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Editorial

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The Power of Materiality

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The theme of the second issue of RUUKKU came from expositions proposed for the first issue, many of which were connected to the idea of materiality. The ideas were presented both at a conceptual level and as explorations of the characteristics and artistic expression of specific materials. In this issue, we approach materiality as a loose term that encompasses different approaches to art, research, materiality and their intersections.

Materiality is at the heart of artistic practice. It is understood as the substances, both concrete and immaterial, which the artist uses to create a work of art. Actors use words, gestures and movement as their materials of expression, whereas composers use notes, tones and tempo. For painters, colours and surfaces are the main materials, while ceramic artists also add shape and the necessary firing process.

In artistic research, the artist often both creates the work and contextualises it. This thinking provides the premise for the second issue of RUUKKU: a space where artist-researchers from different disciplines explain the starting points and aims of the creative work process and then explore the resulting work of art in a meaningful context of their choice.

In *Vibrant Matter - A Political Ecology of Things* (2010), Jane Bennett discusses the concept of materiality at the interface of a human and the (nonliving) physical world. Bennett talks about vital materiality and refers to a force that cannot be separated from matter. According to Bennett, a craftsperson - or rather, anyone who has an intimate connection with matter senses a force, which is manifested as a propensity or tendency trapped in the matter. The direction in which these forces take the creator depends on what types of other forces, emotions and bodies are present in the process (ibid. 56). Craftspeople and scientists have different relationships with material: the former is interested in what could be done with the material, while the latter seeks to know what the material is. According to Bennett (2010, 60), this means that the craftsperson develops a deeper understanding of the “vitality” of a specific material and is able to have a more productive “collaboration” with it. The second issue of RUUKKU brings together five artists who each have a thorough knowledge of the material they work with. Their expositions reveal the outcomes of long-term collaboration with a specific material.

One of the characteristics of RUUKKU is transparent peer review. This means that comments written on the expositions are public, although they may be edited for publishing purposes. Some of the reviewers have chosen to publish the comments under their own names, while others preferred to remain anonymous, as is

the common practice in peer review. In both cases, discussion on the expositions is given space to expand. In this foreword to the second issue of RUUKKU, the expositions are presented with these interpretations and insights.

The exposition of *Teemu Mäki* draws from the creation of a world-view and its expression through art. According to Mäki, art is a radical activity that transcends categories; a positive struggle that can help eliminate social problems and support personal growth. For the first reviewer, Mäki's materialistic viewpoint is utopian, but he sees the section discussing the societal role of art as a valuable contribution. Another reviewer points to a circular structure in the exposition and the idea of artistic research as an "alternative way of thinking", stating that Mäki not only provides arguments, but also demonstrates, providing food for thought.

Elina Saloranta examines her video installation *Aamu* ("Morning") as a kind of modern-day genre art, a "painting" of an interior scene that explores everyday life. According to Saloranta, the aesthetic context of genre art has helped her move away from the documentary approach to more deeply examine what she is ultimately aiming for in her works. According to reviewer Tutta Palin, the main premise of Saloranta's argumentation is her reflection on the videomaking process and on writing about it. In Palin's view, one of the highlights of the exposition is the enjoyable style of writing, which is in harmony with genre art and the unhurried atmosphere of the video installation. For reviewer Susanna Helke, Saloranta's composition has a static element. She asks whether the artist has consciously crossed over the (social and political) charge that characterises the composition with its genre painting-like quality. What were these genre scenes - for whose gaze and for whom were these mundane moments of silent women produced?

Priska Falin's exposition 'Connection to Materiality – Engaging with Ceramic Practice' discusses the role of materiality in the work process of ceramic art. According to reviewer Tarja Pitkänen-Walter, the most interesting aspect of Falin's contribution is the "voice of the material" and its designation as a platform of the aesthetic experience. Material anomaly is one of the strategies of contemporary art. Falin relies heavily on this strategy and purposefully violates the orthodox uses of her ceramic material. However, in the exposition, the unorthodox is not identified as an error; rather, it is seen to offer something special. The second reviewer, Jaana Houessou, notes that the aesthetic way in which Falin presents the "error" guides the reader towards the artist's authentic experience.

Arild Berg's exposition, "Tactile Resonance in Art," presents a community art project he created for elderly people who use mental health care services. According to Berg, the materiality of art objects is the very thing that facilitates interaction with the environment: they activate the senses and invoke memories. Material works of art helped elderly people to anchor themselves in the present and improved communication with staff members. The first reviewer considers that community-based art projects have the potential to strengthen the agency and well-

being of people who need care services. The second reviewer notes that the artist is not alone in these types of art projects: in this case, Berg acted as a facilitator and an intermediary in a hospital context.

Translation is the theme of *Mika Elo*'s philosophical exposition, which centres on a video based on Martin Heidegger's essay "Was heißt Denken?", though Elo uses Walter Benjamin's conception of language as his methodological reference. Benjamin's idea of "the language of things" links Elo's exposition to the theme of materiality. In his review, Miika Luoto emphasises the role of the recipient in the work as a whole: the work requires the recipient to take an active approach, be willing to let go, and explore ideas in a state of uncertainty. For the second reviewer, Elo's title 'What calls for thinking' shows a transition from the attempt to define academic thinking towards artistic processes and practices. According to the reviewer, this is a major shift from the point of view of artistic research.

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