

I Only Want To Talk About Flowers

Written, edited and all works by
Diana Soria Hernandez

There is no chronological order in this publication, the different works have been organized so that the reader can navigate making jumps when suggested, connected through process, concepts and experiences.

INSTRUCTIONS

Different readings are suggested, indicated with pink rectangles around text, nevertheless not all pages have options. A conventional linear reading is possible if you don't feel like taking shortcuts or the options does not provoke you. When options are available, you are welcome to jump, bringing the work in another light. Going back is not possible.

I Only Want To Talk About Flowers contains a small selection of works made in the span of 15 years. The starting point was a conversation with Anne Naukkarinen, editor of this digital publication in which she showed interest in my artistic practice, fluid between mediums and concepts. This body of work hopes to give the reader a brief insight of how it all comes together when looked from a distant perspective.

As I begun drawing mental maps I saw clearly how restraining a linear narrative was, making impossible to depict my paths. As I thought of solutions, I remembered interactive books from my childhood as well as Hopscotch from Julio Cortazar, two examples that give the reader some agency and that would allow me to make traces between works and thoughts that seemed distant in time and execution.

How can I come to you so that you welcome me?

I might come as a flower

Not a flashy flower, but more a small wild flower that comes out in spring
You won't suspect I am anything more than this colorful thing
And you won't notice my power until it has spread around like scent

I'll be a flower

I'll come as I am

Or not

POND



more flowers



ARREGLO FLORAL



a closed fist
I am a clenched fist with water
with bird
with grains
my friend

HISTORY WILL BE KIND TO ME, FOR I INTEND TO PERFORM IT, Bergen, Norway

Photo credits Bjarte Bjørkum



And I came as a flower.

Some, most of the audience only saw the flower.

But the flower was suffocated.

Should I have been more literal than a flower?

brave?

prudent?

What is the prudence of a flower? Even cut they remain sweet and polite, safe and neutral as they rise out of a vase. They hold on to their beauty and charm until they fade. Do they struggle or are they already dead? Both parts of the stem will dry but the roots, wherever they are, might keep on growing.

When I think in farming flowers I feel claustrophobic, to imagine the mass production of the green houses. Orchids from Ikea and supermarkets make me sad, they almost smell like plastic. Someone close said once they are bad quality so they don't last. How can something alive have bad quality? It's disturbing every time I think in this.

I joined a plant Facebook group. Plants were treated badly, just as mere decorative and exotic commodified objects. If a certain plant was to be expensive (very expensive), they would cut it in pieces, make them get roots to later sell them. Harmless they might think this is, but to me, How not to think in other terrible practices that take place? I left the group.

Sometimes I have been told to not take things so seriously

I can't stop thinking in injured flowers

Devil's Flowers

The performance took its title from a podcast from Radio Ambulante in which the survival story of Rosa Julia, a woman from Guerrero, Mexico, is narrated. Her life was severely affected by drug trafficking. The memories of the poppy fields she saw as child redimensioned as she became victim and understood why her mother called them the devil's flowers.

Unikko (poppy) is a classic design from the well known and traditional Finnish brand MARIMEKKO. In this performance a human silhouette is created by cutting the silk dress and gluing it around my body as the story of Rosa Julia translated from Spanish to Finnish emerged from a small speaker; bringing besides each other what is beautiful and brutal. Two different realities of a flower that visibility the privilege in what we see in poppies.

Stay alive

See the poppies



Devil's Flower(2021)
New Performance Turku, Finland
Photo credits Jussi Virkkumaa

To me art making is like throwing a rock to create ripples. We might see the closer ripples before they get out of sight. As I was thinking about flowers I came across this poem by Noor Hindi, a brave ripple from across the ocean with no missing words.

I wrote to her, she allowed me to include it in this publication.

FUCK YOUR LECTURE ON CRAFT, MY PEOPLE ARE DYING

By Noor Hindi

Colonizers write about flowers.

I tell you about children throwing rocks at Israeli tanks

Seconds before becoming daisies.

I want to be like those poets who care about the moon.

Palestinians don't see the moon from jail cells and
prisons.

It's so beautiful, the moon

They're so beautiful, the flowers.

I pick flowers for my dead father when I'm sad.

He watches Al Jazeera all day.

I wish Jessica would stop texting me Happy Ramadan.

I know I'm American because when I walk into a room
something dies.

Metaphors about death are for poets who think ghosts
care about sound.

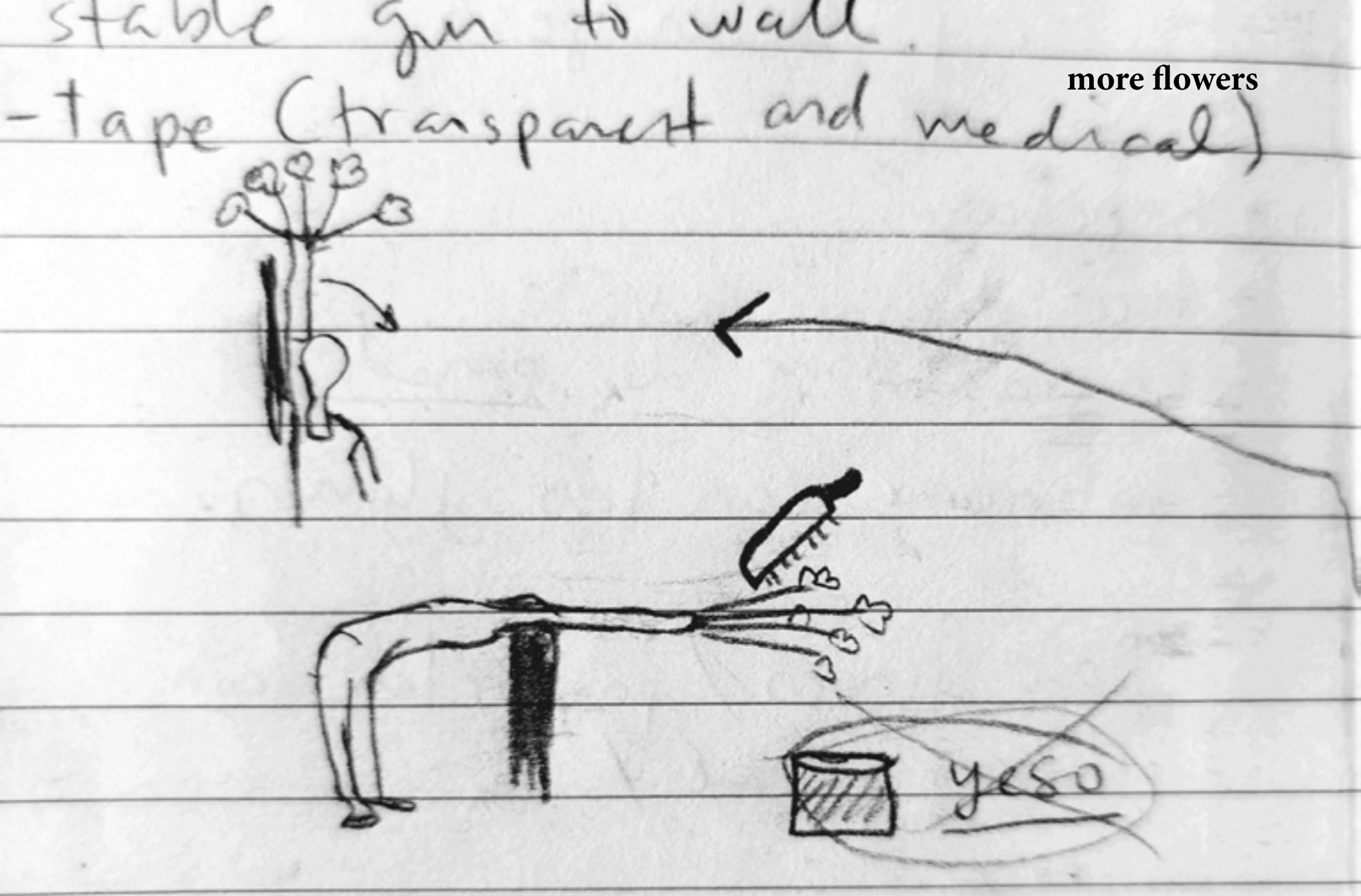
When I die, I promise to haunt you forever.

One day, I'll write about the flowers like we own them.

See some decorative flowers

Romantic Geography

If you don't believe me



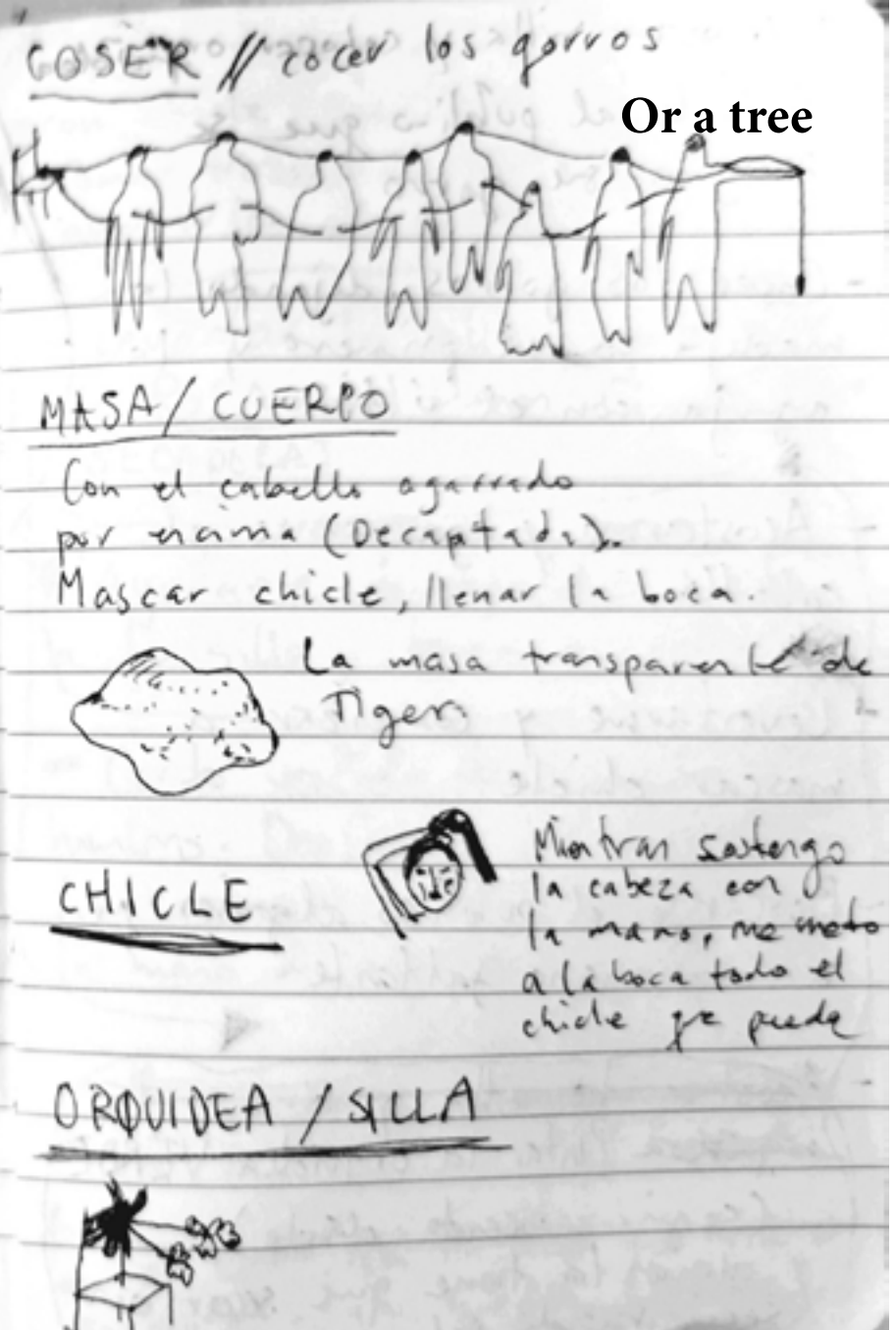
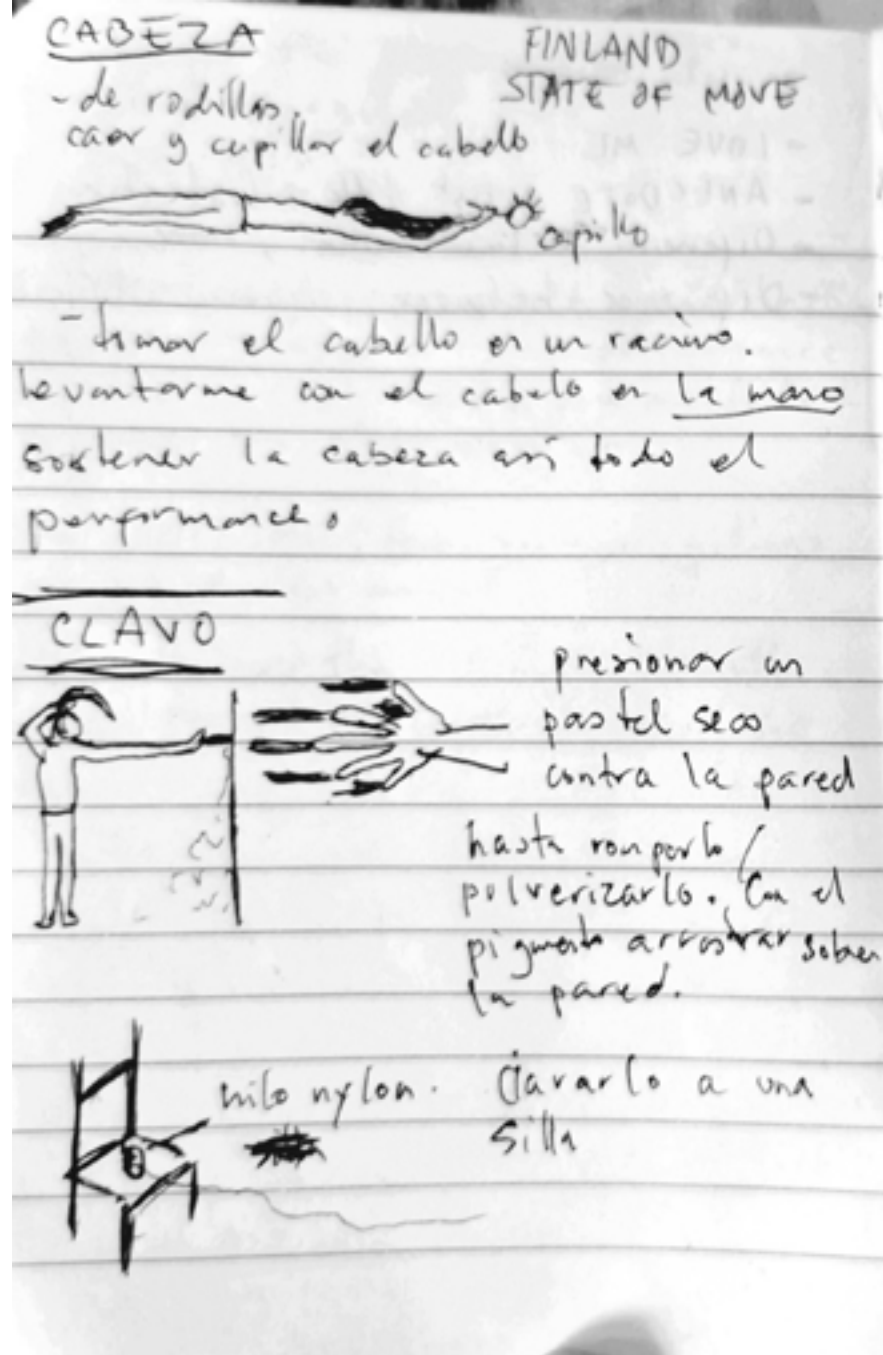
Brief History of the Stem (2018)

As part of Body Landscapes Copenhagen

International Performance Art Festival Copenhagen, Denmark

Photo Sunniva Gudmundsdóttir Mortensen





Self-Portrait With Heads (2018)
State of Move, Kaapelitehdas, Finland
Photo credits by Jakob Johannsen and Antti Ahonen



In school I enrolled to a course mainly recommended to foreign students called Romantic Geography. The artist leading the course would take the students to different locations around Helsinki, Espoo and Vantaa. In one of the trips he took us to Nuuksio, the natural reserve.

I walked in the moss and as my feet sank in the fluffy tender green an absolute satisfying sensation struck me. I felt like being in a postcard, I can't forget the vivid experience of that moment. All those imaginaries landscapes surrounded me and it almost felt like fulfilling something.

I was finally in Europe! Was it that?

I want to make that moment last for ever, so I bend down to touch a rotting tree

I feel so alive

Tuohi

You start collecting *tuohi* (the skin of birch) since the material is absolutely appealing to you, to the touch and to the sight.

To your surprise a person is very much against you using bark in your work. They say it is a sensitive material that represents Finland and feel uncomfortable to imagine you using it, as you are a foreigner. They also think it's problematic that this material is commonly used in Finnish folk crafts, not in fine arts. They question your feelings in the (not) imaginary situation of a foreigner arriving at your place (of birth?) and taking something dear and representative, to use it on their own manners (appropriation I guess, but they didn't say it like that). They try really hard to convince you not to use this material.

You consider it

You better work with potatoes

PERUna, Unknown City Event, Helsinki, Finland (2014)

In the developing Kalasatama district you exchange potatoes bought from local producers, for recipes. Sounding a bell you walk through the streets besides a car that shows colourful posters announcing the exchange:

I exchange potatoes for recipes.

The recipes of potatoes collected throughout two days of performance reveal how well have potatoes adapted and integrated to Finland (and Europe). Not everyone can remember their South American origins as they have become a basic European ingredient.

But you are stubborn and continue working with tuohi

European white birch

You consulted other opinions and researched the material with their local uses. You find out that birch grows in many places and there are many species, just as potatoes, but what triggers you is that this local one can be called European white birch. You decide to continue using birch since beyond its physical qualities its European whiteness provokes you.

You dance to the provocation

You research its qualities

You dance and dance



Three True-Finn mask versions (2017)
Video/performance 10:00 min HD
Hyrynsalmi, Finland

Disguises

Tuohi will keep being one of the most important elements in your work. Throughout the years you learn more precisely what role it plays in Finnish identity. You are respectful to it. It has become part of your misplaced identity.

You make several works

You camouflage

Tuohi, your first local native word

Wannabe Tuohi



Wannabe Tuohi (2017)

Photo performance for camera

Photo credits Jakob Johannsen

I wrote a statement once

“My art making wants to try to resist and challenge the hegemony of text, that so often has insisted in foretelling it. It needs to resist becoming an illustration to concepts, to provide validation to curatorial lines beyond my own interests, to represent my identity in multicultural lists.”

It's true I have two languages divided by an ocean. One is symbolic and the other one conceptual, and sometimes they glitch.
Like that most of my feelings, words and materials.

Resist in Festivals and in emails

Survived at school

Self portrait. Presenting and representing myself



The performance artist print making (2019)
Self portrait

Artist

A young and visual artist.

I dare to say I have many abilities and have had many interests, but a feeling of change and research has always overtaken my art practice. Every time I have met someone as a painter, a drawer, a printmaker, a performance artist; a response close to disappointment is perceived if my interests shift. As if there was some kind of betrayal.

Nowadays it's all coming together.

Performance

Drawing

Printmaking

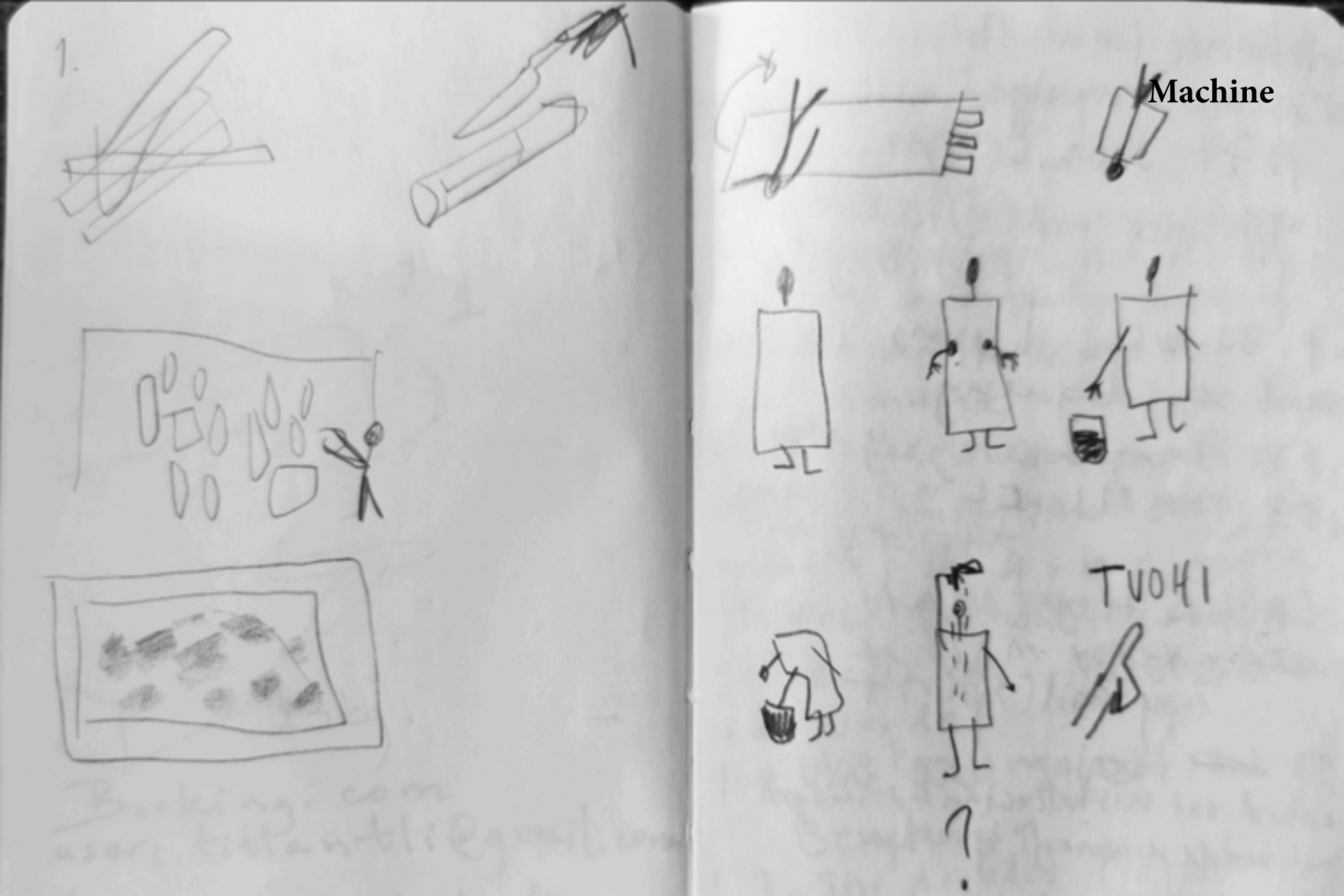
Drawing

Drawing is a verb. The way that I learned it was as action, observation and focus. I think of drawing as a map of what we see and touch and how it transits through our body to material.

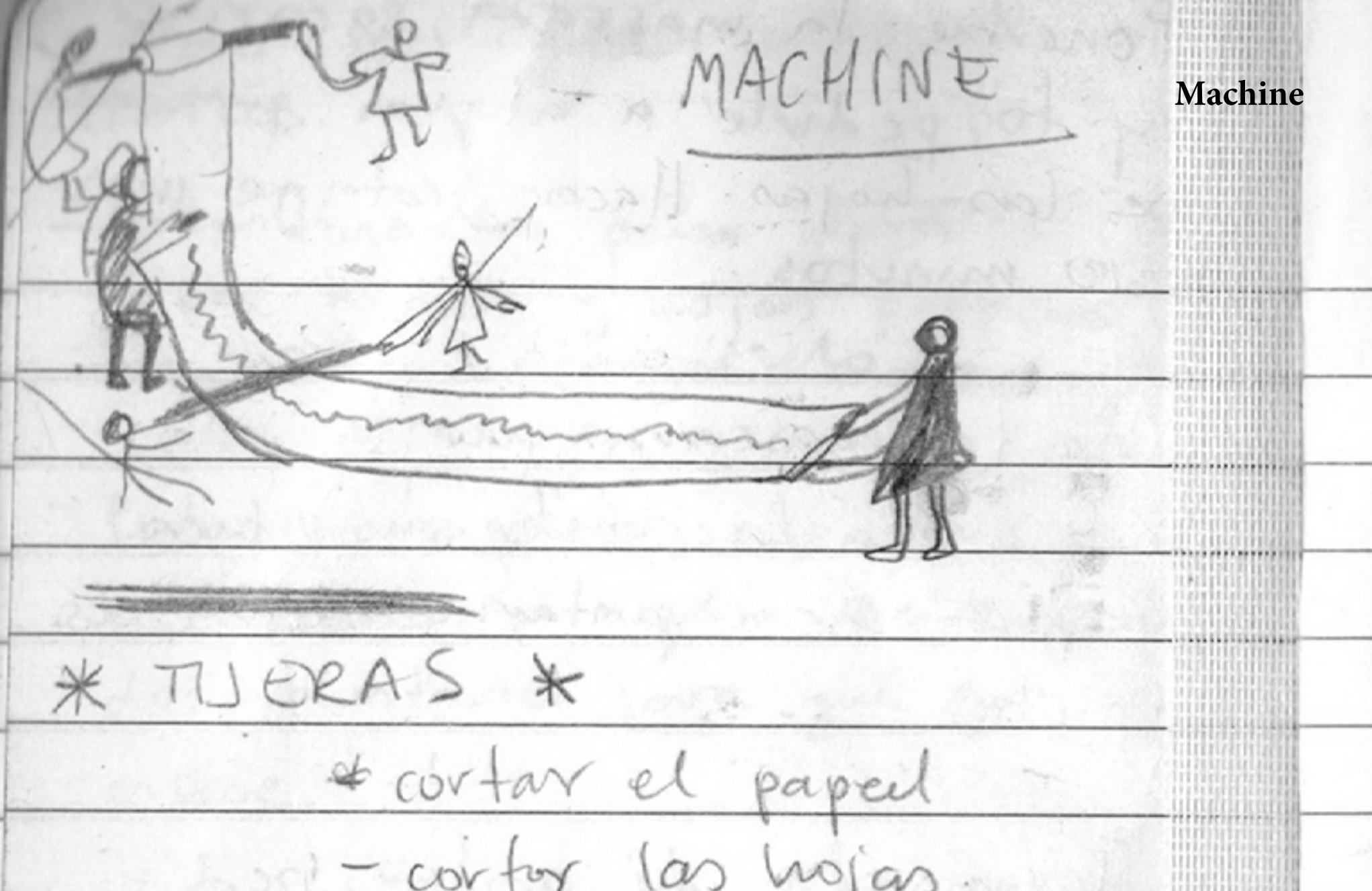
I don't know when it happens but somehow it is in our transition to adulthood that drawing becomes a matter representational skills. It is the act of a drawing what interests me, the verb. The result is a trace to be read, not to be looked at.

The drawings of this publication have been taken from my notebooks and accompany besides each other, the documentation of the performances. Both registers work separately, one before and the other after. Drawings are scripts, I don't make them always but they allow me to think and visualise elements. If I have an idea and I manage to draw it down, it will hold much more information than what is physically there. When looking at it I will be able to remember much more than what is depicted. On other hand, photos are mere documentation of what happened.

Performance Mother Tongue

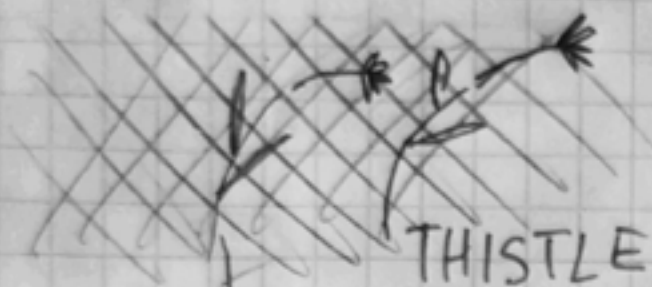


Tuohi (2014)
 Mother's Tongue Festival, Universum Theatre, Helsinki, Finland
 Photo credits Jakob Johannsen



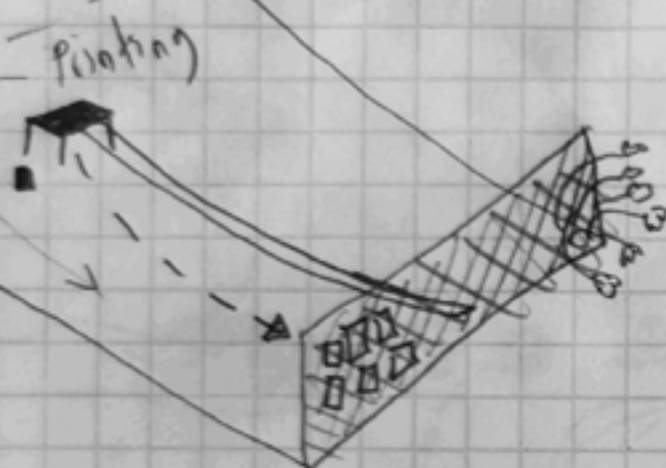
Short Distance Camouflage (2018)
 Performance in New Performance Turku
 Photo credits by Jussi Virkkumaa





With wire, cover the
flowers so that they
can be turned outside
the force.

HUMAN MACHINE WITH ~~THISTLES~~
THISTLES



Thistles And Human Machine (2019)

As part of Bubbly Creek Performance Art Assembly for Defibrillator Gallery, Chicago, USA

Photo James R Southard and Angeliki Tsoli



Printmaking

I have always liked to repeat words until they lose their meaning. As child I used to play this game with myself, choosing a meaningful word and then observe how it would empty, as I repeated none-stop and without other purpose. It was a strange hobby, a miss-use of something intangible.

I think my relationship to printmaking developed similarly. I would make an image as if it would be a word, I would carefully shape it's texture, give it qualities and depth. And once it was achieved, I would print none stop, merging my body with the mechanical rhythms of the machines. I loved it. Numbering the prints was painful, no mater how much I liked the image, I could never find justification of having one same image hundreds of times. I had no talent for being a commercial artist.

I started climbing onto the litho stones at nights, greasing my body and imprinting my silhouette. A classic, I know. One more proof I belong to human kind. I developed a technique to etch hair and skin on copper plates without any purpose but to seize the body with as much detail as possible. I drew myself into the brass. After, I ripped the paper off the finished prints just as if it would be skin, I glued bad quality paper on them. I did everything I could to hold on to my unique self, tearing the production values of printmaking away.

Eventually I had to let go and move on

Words ran out

The love for print making remained

12-15 FPS (2009)

Etching on copper plate and chine colle on cotton paper.



Words Run Out (2021)

BOOKED artist's book Fair

Merikaapelihalli, Helsinki, Finland

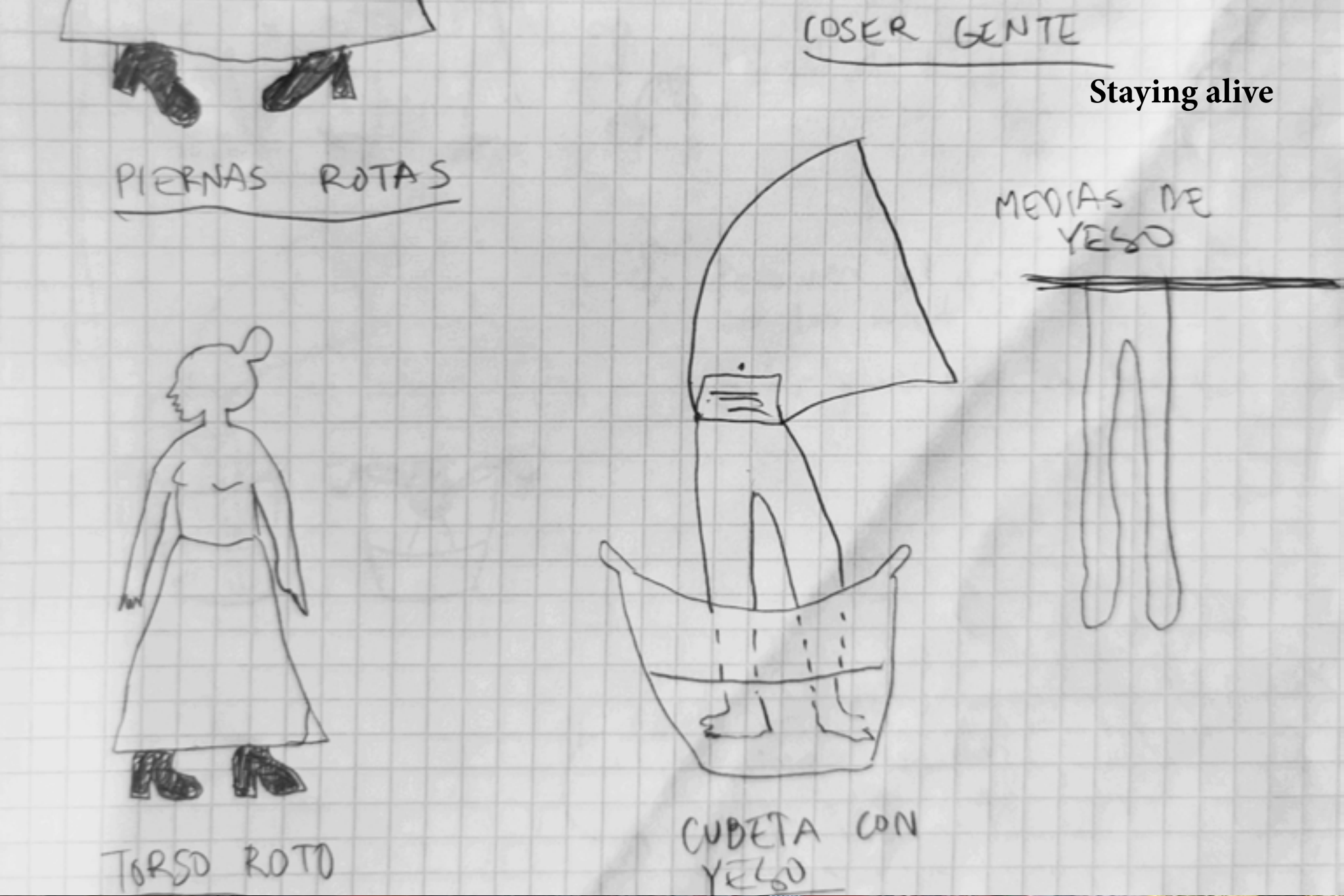
Photo credits Jakob Johannsen

La Muerte Chiquita (2011)
Lithography on cotton paper



Desaparecidos (Disappeared) (2013)
Löyly Löyly event, Arla Sauna, Helsinki.
Video stills by Jakob Johannsen



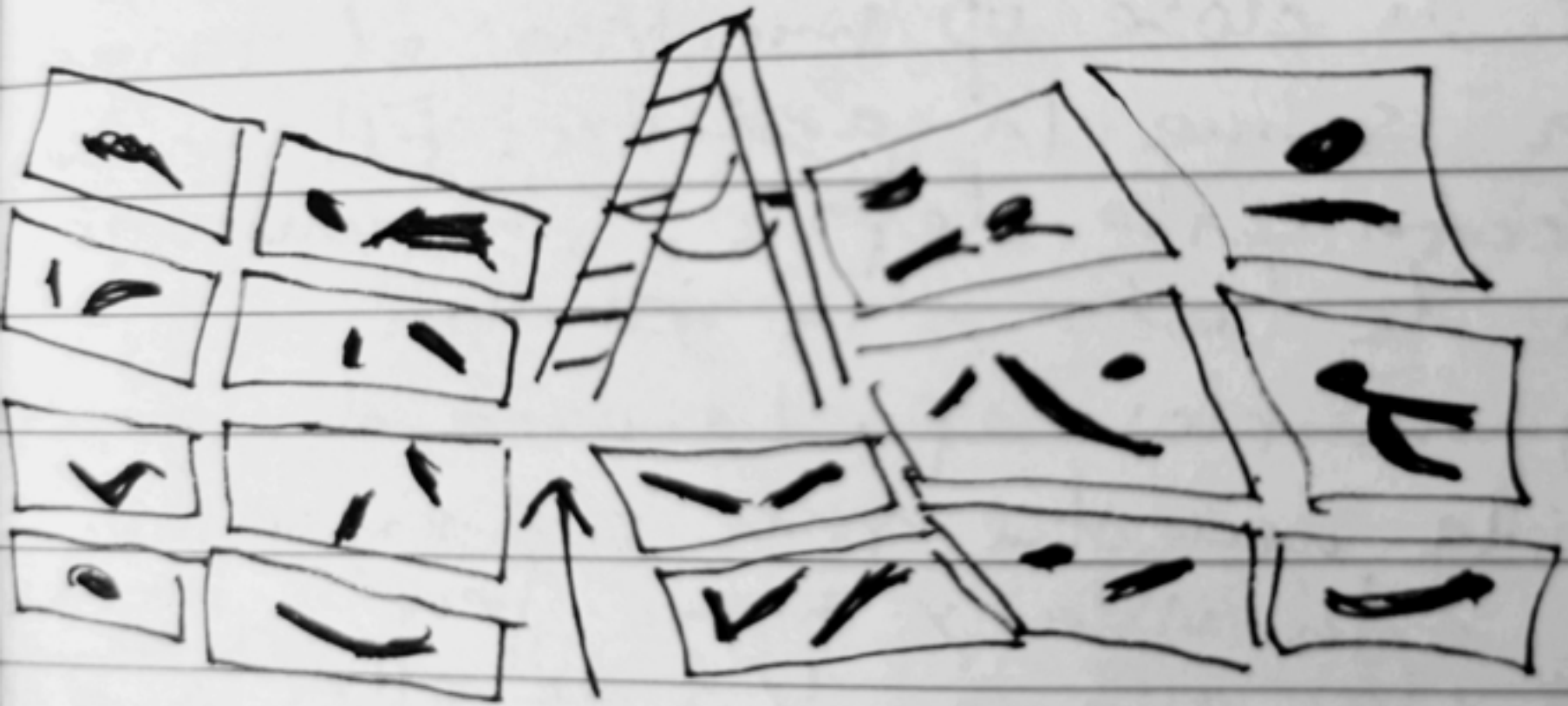


Sobre Dos Piernas (On Two Legs) (2019)
Festival Internacional de Teatro y Artes de Calle de Valladolid, Spain
Photo credits Jakob Johannsen



en el piso pero dejando un camino
a la escalera.

Not being alive



Fragments in-situ (2019)
RESIST Vienna, Dessous Gallery, Vienna
Still from video



Performance

Performance came to me, I did not choose it, but when an artist follows the process, it goes until the last consequences. It can go back and forth, or have many layers. Long before, I remember thinking I would never do performance, and many might have agreed with me, thinking I was too shy for this.

Performance came to me and I embraced it because it still has the potential to be one of the most radical forms of art making (it can also be domesticated like a bonsai, but that's up to the artist). I must admit I was attracted to its wildness and immediacy; to the liberation of producing an object, to the advantage of reducing it to the most minimal elements always present.

Performance seemed able to reach beyond representation, as a fragment of life that gets disclosed together with audience. And it was in this relationship with the audience and in the uncertainty of the liveness, that somehow I felt extraordinarily comfortable.

You love performing

You wrote a statement once

You are invited to a festival

Festivals

I was invited to a Performance Art Festival under the specific theme. I am happy every time I have the opportunity to present my work to a larger audience, nevertheless I can't help questioning under which themes I regularly get invited and there is no doubt somehow I have fallen into some kind of category (is it my fault?)

I am interested in many aspects of life, and so I observe how many times artist work is overlooked and identity has become a commodity for the organizers, and far more decisive than any artistic quality or proposal.

This is why nowadays I recommend asking, Who is organizing/promoting this and why?

Is it my fault?

Maybe just stick to potatoes

Or something more local, like the Finnish forest

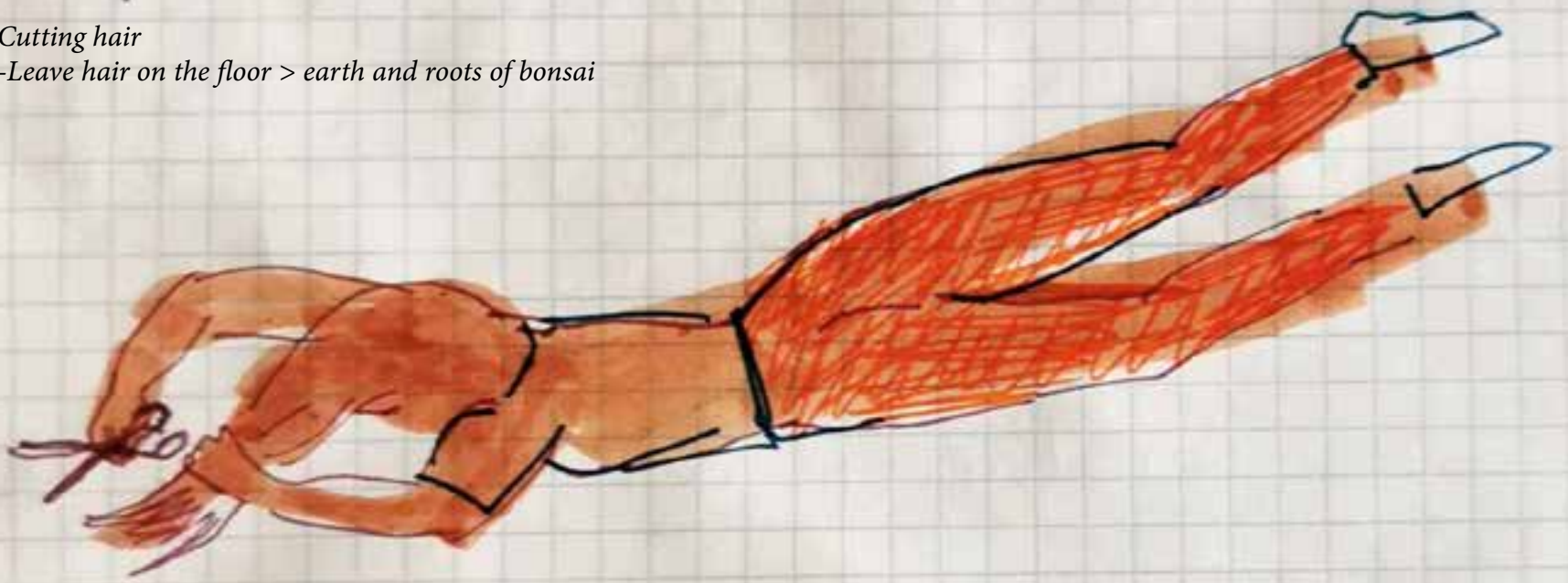
I am definitely tired

In that freedom we are artist

Cortar el pelo
- Dejar el pelo en el suelo > tierra y raíces del
bonsai.

Cutting hair

-Leave hair on the floor > earth and roots of bonsai



In That Freedom We Are Artists (or The Art of Making a Bonsai) (2019)

Bubbly Creek Performance Art Assembly for Defibrillator Gallery, Chicago, USA

Photo James R Southard of Under Main and Angeliki Tsoli



Colonizers write about flowers

In That Freedom We Are Artists (or The Art of Making a Bonsai) (2019)

Bubbly Creek Performance Art Assembly for Defibrillator Gallery, Chicago, USA

Text as materials. Emails between me and a curator.

Good morning Diana, performance artist has talked me about you
My name is I'm an artist and curator
I would like to see your work and evaluate if your participation is possible in the festival
Is it possible to talk with you today?

As you know this year I'm searching for actions with a certain degree of political engagement and transgression attitude or compromise, that invite to reflection. I am grateful if you could recommend me an artist, to check their work.

I am waiting for the idea or ideas you could propose for the festival. I will give you the 100% confirmation when we agree on one.

Last year the artist selection was more eclectic, but as I have mentioned you, this year the curatorial approach is focused on performances with a political discourse, dissident towards themes related to body, gender, identity, race, borders, etc...
About what you wrote in your dossier, I want to emphasize that in this edition I am searching for pieces that can impact, with certain force and action. Of course, from the honest action of the artist. I would like to discuss with you idea 1 and 2

I love the poetic approach... but for this edition I don't want to include pieces with a wide abstract level that can lead to many interpretations and where the main idea gets lost

Dear Diana. Thank you for your extended explanation. I see it essential for understanding your work. For me it's not extra, it's necessary. I understand everything you express about the strength and sense in Performance. I agree.

Also if you allow me to express my opinion, your work becomes stronger when you complement it with information. Right now I believe the world doesn't need more abstraction or ambiguity... This is why this year I have made my decisions based on the compromised contents of all the pieces, political compromise, reflexion, denunciation, dissent regarding the dominant normative thinking, in relation to injustice, repression etc...

Let's agree on the date for your piece. Yes, I want to confirm your participation in the Festival

The only thing I ask you within the integrity towards you and your work (this is something that for me it's not negotiable because it is in that freedom that we are artists) is that you adapt-focus your piece, texts etc... to the curatorial line we have been discussing.

There is only this sentence "This performance does not seek to illustrate a theme" that goes in the ambiguous direction I mentioned you I am not interested for this (festival) edition. If I have selected you, it is in part because I have been attracted to your work and I have perceived something interesting, it has been because of our conversations. Without your explanations (and without having seen you obviously) I wouldn't have perceived what is behind your actions and I wouldn't have selected you for this edition. Maybe for another one with another purpose.

As we have talked, I'm seeking for pieces with explicit or implicit political compromise, dissent, etc...

If it doesn't seek to illustrate a theme, where are we standing?

The last thing I want is to tell an artist what she has to do, because I am an artist and I like to be 100% free, but in this case it is me who makes the selection process, of course.

Because your piece does have a theme, you have mentioned to me...and...and... in a couple of extended emails. Honestly I was very attracted by your explanations and that's why I have selected you.

You wrote a statement once

“My art practice wants to be as close as possible to being alive, staying alive or the imaginary of not being alive”.

To be alive

To stay alive

The imaginary of not being alive

To be alive

When I think in being alive I think in the most essential elements, like breath, affects, nourishment, weather. I think of elements and experiences that connect us because without them life would not be possible. This is a starting point when sometimes it seems there are no points in common.

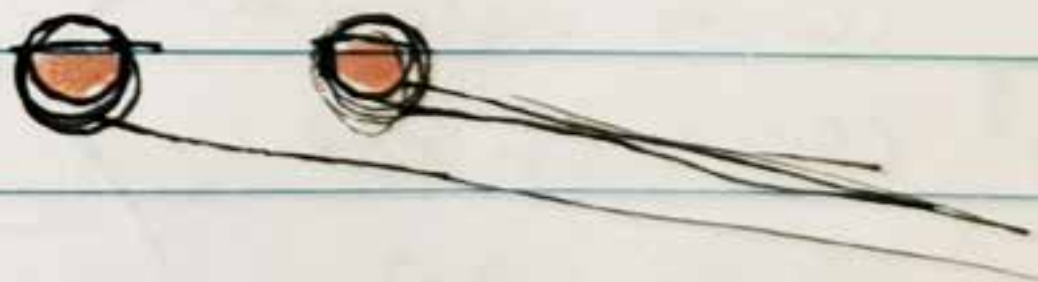
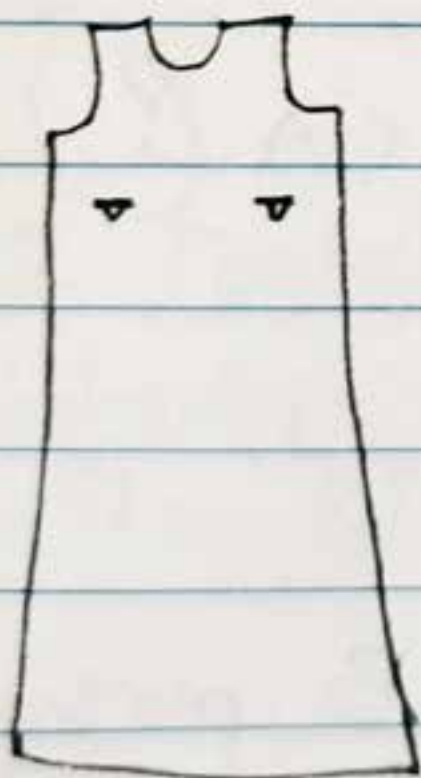
Straightforward elements or experiences can be overlooked and spurned the closer as they are of considered cliché. Nevertheless my interest in these commonplaces and over explained experience is their significant potential that rarely gets unfolded in depth. Cliches for me are attempts, recurrent failures to unfold in depth the common affects that tie us together and apart. The more they are rejected for pointing a commonplace, the more I feel encouraged in bringing it into a different light.

Nursing

Breathing

Seasonal hobbies

Crawling

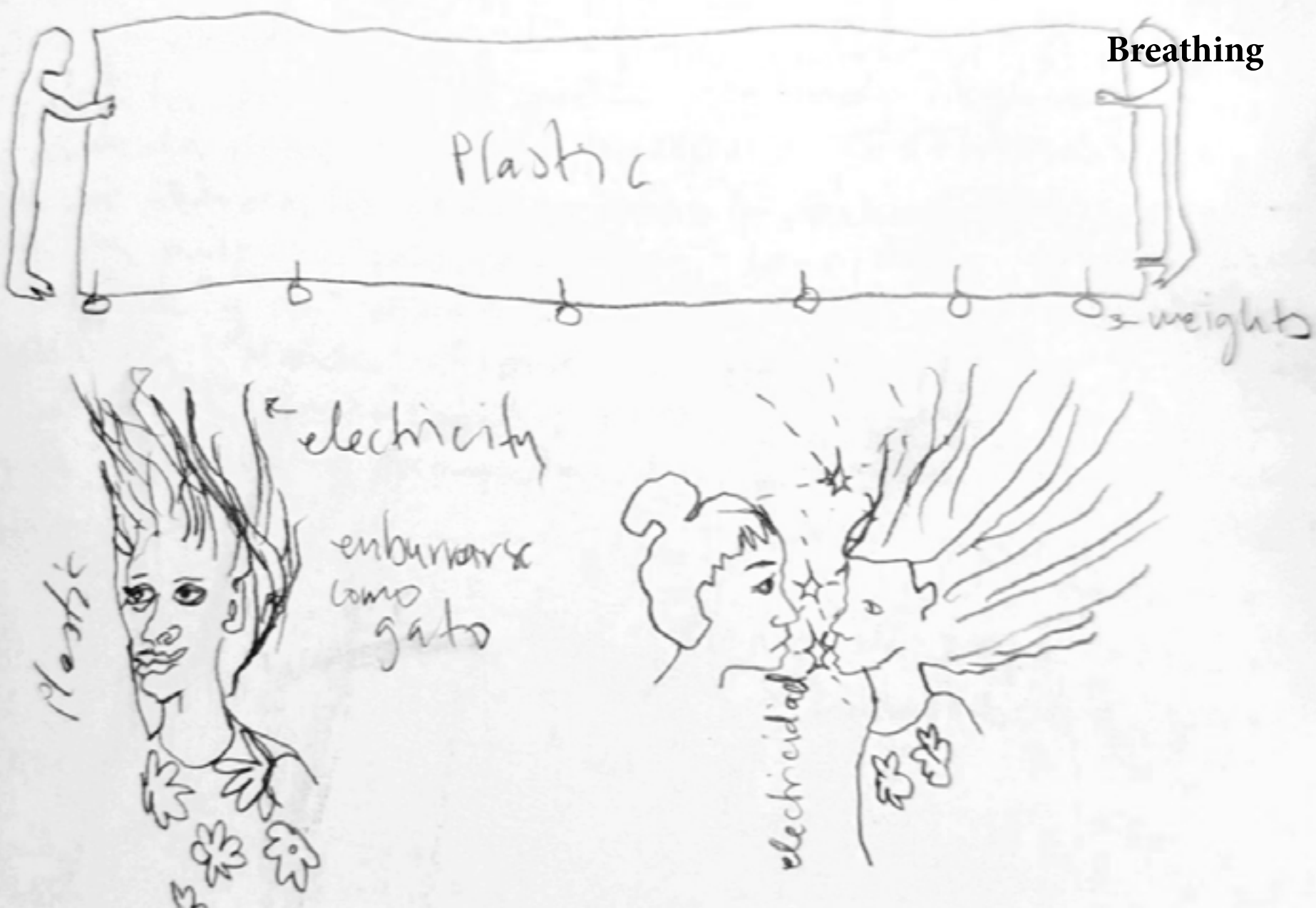


Lullaby (2021)

Meno Parkas Gallery, Kaunas, Lithuania

Photo credits Airida Rekstyle

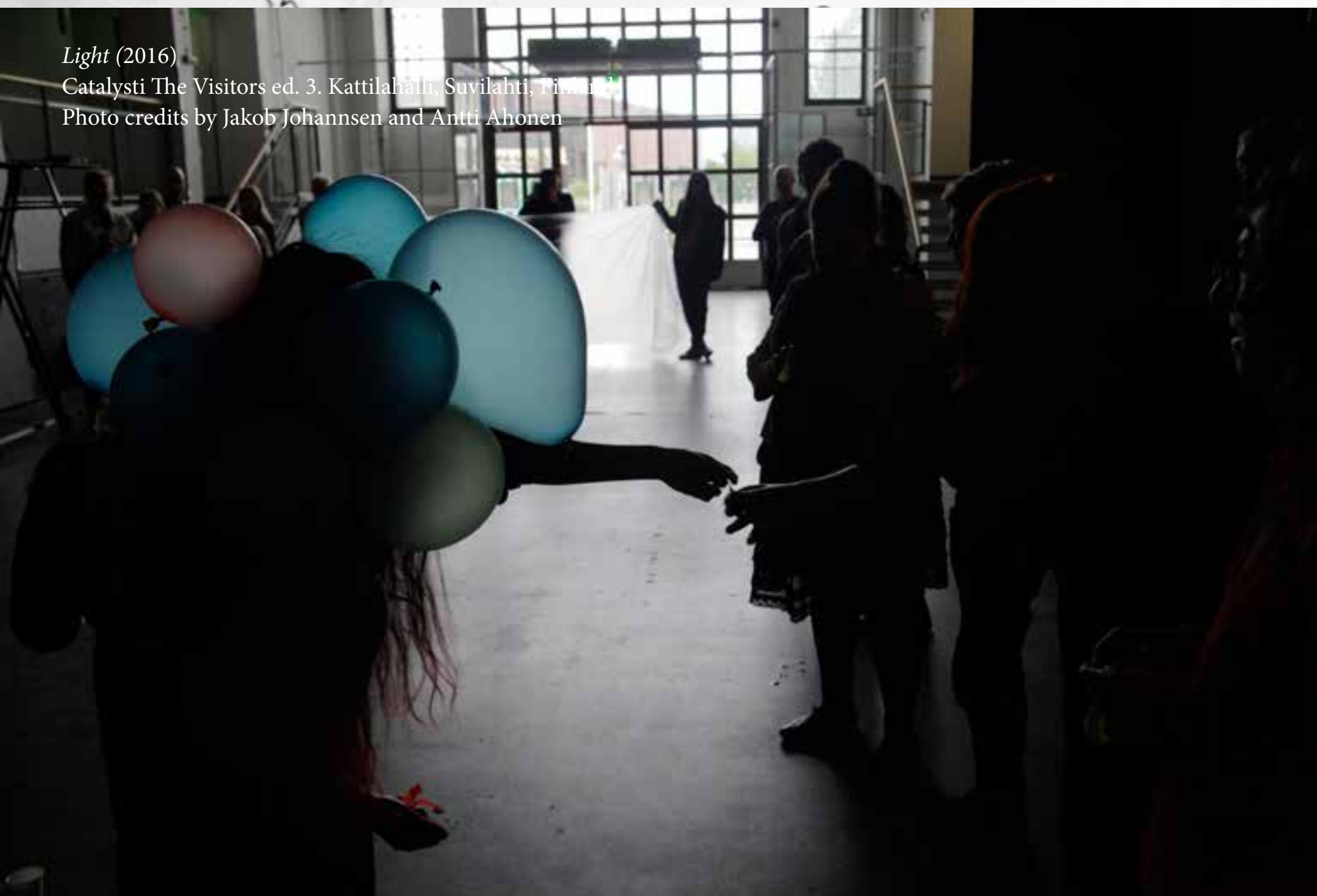




Light (2016)

Catalysti The Visitors ed. 3. Kattilahalli, Suvilahti, Finland

Photo credits by Jakob Johannsen and Antti Ahonen



Seasonal Hobbies

There was a time I lived in Colombia and there seasons changed daily. If morning was rainy and cold then people would say that day broke winter. If sunny and hot, then it broke summer. Fickle.

Here, months pass and it feels like eternity. It's easy to forget that behind those clouds the sun is still shining. And then, when there is almost no hope, spring bursts and the northern sun beams spread horizontally on the asphalt ground. They blind my eyes until they hurt.

Seasons steer our life since ancient times. Lead our occupations in leisure or labor. We make an effort to organize ourselves through the particular conditions, catching up with traditions, habits, moods. Nothing has more social influence than the planets turning round.

This is a year-round provocation that keeps me busy with a lot of waiting. Actions for camera take place when the right time comes and conditions are perfect (or not).

Spring

Summer

Autumn

Winter

Spring

Summer

Autumn

Winter



One too many (2017)

Ongoing photo series for *Seasonal Hobbies*

Photo credits by Jakob Johannsen

Summer

During the “räkkä” season, the reindeer form themselves into herds as then the number of insects per animal is reduced. Animals become stressed by the almost constant onslaught of these insects and they risk losing so much blood that their life is endangered.

How does this feel? A stitch on my scalp. It's a sharp and filling pain that goes through my body like electricity, burning. It makes me mad, it fills me with irritation. After some hours, on my way back to the house I can barely think. I'm running, I'm fleeing.

Autumn

Winter

Spring



Mosquitoes (2017)

Photo documentation after performance by Jakob Johannsen
Hyrynsalmi, Finland

Autumn

What is a flower without color? And leaves?

It is autumn when someone points out the color of my pullover and suggests gray and blacks are more appropriate.

Summer

Spring

Winter



14:42 (2019)

Video performance for *Seasonal Hobbies*

Video credits by Jakob Johannsen

Winter

It's winter, I look at my plants. Their rhythm has stopped, their leaves are still and pale green, their roots are stiff and silver. I get frustrated by my little energy and then again, I look at my plants and think they might know better.

Autumn

Spring

Summer



Winter (2017)

Still from video performance for *Seasonal Hobbies*

Video credits by Jakob Johannsen

Start again

More winter, because winter is long

Autumn

Spring

Summer



Defeated by seasonal darkness (2018)
Self portrait for *Seasonal Hobbies*

To stay alive

To stay alive is an everyday intention and at times might require more effort. It spreads from the little ordinary things of life to critical situations (in which art making is very unlikely possible). Situations of danger, stress, expectations, adaptation, integration, weather conditions and so on, all trigger my will to stay alive.

Seasonal hobbies

Fear

Staying alive with flowers or trees

Criaremos hijas (2021)

Territori Performance Art Festival Ibiza, Spain

Photo credits by Irene Arango

Printing



The imaginary of not being alive

What is this need us artist have to portray our own death? You have come to think about it as a need of owning our own death, or maybe it can act like a witchcraft that will scare a brutal death away. Elvira Santamaria says in an interview “I aspire and believe that we can live and die in a dignified way. We have to transit to death without violence. That will be the perfect moment to call a society civilized. As an artist, I try to talk about it”

Fear

Self portraits

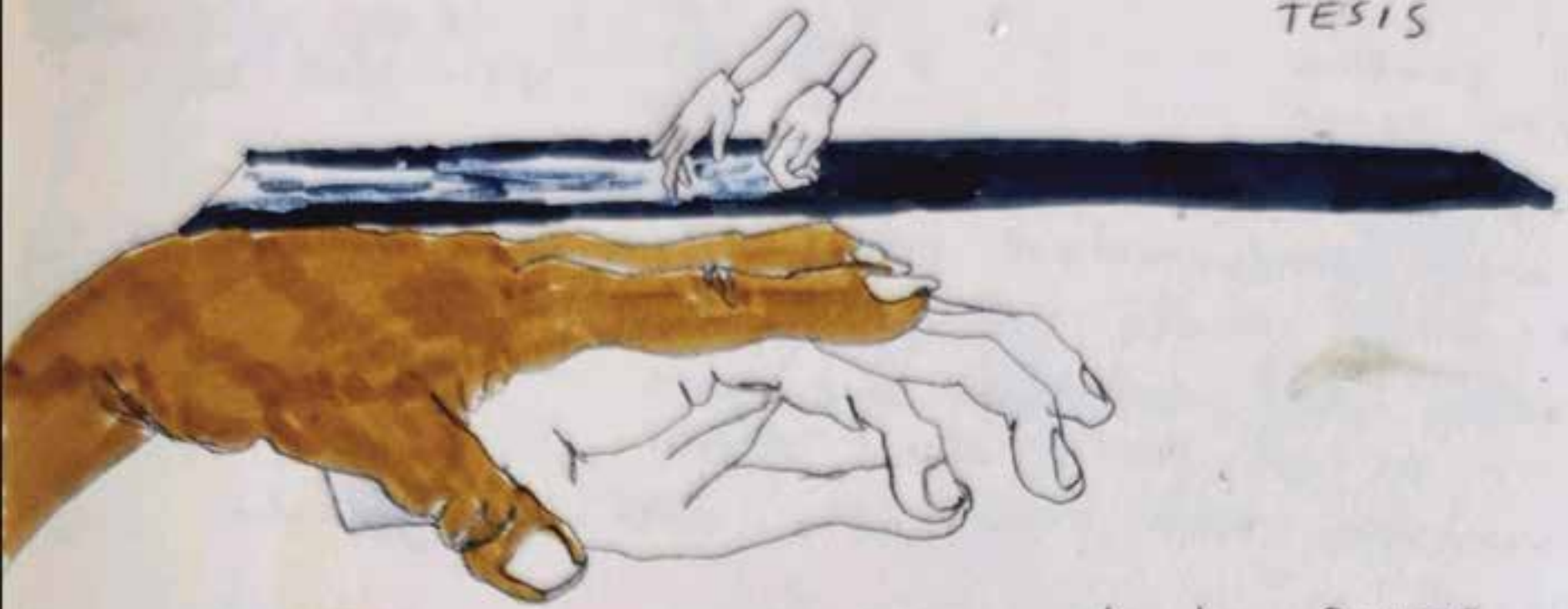
Hey Joe

Shocking



Me quitaron el rostro pero hoy los que marchan son mi nueva cara (2014)
Tonight, Performance Art Event. Helsinki, Finland
Photo credits by Maurice Blok

IMÁGENES
TESIS



Podría representar o ser parte de BONES

IMAGEN TESIS
BERRIES

could be an image that takes to the bones



Pointing at the Edge (2018)

As part of History Will Be Kind To Me, For I Intend To Perform It-project

Performance Art Links, Stockholm, Sweden

Photo Denis Romanovski and Hironori Tsukue

HEY JOE

On the day of my birthday someone sends you a link to a song as a gift. You listen to the song many times without understanding the choice and goggled the lyrics in different versions, but the meaning doesn't change. In all versions, there was a man murdering a woman. You ask why they had chosen this song for you, was it because of the mariachis? They reply the song is famous and something about your visa, which was supposed to be funny since at the moment that was stressing you out. They said it wasn't meant to be taken seriously.

This performance was aikido to that birthday gift and to every Joe.

Staying alive

Always flowers

INVISIBILISATION

Hey Joe

Se escucha el track de la canción por segunda vez y y transformada en animal femenino, saca la matraca y recito junto a la grabación alegándole a la canción.

INVISIBILIZATION

The track from the song can be heard for second time and I, transformed in female animal, take out the matraca and recite besides, adding to the song

Hey Joe (2016)

Performance in Oxford Brooks University, UK

Photo credits by Pier Corona and Stu Allisop



You think about flowers specifically in November



Flowers for our dead (*Feminicidas*) (2015)

Still from Video

Mexico City, Mexico

Fear

Unfortunately to grow up as a woman in many cities is to learn to protect yourself, to develop an awareness in the form of a third eye would sense movements and proximity. Several skills you would have no reason to be proud of.

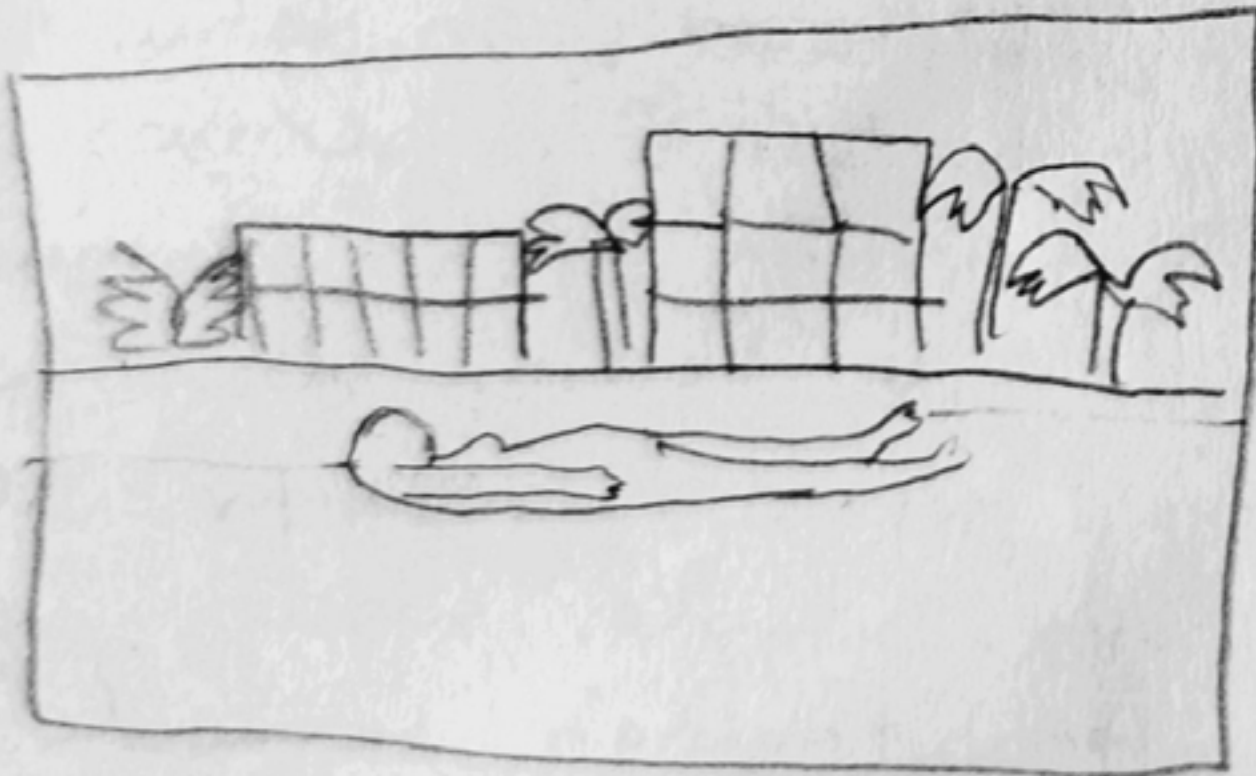
A crust that protects you grows like a shell and then you merge with the city. A night out would imply logistics of returning home or to find a safe shelter, so you learn to take care of others and to ensure your wellbeing. Later, living 11,000 km away you will discover the weight of that crust, and as you slowly learn to live without it, you start learning how it feels to feel free.

What to fear

Without crust

Flowers for Our Dead

Landscape—Sea



close-up building

Unknown (2017)

Ongoing photo series *Huehua*

Photo credits by Jakob Johannsen



Without crust

And when you go back for a little while to your monster city, you realize that the local crust that takes the dents in, has fallen. The crust fell softened in the Finnish winter's tender snow, soaked in the sauna nights. You walk now pretending you dress the crust, that it's thick and callus. You pretend your steps are solid and that you do not hesitate. But the crust has fallen and with it you are no longer a creature of this city. Night falls and again there it is, that fear you learned as a young woman. It comes in with a slash.

2022
Helsinki, Finland
in collaboration with Mad House Publication