

HELSINKI BIENNIAL 2023 with MUSEUM OF IMPOSSIBLE FORMS:

Polyphonic Entanglements

Stoa Cultural Centre 16.-17. June

Polyphonic Entanglements is a discourse series taking place on June 16-17 and September 1-2 at the Stoa and Caisa Cultural Centres. These locations move the Helsinki Biennial off-centre, engaging it with two heterogeneous sites of encounter in the city – Itäkeskus and Hakaniemi. The programme brings together lectures, screenings, sonic interventions, performances and gatherings as an evolving assemblage that contextualises and expands on the diverse practices and debates present in this biennial. It proposes a way of thinking-with and through island ecologies, Baltic contamination, radioecologies, desertification, practices of healing and collective resistance to pose questions not about what will come but rather focusing on ways to learn and reset paths-of-entry into spaces of plural transformations.

The two-days gathering convenes lectures, conversations, screenings, and sonic interventions by **Matti Aikio, Danielle Brathwaite-Shirley, Taru Elfving, Akwugo Emejulu, Sini Harkki, INTERPRT, Helen Kaplinsky, Svitlana Matviyenko, Oleksiy Radynski (Red Forest), Ville Aslak Raasakka, Sepideh Rahaa, Kati Roover, Emilija Škarnulytė, Anna Törnroos-Remes, and Wu Tsang.**

Curated by **Giovanna Esposito Yussif**, Artistic Director of Museum of Impossible Forms

PROGRAMME

16.-17.6.

Stoa Cultural Centre, Music Hall

BLACKTRANSARCHIVE.COM - WE ARE HERE BECAUSE OF THOSE THAT ARE NOT

Danielle Brathwaite-Shirley, 2020

Installation at Music Hall, STOA

On view only on 16-17.06

“WE ARE HERE BECAUSE OF THOSE THAT ARE NOT” is part of Danielle’s DOTCOM series which compiles archives of the lives and stories of Black Trans people. The work was produced alongside Black Trans people in London, collaboratively designing the characters’ landscapes and story.

FRIDAY 16.06, from 9:30 to 17:00

9:30 Open doors

9:50 Opening words by curator **Giovanna Esposito Yussif**, Artistic Director of Museum of Impossible Forms

10:00 -12:00

Session with **Akwugo Emejulu** and **Sepideh Rahaa**

· Lecture | *Fleeing the Human* by **Akwugo Emejulu**

Inspired by Akwugo Emejulu's *Fugitive Feminism* (Silver Press, 2022) this presentation will explore the idea of fugitivity and what it means, conceptually and practically, to flee the category of the human. Fugitives seek escape into the wild unknown but how might this happen and what awaits us on the other side? How can we embrace uncertainty and liminality as a resource for our world-building? Helping us think about flight, escape, capture and freedom, we will read poems from Lucille Clifton, Joshua Jennifer Espinoza, Alice Walker and Linda Pastan.

· Presentation and conversation | **Sepideh Rahaa**

Sepideh Rahaa will open her artistic practice which investigates and questions prevailing power structures, social norms, and conventions while focusing on womanhood, storytelling, and everyday resistances. Rahaa will share reflections on her recent work presented at Helsinki Biennial *Songs to Earth, Songs to Seeds* which highlights issues of food security, access to clean water and nourishment as well as the importance of the traditions of sustainable cultivation in the current climate emergency. With this work, Rahaa addresses the contemporary neo-colonial food politics and the consequences of the imposed sanctions on Iranian farmers.

The presentation will be followed by a conversation with Akwugo Emejulu.

12:00-13:00 | Lunch break

13:00 - 15:00

Session with **Oleksiy Radinsky** (Red Forest) and **Svitlana Matviyenko**

· Screening | *Chornobyl 22, 2023* (21 min) by **Oleksiy Radinsky** (Red Forest)

During the Russian occupation of the Chornobyl Zone in early 2022, a local informant is clandestinely filming the Russian troops. We hear the workers of the Chornobyl Nuclear Power Station discuss their experiences during the Russian military takeover of their facility - an act of nuclear terror which threatened another global disaster at this site. Past and present catastrophic scenarios intertwine in this macabre episode of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. This work has been developed as part of the Reckoning Project, a media and forensic effort aimed at investigating and prosecuting Russian war crimes in Ukraine. The film won the Grand Prize at Oberhausen International Film Festival in 2023.

· Lecture | *Nuclear Terror: The Modern Logic of Radioactive Colonialism* by **Svitlana Matviyenko**

The production of the Chernobyl Zone of Exclusion preceded the Chernobyl catastrophe by two decades. By critically engaging with Paul Virilio's reading of the Chernobyl catastrophe as "the original accident," the lecture will discuss the consistency of recursive colonial operations in Ukrainian Polissia from its industrial subsumption by the Soviet cold-war infrastructure, including the ballistic rocket detection radar Duga-1 and the Chernobyl NPP, until the full-scale invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation in 2022. The lecture will be followed by a conversation between Svitlana Matviyenko and Lyuba Knorozok, producer of *Chornobyl 22*.

15:15 - 17:00

Session with **INTERPRT** (Nabil Ahmed and Olga Lucko), **Matti Aikio** and **Sini Harkki**

· Presentation and conversation | *Transitional and Climate Justice in the Colonial Present* by **INTERPRT** (**Nabil Ahmed** and **Olga Lucko**) in conversation with **Matti Aikio** and **Sini Harkki**

Nabil Ahmed and Olga Lucko will present the work of INTERPRT, a research agency that engages with environmental justice and human rights. Through spatial and visual investigations by a team of academics, architects, and spatial designers, working in collaboration with civil society organizations, international lawyers, scientists, NGOs, journalists, and leading cultural institutions worldwide, they focus on the representation of difficult-to-trace environmental destruction and resistance to extractive projects mounted by indigenous, minorized and marginalized groups.

For Helsinki Biennale INTERPRT has produced a multimedia report and installation that focuses on the ongoing legal struggle between Sámi reindeer herder communities and wind power projects in Øyfjellet in Nordland county in Northern Norway.

The presentation will be followed by a conversation with artist Matti Aikio and Sini Harkki, programme director of Green Peace Nordic, to discuss how the "green energies" and extractivist policies are affecting Sámi peoples' livelihoods and Sápmi territory.

SATURDAY 17.06, from 12:00 to 18:00

HAM

Helsinki Biennial 2023

Helsinki

12:00 - 13:40

Screening | *Burial*, 2022 (60 min) by **Emilija Škarnulytė**

A python slithers over the abandoned control room of Chornobyl's sister, the Ignalina Nuclear Power Plant—at the time of its opening in 1983, the most powerful nuclear power plant on the planet. But with the Chornobyl disaster, Ignalina's dismantling began. An attempt to bury the immortal.

Screening | *Aphotic Zone*, 2022 (15 min) by **Emilija Škarnulytė**

Luminous sea jellies beam over choirs of fish as we travel 4 km deep into the Pacific ocean off Costa Rica to reach the pitch black 'aphotic' zone. There, in a digital imaginary ocean, the Duga radar (a Soviet-era missile defence system near Chornobyl) is an undersea ruin far beneath the waves.

Screening | *Mining the Abyss - Blue Peril*, 2022 (15 min) by **INTERPRT**

Mining the Abyss is a visual investigation on deep-sea mining and accountability. A speculative rush is underway to exploit deep seabed minerals – cobalt, nickel, copper and manganese – allegedly needed for the green shift, led by the International Seabed Authority (ISA), a handful of states, mining startups, frontier investors and research universities. To counter the mining industry's greenwashing, INTERPRT analyzed data shared by marine biologists to simulate mining footprints and then collaborated with an oceanographer to model the trajectory of plume particles from seabed mining in the CCZ. Blue Peril is an advocacy video produced in collaboration with Deep Sea Mining Campaign and Ozeanien Dialog in cooperation with Pacific civil society organisations fighting to stop deep sea mining, was launched in an official side event of the 2022 UN Ocean Conference in Lisbon.

14:00 - 16:00

Conversation and listening session | *Spectral Listening in the Shallows of the Baltic Sea* with **Taru Elfving, Ville Raasakka, Kati Roover** and **Anna Törnroos-Remes**

This session attunes to the natural-cultural transformations in the lively water body of the Baltic Sea, along its shifting shores and within its archival sedimentations. Artists Ville Raasakka and Kati Roover, alongside marine biologist Anna Törnroos-Remes, share their recent work based on field recordings that register processes of extraction and colonisation yet also signal alternative senses and sensibilities on the evolving marine ecosystem.

The Baltic Sea is a small and shallow body of water in oceanic terms, a vast river estuary of brackish water in dynamic formation since the last retreat of the glaciers. Albeit the Sea being extensively mapped and modelled, the intricate interdependencies between myriad forces and agencies, spatial scales and temporalities, urgently call for further attention - for attunement beyond the prevailing historical, geopolitical, economic, ecological and embodied imaginaries. How to listen to the resonances of distant shores or the frequencies of pasts and futures in the here and now? What reverberates through the yet-unidentified sounds or indeterminate silences? Can listening complicate the anthropocentric narratives of lifeless seabeds and waters, or rising sea levels and shorelines? Can field recordings of soundscapes that otherwise escape from human perception, act as guides not so much to further knowledge, but towards different modes of co-inhabiting the Sea?

16:30 - 18:00

Screening | *MOBY DICK; or, The Whale*, 2022 (75 min) by **Wu Tsang**

The film reconsiders the wider context of the voyage of Moby Dick— interconnecting storylines from tumultuous mid-19th century maritime history, via the trans-Atlantic slave trade, to Western

imperialism, the beginnings of modern capitalism and mass civil unrest. Through powerful imagery, staging, choreography and music, *Moby Dick* is presented as a figure of thought seen through a post-colonial lens — re-framing its history, characters and story using the magic of cinema, illusion, and metaphor. The adaptation interweaves extracts by a sub-sub-librarian (character played by Fred Moten), tackles the novel's subterranean currents, encountering a resistant hydrarchy and haptic collectivities of "mariners, renegades, and castaways" as described by historian CLR James.

Directed by Wu Tsang and written by Sophia al Maria, the silent film follows the white whale above and below the surface of the water, developing a visual cosmology that resists the exploration and exploitation of the earth under imperial colonialism. The staging of *Moved by the Motion* links the story of the whaler's 'floating factory' with the early days of the film industry. *MOBY DICK; or, The Whale* is produced by Schauspielhaus Zurich in collaboration with Zürcher Kammerorchester (ZKO). TBA21–Academy is co-commissioning this work with LUMA Foundation, Superblue, Hartwig Art Foundation, The Shed, DE SINGEL and The Whitney Museum of American Art.

BIOS

Nabil Ahmed is a researcher and writer working at the intersection of spatial practice visual culture and environmental humanities. He runs INTERPRT (<http://interprrt.org/>), a research and design studio dedicated to environmental justice advocacy. The transdisciplinary collective works with civil society organizations, lawyers, scientists, NGOs, and journalists worldwide. INTERPRT's work has been recently exhibited at Biennale Warszawa, Museum of Modern Art Warsaw and Beirut Arts Centre. He has written for *Third Text*, *Routledge*, *Candide: Journal for Architectural Knowledge*, *Documenta*, *Sternberg Press*, *MIT Press* and *Scientific Reports* among others. He completed a doctorate in Research Architecture at Goldsmiths, University of London where he has a long-term research affiliation with Forensic Architecture.

Matti Aikio is a Sámi artist with roots in reindeer herding. He explores the intersection of modern Western society and indigenous cultures, their relative worldviews and conceptions of space and time, with a particular interest in the conflict between their use of natural resources, arising from their fundamentally different approaches to nature. Combining moving image, sound, text, and photography, Aikio raises issues about the Sámi truth and the reconciliation process, cultural appropriation and Sámi self-determination.

Danielle Brathwaite-Shirley is a London-based artist who works predominantly in animation, sound, video game development, and performance, creating interactive spaces. Their practice focuses on intertwining lived experience with fiction to imaginatively retell the stories of Black Trans people.

Taru Elfving is a curator and writer based in Helsinki focused on nurturing undisciplined and site-sensitive enquiries at the intersections of ecological, feminist and decolonial practices. As artistic director of CAA Contemporary Art Archipelago, Elfving is currently leading the research residency programme *Spectres in Change* on the island of Seili in the Baltic Sea in collaboration with Archipelago Research Institute of Turku University. Previously she has worked as Head of Programme at Frame

Contemporary Art Finland and HIAP Helsinki International Artist Programme. Her curatorial projects include Earth Rights (Kunsthalle Turku 2019), Hours, Years, Aeons (Finnish Pavilion, Venice Biennale 2015), Frontiers in Retreat (HIAP 2013-18), Contemporary Art Archipelago (Turku 2011 European Capital of Culture), and Towards a Future Present (LIAF Lofoten International Art Festival 2008). She has co-edited publications such as Contemporary Artist Residencies. Reclaiming Time and Space (Valiz, 2019) and Altern Ecologies (Frame, 2016).

Giovanna Esposito Yussif engages with curatorial praxis and research. Her background is in art history, museology, and critical theory. Giovanna has a long-standing commitment to nondominant praxes, dissentient imaginations, epistemic plurality and epistemologies in resistance. In 2019 she curated the Pavilion of Finland at the 58th Venice Biennale with the Miracle Workers Collective. She is currently artistic director of the Museum of Impossible Forms, co-artistic of Drifts, the curator for M_itä biennale 2023, and co-curator for Helsinki Biennial 2023.

Akwugo Emejulu is Professor of Sociology at the University of Warwick. Her research interests include the political sociology of race, class and gender and women of colour's grassroots activism in Europe and the United States. In 2020, Emejulu received the Flax Foundation's Emma Goldman Award for her contributions to feminist social science in Europe and was inducted as a Fellow of the Academy of Social Sciences. She is the author of several books including Fugitive Feminism (Silver Press, 2022) and Minority Women and Austerity: Survival and Resistance in France and Britain (Policy Press, 2017). She is co-editor of To Exist is to Resist: Black Feminism in Europe (Pluto Press, 2019).

Helen Kaplinsky is a curator and writer based in Helsinki and London. She is currently convening the project 'Cyberfeminism(s) to Protofeminisms', including events at PUBLICS and Museum of Impossible Forms (Helsinki) that consider how computational, past-facing mythologies are folded and diffracted into present and future feminist imaginaries. Recent publications include texts for Immerse! catalogue, Tallinna Kunstihoone, Curating with Care, Routledge and Artmonthly. Exhibitions include GENDERS, Science Gallery London (2020) Alembic, Res., ICA and Goldsmiths (2016-2018, London) Damn Braces Bless Relaxes, Whitechapel Gallery and mima (2013-2014, London and Middlesbrough) fellowships with the Arts Council Collection and Tallinn Kunstihoone.

Olga Lucko leads INTERPRT's spatial research and design projects. She has been responsible for developing visual forensic evidence for the past five years. She is an ARB registered architect with experience working on public building projects in the UK with renowned practices Tim Ronalds Architects and Clash Architects.

Svitlana Matviyenko is an Assistant Professor of Critical Media Analysis in the School of Communication. Her research and teaching are focused on information and cyberwar; political economy of information; media and environment; infrastructure studies; STS. She writes about practices of resistance and mobilization; digital militarism, dis- and misinformation; Internet history; cybernetics; psychoanalysis; posthumanism; the Soviet and the post-Soviet techno-politics; nuclear cultures, including the Chernobyl Zone of Exclusion. She is a co-editor of two collections, The Imaginary App (MIT Press, 2014) and Lacan and the Posthuman (Palgrave Macmillan, 2018). She is a co-author of Cyberwar and Revolution: Digital Subterfuge in Global Capitalism (Minnesota UP, 2019), a winner of the 2019 book award of the Science Technology and Art in International Relations (STAIR) section of the International Studies Association and of the Canadian Communication Association 2020 Gertrude

J. Robinson book prize. Matviyenko delivered the McLuhan Lecture at Transmediale in Berlin on January 2023.

Museum of Impossible Forms (MIF) is a cultural centre located in Kontula, East Helsinki, and the coming together of communities of art and cultural workers invested in building anticolonial, antipatriarchal and non-fascist practices and futures. Over the past six years, MIF has unfolded as a heterogeneous platform to engage with experimental, marginal, and migrant forms of expression, and as a laboratory for experiences, critical thought, and radical imagination. MIF is a collaborative project that seeks to defy prejudices of otherness and structural asymmetries, working for dignity, diversity, equity, allyship and solidarity, and towards developing and strengthening a plurality of knowledges and practices in the arts. As part of their curatorial collaboration for the Helsinki Biennale 2023, MIF will develop the Biennale's discursive program Polyphonic Entanglements curated by Giovanna Esposito Yussif and the summer school Agonistic Intelligence/s (AI/s) curated by Ali Akbar Mehta.

Oleksiy Radynski is a filmmaker based in Kyiv, Ukraine. His films have been screened at International Film Festival Rotterdam, e-flux (New York), the Institute of Contemporary Arts (London), Krakow IFF, DOK Leipzig, Doc Aviv, Sheffield Doc Fest, Docudays IFF, and SAVVY Contemporary (Berlin) among other places. His latest film Chornobyl 22 won the Grand Prize at Oberhausen International Film Festival in 2023. As an essayist he contributed to publications including Proxy Politics: Power and Subversion in a Networked Age (Archive Books, 2017), Art and Theory of Post-1989 Central and East Europe: A Critical Anthology (MoMA, 2018), and e-flux journal. He is a participant of Red Forest.

Ville Aslak Raasakka is a Helsinki-based Finnish composer specialised in ecology. His current ecological focus is in the formation, extraction, energy use, product use and dispersion of coal, oil and wood. His practice involves making field recordings, orchestral and chamber music, electronic music and installations. Raasakka is researching ecology and music at the Sibelius Academy, where he also teaches composition and works in the ecological steering group. His orchestral work gained a recommendation at the Unesco International Rostrum of Composers in 2019.

Sepideh Rahaa is an Iranian-Finnish multidisciplinary artist and researcher based in Helsinki. She investigates and questions prevailing power structures, social norms, and conventions while focusing on womanhood, storytelling, and everyday resistances. Rahaa aims to initiate and create spaces for dialogue, influenced by feminist politics, decolonial and postcolonial theories and practices as well as social and environmental justice.

Kati Roover is Estonian-born Helsinki based multidisciplinary artist. Her practice spans across the mediums of moving image, sound, photography, text and installations, draws upon and addresses a broad range of topics that are connected - from human-non-human interactions, dialogical aesthetics, mythical storytelling, decoloniality and hydrofeminism, to the natural sciences and ecology. Roover's works have recently been on display in the following exhibitions and art contexts: Turku New Performance festival (2022); Kunsthalle, Helsinki; KINDL Centre for Contemporary Art, Berlin, (2021); Wäinö Aaltosen museo, Turku (2021); Galerie im Körnerpark, Berliini (2020); Kiasma Museum of Contemporary Art, Helsinki (2019); Gallery of Emila Filla, Ústí nad Labem, Czech Republic (2019); Titanik galleria, Turku (2019).

Emilija Škarnulytė is nomadic artist and filmmaker. Working between documentary and the imaginary, Škarnulytė makes films and immersive installations exploring deep time and invisible

structures, from the cosmic and geologic to the ecological and political. Winner of the 2019 Future Generation Art Prize, Škarnulytė represented Lithuania at the XXII Triennale di Milano and was included in the Baltic Pavilion at the 2018 Venice Biennale of Architecture. With solo exhibitions at Tate Modern (2021), Kunsthaus Pasquart (2021), Den Frie (2021), National Gallery of Art in Vilnius (2021). She is nominated as the candidate for the Ars Fennica art award 2023.

Anna Törnroos-Remes is a Marine Biologist currently working as an associate professor (tenure-track) within The Sea and the Environmental and Marine Biology in Åbo Akademi University (ÅAU). Törnroos-Remes current marine ecological research focuses on the functioning of coastal areas, marine environments and particularly the seafloor. In order to understand the functioning and be able to assess the state of, pressures on and changes to the marine ecosystem, they apply and develop the “trait-based approach” . This approach centres around the characteristics or traits of marine organisms, such as how they feed, live and reproduce, which allows us to understand how marine organism contribute to e.g. production, nutrient circulation and habitat provision, as well as predict ecological strategies in contrasting environments under global change.

Wu Tsang is an award-winning filmmaker and visual artist. Tsang’s work crosses genres and disciplines, from narrative and documentary films to live performance and video installations. Tsang is a MacArthur 'Genius' Fellow, and her projects have been presented at museums, biennials, and film festivals internationally. Awards include 2016 Guggenheim Fellow (Film/Video), 2018 Hugo Boss Prize Nominee, Creative Capital, Rockefeller Foundation, Louis Comfort Tiffany Foundation, and Warhol Foundation. Tsang received her BFA (2004) from the Art Institute of Chicago (SAIC) and an MFA (2010) from University of California Los Angeles (UCLA). Currently Tsang works in residence at Schauspielhaus Zurich, as a director of theatre with the collective Moved by the Motion.