. The shadow cast to the wall had an odd effect to it because of the light entering through these stripes and bending in a way that resembled like something computer-made.

I was relating to “Wall” as a key element tightening the whole conceptual map of the performance space. In contrast to the other two, “Wall” never showed clearly its location, did not follow a logical time-based narrative, and generally did not show “everything” but only specific parts of the whole picture – only the

hands, only the wall. Listening to the headsets, a single poem[9] in four different languages was heard, but this text as "text" was thoroughly incomprehensive due to echo and overlapping of different languages. Certain words could be caught from here and there, assuming the languages spoken were familiar to the listener. Even with knowledge of the languages spoken the text, however, became rather like "texture", with an occasional grasping of a meaning from here or there.

"Wall" was edited audio-visually, bright in terms of colors, at times fast-paced or more time-taking, containing some hidden images and using cropping extensively. Rather than depicting the event in its succession (was my hand green before or only after that?) this video was composed independently in an arrangement of its own.

The material was recorded very much on a whim. We were at the location filming other things when we realized that the evening light filtering in was very inviting. Nothing was planned; I only asked if eyes could be framed out of the picture.

9 "Theresa", poem by Amado Peña.

Live-performance sequences

Piling stones

Piling stones was the first live-performance sequence to appear inside the space of *provide*. Its duration was around seven minutes long and it appeared against the wall hosting the video work "Stone". During the duration of *Piling stones,* the video was disrupted and swapped for another video titled *Hanging* (a video collage of hanging above ground from various structures), which looped in the background of this live sequence during its whole duration.

Piling stones did not trigger changes in lighting and sound in the whole of the space. It started without a signal to the audience, and went entirely unnoticed for some spectators happening to be occupied with scrutinizing something else. *Piling stones* was the first clear moment of change to everything that preceded it: at its beginning moment, some spectators had been inside the stable gallery space for well over half an hour. The audience had been informed that live sequences would take place inside, but this first sequence still contained an element of surprise.

Piling stones was literally a sequence of balancing pieces of stone on top of one another to create a pile of stones. For this sculpture, I used pretty much the same arrangement every time, borrowing from my 2015 solo *Mass and construction* in which the same stones played a major role and were piled in the exact same composition. The composition counterweighted the stones in a manner that made the sculpture look seemingly impossible to stand without additional support. The thematics for *Piling stones* (and for *Hanging*) were gravity and working against it to create and achieve verticality; thematically they were in connection to the specific spatial location they took over from the video "Stone", referencing to physical work with stones and to the myth of Sisyphus.

As a performer, I decided that the references were activated trough their co-existence in location, not so much with my performance. To the action of sculpting I related simply as a physical task, concentrating on breath and a tactful touch with the stones. However, as a choreographer I decided to situate this specific performative sequence to this location in the performance space and to make these references. As a whole *provide* was *Mass and construction* re-created, and the references constructed to this specific spatial location with "Stone" were references extracted from *Mass and construction*; this work was enacting the past work towards an alternative reading.

The beginning of *Piling stones* did not affect the recordings heard from the headset clusters anywhere in the space - the text material intended for "Stone" was running throughout the duration of *Piling stones* and *Hanging*. This was to further enclose the two into the same sphere (although admittedly only so for the spectators coincidentally in possession of a headset at that moment) and to bring the questions to the realm of live creation, not only referring to them in the "infinite", "stable", "general" or "abstract" as "is" the gallery space. The text, written by Edward S. Casey from the book "*the fate of place. A philosophical history*" was revolving around the concept of creation as depicted through various myths (including The Book of Genesis). Especially asking whether *a* place must exist before *the word* - that is to say, whether *a* world certainly existed before the act of creation. Casey's text was, for me, an interesting juxtaposition for a re-created performance taking place inside a "completely new world of an artistic work". *Piling stones* took place exactly at the same spot as it happened in the beginning of my studies in *Mass and construction,* in one of the golden cuts of the space, with the same stones, arranged in the same manner.

Dance with stone blocks

Dance with stone blocks was second of the four live performance sequences in *provide*. Following straight after *Piling stones* and also featuring stone as material, these two were considered one long block in the dramaturgical arch of *provide*, yet two separate performance sequences. *Dance with stone blocks* was a ten-minute sequence of working with a block of stone in each hand. These blocks were tile-shaped granite, weighting approximately four kilograms each, and collected from The Theatre Academy's premises. Apart from this live-sequence, the blocks served as legs holding up one of the artefacts of the space, a book titled "*L'Éducation physique ou l'entraînement complet par la Méthode Naturelle. Historique documentaire*" by Georges Hebert.

The sequence was spatially situated in front of the screen hosting a video work titled "Bridge" and in symmetrical spatial opposition with *Piling the stones* and "Stone". "Stone" and *Piling stones* I thought of as *executing a task to re-enact historical practices and paying them tribute*[10]. "Bridge" and *Dance with stone blocks* was engaging these enacted practices for an investigation of *locus of memory as bound to the body*. In "Bridge," I approached this subject through Merleau-Ponty's discussion of a sense of place as being constructed through subjects "inhabiting" time and space. *Dance with stone blocks* was exploring the personal significance of the re-enacted, rigid practices to the re-enacting body.

[10] Re-enacting *hebertism*.

Spinal dance

Spinal dance was third of the four live performance sequences in *provide,* spatially situated in front of a video work titled "Wall". The sequence's ten-minute duration consisted of repeating (dancing) through two or three times a written four-point score, which took me through a growing wave-like movement of the spine, brought the spine and hips into rotation, lowered my body to the floor, and re-introduced the motion of the spine. The score was written more in the manner of (and also contained a direct reference to) the butoh scores of Hijikata Tatsumi. The final form of the score used in *provide* was:

A snake spine
A nest of eyes
Bright yellow
Gliding on rusty metal

The initial form of this score was drastically longer, both in terms of individual phrases and total number of lines. I repeated the score over time, changing it slightly each time and cutting out phrases that I had written but while moving did not "get into". I also changed the form of these remaining four phrases many times over the course of score-crafting; the only line of the score that remained completely unchanged was *A nest of eyes*, a direct reference to Hijikata (I have no idea how this phrase was initially meant to be embodied, but for some reason it immediately pulled out a response from me). The choice to use an explicit reference felt fitting to the integrity of *provide* – as the assembling of references and borrowing things was a central means of gathering material for the performance.

Spinal dance was also an attempt to work in terms of dance as an artistic practice. I have a personal tendency to reduce movement into functionality and

to add other qualities through the context (or framework) that this movement appears in (obvious in *provide* as well). *Spinal dance* contained for me an unfamiliar approach to making dances. The role of text as a source within *Spinal dance* was in a very different relation to movement than has been the case in the rest of my work. The score was not dictating form or clear tasks but contained possibilities of free interpretation and was evolving in a responsive feedback loop with the movement material. *Spinal dance* contained a crucial difference to the rest of *provide,* a work filled with re-enacting of indoctrinating writing - texts that make a demand of embodiment and shape the sphere of experience within their re-enactor.

Audience discussion

Audience discussion was the last live performance situation within *provide*. Whether or not exactly depicted as a "performance" by the audience, *Audience discussion* was included *inside* an ongoing performance and not taking place only *after*. The transition towards *Audience discussion* was realized by fading away the video projections while raising light intensity inside the projection cube, making the cube glow like a lantern. A text "Audience discussion" then slowly appeared to each side of the cube. When the transition to *Audience discussion* was complete, the headset clusters each introduced a new track to listen to. This transition took around six minutes.

Audience discussion was a moment of reference to Robert Morris's 1961 installation *Box with the Sound of Its Own Making*. The cube was, starting from the beginning of *Audience discussion*, for the first time displayed as "just a cube", without video or live performance overrunning it. The three audio tracks running in headset clusters were listing working hours, working materials and working expenses, namely in one way giving away the making of *provide* (although instead of from coming from inside the cube, as was the case with Morris's box, the sound was situated as far away from the cube as possible

within the space). Although *provide* at all times laid on display "its own making" in different ways, this situation was rather different in that it did not happen within "the performance realm" of *provide,* but bluntly stated concrete resources spent in the process.

On a live performance level, *Audience discussion* was quite frankly just that. I tried to relate to the situation as just talking with the audience, without much "romantism"; sometimes without having answers to the questions, sometimes getting exited hearing about a connection someone had found, sometimes getting slightly offended, and so on; I did not have other roles than those of "me as a performer and a choreographer". *Audience discussion* was no exception to other performance sequences of *provide* in my personal relation to them; I took them all as practices – of movement, of choreographing, of talking to an audience, and so on. Whereas in other live performance sequences, the audience supposedly interpreted me as *a performer*; it seemed I was read to be first and foremost *a choreographer* within *Audience discussion*. To me personally, these roles were already in too complex a relation to distinguish, and anyhow the only way I feel comfortable in relation to working as a performer is to simply relate to it as "doing these things".

To complete the transition to *Audience discussion*, I informed the spectators along these lines: "*We have reached a point of* Audience discussion *within the performance. You are, of course, still free to move as you please, to participate if you so wish and to leave whenever you want to.*" At the beginning of the discussion, I customarily stated the situation at hand (i.e. this is the second run-through, the premier, and so on) and thanked the people involved in the production. Then either the discussion was initiated by members of the audience or I asked them about their experience within the performance; whether there was a point in time when they felt "ready, in the sense of having seen everything", "knowing what is in the space". This initiation question was without a great deal of consideration or meaning; it simply was, according to open rehearsals, a topic that quite easily evoked positive as well as negative

feedback and was often brought up by spectators themselves. The question was also slightly impish for it was asked before the piece had “ended” and at the beginning of a completely new and unique situation within the performance.

However, as one of the organizing principles in designing *provide* was that it was practically impossible to see throughout (despite a setting akin to minimalism), the audience feedback was genuinely valuable. Not so much as in whether the spectators did or did not “see everything” (knowing certainly that they did not) but rather in the sense of hearing of their experience and conception of the piece’s subject matter – whether or not the composition and dramaturgy of the work encouraged them enough to explore, to connect dots, and whether they were interested in continuing doing so throughout the piece or not. If not, it was interesting to me what kind of attitudes towards the work they formed. Another organizing principle of *provide* was an effort to make the piece aesthetically and atmospherically coherent in a way that would alternatively allow residing within the space as enjoyable without the need to formulate knowledge out of it.

THOUGHT CONTEXT OF THE WORK

Working on an artistic piece creates a sphere of its own, a discourse connected to that specific process. With that sphere comes the responsibility to constantly make decisions about which concepts, attitudes and thought patterns to introduce and incorporate into the process while excluding others. Although *provide* was a "solo project" (in the sense that as a choreographer I was engaged in making a performance that I would also perform alone) the responsibility does not go away. I think of it as a responsibility towards work itself. As later becomes evident, trying to stay aware of this decision making in the process was a central theme within my artistic thesis project.

I am trying here to open those lines of thought that followed me into the artistic process of *provide* and laid me a framework. I will approach this foundation from three perspectives: by trying to characterize the nature of *choreography* as I have understood it, by speculating on how the spatial setting could influence the spectator's relationship with time, and by describing two differentiated modalities of perceiving and making sense of an artistic work.

"Choreography"

When applying to the study programme of choreography in 2015, I had a task of giving a short lecture about William Forsythe's essay "Choreographic Objects". At the time, I couldn't really understand the essay that well (which specifically was the reason I chose that essay out of given options), and found myself coming back to it every now and then during my studies. The essay questions the possibility of a universal use for the term "choreography" by giving it a broad definition of being "a term that presides over a class of ideas", stating that each of its use is "*ideally at odds with its previous incarnations as it strives to testify to the plasticity and wealth of our ability to re-conceive and*

detach ourselves from positions of certainty" (Forsythe, 2008). As a student of ”choreography”, what do I study then? And more specifically (and more in the spirit of the cited essay), what kind of a definitions for ”choreography” could I give to the one that was at play in the making of my artistic thesis work *provide* (2017) and in terms of this writing process?

For me, to ”choreograph” relates to thinking of patterns and principles that guide the emergence of a performance, an event, a place, a written text, virtually any phenomena of moving or communicating subjects. I cannot think of it separately from dance and arts, with its traditions of bodily practice and movement culture, and with conventions of both classical and experimental. I'm using the term in instances where a ”body” comes in contact with the emerging situation, and exclude cases of “pure abstract” that are separate from an experiencing or creating agent. My subjective ”study of choreography” then is a study of ”principles that guide the emergence of what is perceived”, but not in a sense that could claim to extract knowledge of universalities, truths or ideals. Yet I would like to claim that choreography generally has the capacity to extract knowledge or understanding, whether a decision to situate it in the realm of science is made or not.

When it comes to my artistic thesis work *provide,* I felt entangled with a whole mess of different approaches and questions that accompanied them. I look at this written examination of *provide* as reformulating the thoughts and experiences of that working process (this being ”a study of principles that guide…” and so forth) but also as an act of restructuring the artistic work itself, to make it present again through a different medium. I regard this written examination as reconstructing the piece in textual form. Whereas *provide* was largely about making the thought process and framework of the artistic work explicitly present within the performance, could this analysis be an attempt to re-create the artistic work?

To be fair, I cannot be exactly certain about a single, defining artistic question

that was dominant during the process of *provide*. To be able to go on, the question could take a form such as: *how aware can one be of the influences that frameworks - personal experiences, external conditions, materiality - has over the creation process of a work of art*, and *how to make use of that awareness as material for the performance*? A problem I addressed throughout the creation process was the relation between now and then, the difficulties of relating to the work taking place *now* while being aware of its historical roots. The concrete work was largely preoccupied with arranging material in ways that could evoke a perception of space as simultaneously both cohesive and contradictory: consisting of a slow pace but with an overload of information, simple and obvious presentation but with a presence of multiple meanings, and simultaneous residing *through* the present and in the past.

In-betweenness

In the opening chapter of his book ”*Truth and method*” Hans-Georg Gadamer expresses the detachment point of human sciences from natural sciences as a resistance to ”grasp a concrete phenomenon as an instance of a universal rule [or *law*]”. Whereas natural sciences have the potential to apply known facts to create coherent, functional and stable models of explanation, the human sciences may use what Gadamer calls ”experiential universals” with an aim to arrive to an *understanding*. This ”understanding,” however, regardless of having different kind of reliability than ”*knowledge of a law*”, is not by any means rendering the information acquired incorrect. The distinction simply suggests an existence of ”knowledge that understands that something is so because it understands that it has come about so” (Gadamer 1975, 5.) The type of knowledge in question becomes something interested in particular circumstances of ”what is it and how is it so” *without* the power to extract a rule. The importance lies in an understanding of a phenomena rather than in extending the mechanics of its emergence outside the phenomena’s own borders.

This separation of “knowledge and understanding” as forms of information was interesting to me during the creation process of *provide*. To what extent specific meanings or connections could be communicated as “understanding”, and how to persist with logically thought-out forms without fixing the “meanings” of a work?

A relationship or even a tension between past and present was written all over *provide* both on a personal and a more general level. *provide* referred to various subjects that could be recognized as “concerning the historical”: a book from the beginning of the 20th century, references to specific modern and postmodern artists, a stone from a preserved cultural-historical site. On a personal level, past becomes present through video materials, audio recordings, live performance and more subtly in most of the artefacts present in the space.

As the performance preoccupies with the extent of possible *understanding of frameworks that formed it and the mediums that make a similar kind of understanding possible for the spectators,* the emphasis on history seems evident: the emerging work lays out, contains and *means* both the objects of its interest and the methodology of its own study – and its performative outcome in the performance.

Gadamer was not too eager to demand ”objectivity” and ”inductive logics” of a ”methodology”” of the natural sciences from human sciences, pointing out that the gained understanding and a development of ”psychological tact” was sufficient enough for the study to be worthwhile. Gadamer describes this tact as an aesthetic and historical consciousness that helps one to avoid offensive or intrusive behavior (Gadamer 1975, 16.) and, as such, it works in a sphere of encountering otherness in a more open manner. A similar thematic of ethics was included in *provide* connecting to the spatial arrangements that were meant to inhibit definite conclusions, as the arrangement only slowly unfolded with time spent inside the performance sphere.

I thought of *provide* as situated in a state of in-betweenness in at least two different senses laid out above: explicitly of time and historicity connecting to the chosen form of installation/gallery/dance performance; and perhaps more implicitly in relation to references to different philosophical standpoints of humanism and post-humanism orbiting the process.

…of past and present

The tension between past and present was inherent in the chosen form (or *genre*) of the work. *provide* was a piece consisting of a video installation and a gallery space, inside of which several live performances took place. A gallery, here in the sense of ”a room devoted to the display of a work of art” and

etymologically in a possible connection with ”galilea, Galilee” - the church porch, naturally bears affiliation with museums and objects of a given significance of historical quality, especially because this reading in *provide* was emphasized through the aesthetics of the space. The space was arranged symmetrically with the strictly framed profile lights highlighting the artefacts lying on pedestals covered in smooth, snow-white fabric. The most dominant element on display was a wooden cube of 2 meters of height and 2,46 of width, in the center of the space, entirely covered in white fabric and hosting video works projected on its three sides. The fourth side, lit but placed facing a wall and not immediately evident when entering the space, was covered in hand-written notes, images, book references, illustrations and e-mail exchanges from the performance process, serving as an immense program sheet. On the three other walls of the space, headsets were hung from the ceiling, inviting the audience to circle the space and observe it from different angles. During the dramaturgy of the performance, the gallery setting occasionally became a stage for a total of four live performances situated in different locations in the space.

Relating to *provide* as only “gallery space” would be an obvious mistake, but so would be to relate to it as only “performance”. The dramaturgy of *provide* was on-going simultaneously in two different conceptions of time in relation to the spectator. The stability of the gallery space in relation to the sequences of live performance was disturbed to *varying extent*, but never ceased to exist. Similarly, the live performance took over the space to *varying extent*, but never entirely pushed away concrete encouragements to relate to the space as a gallery. In the dramaturgy of the work, several things were hidden, waiting to be found. These things were not ”hidden” because finding them required ”searching”, but they were ”hidden” through *dramaturgical* means of encouraging the spectators to assume roles with differing relations to time and space. As the spectators assumed their identity as ”gallery visitors” with time and freedom to circle the space and to stop for ten minutes to take a closer look at a video on display, they drifted away from the fleetingness of a live performance and in some cases, might entirely miss out on a live performance

sequence taking place on the other side of the space. As they grew accustomed to interrupting their role as a gallery visitor to become for a while ”a performance audience”, they forgot their relation to *space* and missed out on the information that the headsets were giving regarding the on-going live performance. Perhaps the most subtle part was the last live performance: ”an audience discussion.” This part, which was included in the work, was - in my experience - mostly regarded as *following* the performance and not integrally a *part* of it, even though spectators were explicitly given the information upon arrival. The space was still evolving and the performance was not over. From the headsets three different recordings had only started to emerge at the beginning of the audience discussion.

This oscillation between a seemingly stable space and a fleeting live performance offered the audience different strategies of relating to the time and space proposed by the work. The headsets were a key element of *provide,* both in the sense of experience of duration, but also in another manner: the headsets were never quiet but always relating to the space and to changes inside the dramaturgy. Putting on the headsets during a live performance sequence was probably counterintuitive for most, but their encouragement for either immersion (during gallery situations) or detachment and reflective distance (during live performance sequences) became a practical means offered to spectators to help them experience the oscillation between different relationships to time and space. The work was designed as a challenge to perceive past in present and present through past.

…of perceptional modalities

The second, perhaps more implicit in-betweenness of the work related to the philosophical standpoints taken during the process and was suggested within the actual performance: *provide* made an array of direct and indirect references

philosophically, including existential humanism, absurdism, Marxism and post-humanism, yet without having a single clearly chosen philosophical grounding of its own. The work also suggested both rational thinking and sensitivity to an aesthetic experience, leaving room for the spectators to settle to a perceptional mode of theirs but not clearly offering an approach to decipher its content.

A certain rational approach to experiencing the work was suggested through the symmetry of the space, academic quality of some of the present texts and a seemingly logical spatial setting of connections that could be made between objects on display. Direct usage of symbols was also present in the space. The space was composed to be a mosaic of connections to be found through circling around and viewing the site from different angles, reading and listening the text materials and observing the live performances. Some of the spatial connections and references were rather obvious, while some required much more attention to details, a coincidence to occur or even background information. However, a certain mode of relating to the work as ”to be deciphered in a somewhat logical manner” was made possible and maybe even ”rewarding” for some because of the ”things and connections lying around to be found”. However, the connections and possible realizations of finding them was not meant to be carrying ”a message”, and the comprehensiveness of the text materials present was actively obscured. Audio recordings of text found in some headsets was repeated, echoed and overlapped in such a way that rendered the text more sound material -like and difficult to understand. Some present texts were written in languages not accessible to most of the audience.

The video material was not uniform either in its relation to narrative means and story-telling. Two of the three videos had a linear progression of events. ”Stone” was a 9—minute film starting with finding a rock in the island of Suomenlinna and carrying it through the city of Helsinki towards north. The film was edited in a linear manner, and at least a spectator familiar with the city recognized the linearity of the performer arriving to the island port and taking the ferry,

passing by the Cathedral and taking the subway from The University of Helsinki to Hakaniemi. In contrast, the film ”Bridge” was shot and edited at one location only, and the change of events happened vertically as a performer climbed up and down railroad bridge structures. A drone was used for the shot, and the dramaturgy of the film was realized with the camera filming mostly from up, changing directions every now and then, and adjusting the height of flight. Rather than passing through locations in succession, the film created its narrative while staying in one location, observing it from varying distances of height. The dramaturgy was arranged “horizontally” (passing through locations) for “Stone” and “vertically” (offering view from close or afar) for “Bridge”. Both films also contained a specific key image that, at least for me, evoked mixed feelings, perhaps because of their vague familiarity from movies. These instances were notably a person lying down and facing the sky while the camera pulls back, leaving the character a small dot in the landscape; and a person carrying a big rock over his shoulders while passing through an arch, forming a silhouette when entering the shadow and emerging back, the arch situated at the very center of the camera. Both instances used explicitly cliché methods from filmography to such an extent that for me they became both extremely important to the whole and very, very complicated to edit. They were instances that made video works emotionally loaded and easy to decipher; yet the power of these images had to be limited somehow to deprive those instances of the power to dominate the work.

The third film ”Wall”, situated in-between the other two, was quite different in that it did not so much contain ”events” and ”succession”, but rather constituted of constant motion of light, darkness, and hands against a wall and the old paint on it. The character was not shown a single time except for the moving hands of the performer. The film did not show the ”location” but made the wall its only site. The film’s material was repetitive. Editing and editing-related effects were used more than in other films, and this created the rhythm of the film, without being tied to a succession of filmed events. The key gesture of the film was caressing the painted wall with hands, making the paint stick to those hands:

all in all, the film was more about the colors, light, materials and medium of film than about a succession of events. As this video screen was situated in the middle of the projection cube, it was probably the most visible one as it could be seen alongside one or the other of the rest and, thus, it created different kinds of synergies with the others.

Personally, I thought of these three films as juxtaposing different ways in approaching art- and meaning-making. They each laid out varying possibilities of approach: rational, phenomenological or material-discursive points of view. Although their arrangement made them to be perceived as ”coherent” as an aesthetic whole, they in fact each followed their own aesthetics and connected to the rest of the space and it’s dramaturgy in different ways.

SPECULATIVE PREFACE

These very first lines will be purely speculative in the sense that I have virtually nothing concrete to write about. This preface shall, thus, remain purely speculative. Time will reveal whether it will have any relevance to my thesis whatsoever.

In general, master's thesis in choreography in the University of the Arts, Helsinki, is composed of an artistic work and a written thesis, realized in this order. I'm trying out a reversed order, writing a chunk of my written thesis before even getting started with my artistic project to see if I will be able to lay a meaningful ground for my praxis. I will then continue my writing alongside with the artistic work. This leads me to face an important question: what is the relationship between theory and practice?

I believe that our thinking patterns largely determine the practical choices we make in artistic processes - be it inviting collaborators, choosing relevant concepts for the work or bringing forth and organizing materials. While many artistic practices seem to contribute in seeking possibilities of co-existence and giving possibilities to explore the unfamiliar, I find myself reflecting on my pre-existing conditions of artistic creation. What patterns lead me to behave and create the way I do? How familiar am I with them?

I'm taking this practice of self-reflection also as a gateway to ethics. Throughout my history of movement practice, I have dived into various arts that contain very different approaches to ethics, sometimes in ways that, I presume, deeply shaped my own system of beliefs. The practice of determined movement systems as a way of transmitting values between individuals and communities intrigues me - the more a system is thought out, the more ideas might be flying

around under the radar. What kind of relationships and mechanisms between the use of the body and value systems lie under surface? This is a conception that seems to take material, body or shape, and instance as a site in which these spheres of known and unknown are gathered. Maybe, hence, my interest in performing arts: in these terms, a performance becomes meaningful as a site for examination and inquiry.

’Place’ and ’site’ lately have been my key interests amidst all complexity. As I think back, various phases of my personal experiences feel connected to specific places and memories within them. I seem to feel an indescribable dislocation and passivity that I would like to come to terms with, and I have hopes that this artistic process could allow me to arrive into a more sensitive place.

Notes, end of May 2017

They will renovate the facade of my apartment building. The outlines are stretched out by fresh scaffoldings covered with glowing white plastic curtains, and my windows are sealed with brown paper. They will soon tear down the balconies. Just a week ago my living space was enlarged by the construction site, because I could go out of the bedroom window onto the scaffolding and then climb even higher to reach the rooftop above my eight-floor flat. I noticed I was being searched for an hour later.

Having a (very late) coffee downstairs, I notice the streetlights are reflected from the wrappings of the scaffold exactly in the direction of natural sunset. This mechanized equivalent is not that bad at all, and what it lacks in color it provides back in the form of a strange glimmer on the plastic surface. This luminosity can be touched back.

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