



# THE FIVE RINGS 地 水 火 風 空 VOID

23–25 August 2023



Symposium Programme  
Sibelius Museum  
Piispankatu 17 / Biskopsgatan 17  
Turku/Åbo, Finland

## Tuesday, 22 August

**20:00–21:00** **KICK-OFF CONCERT** Void Iteration – If I Close My Eyes, Do I Hear?

## Wednesday, 23 August

**9:45–10:15** Signing in

**10:15–10:45** **OPENING CEREMONY**  
Opening Remarks  
Concert: *Leere*

**10:45–11:15** Coffee

**11:15–12:15** **PERFORMATIVE SESSION** Emptiness – Form, Control, Liberation

**12:15–13:00** **KATORI SHINTO RYU DEMONSTRATION** The Silent Sword – Reflection of Void

**13:00–14:00** Lunch break

**14:00–15:30** **PERFORMATIVE SESSIONS**  
Sense and Absence  
Charting the Void

**15:40–18:35** **SENSORY EXCURSION** Regenerative Void, and What Floats to the Shores (Saaronniemi beach, Ruissalo)

**19:00–20:30** **AGORA** Karen Barad: On Touching the Stranger Within – The Alterity that Therefore I Am ►



Selfportrait ensemble. Photo: Ulla-Mari Lindström

## Thursday, 24 August

**10:15–11:45** **AGORA** Hans Ruin: The Way of the Unexpected – The Poetics of Being and Non-being in Early Greek Philosophy

**11:45–13:15** Lunch break

**13:15–14:45** **PERFORMATIVE SESSION** Edges of Knowing

**14:45–15:15** Coffee

**15:15–16:45** **PERFORMATIVE SESSION** Close the Borders!

**19:00–20:00** **CONCERT** Void (Turku Cathedral)

## Friday, 25 August

**8:15–10:00** **WORKSHOP** The magic of the blank page / Tyhjän paperin lumo / Den tomma sidans förtrollning

**10:15–11:45** **PERFORMATIVE SESSION** Studying the Void

**11:45–13:15** Lunch break

**13:15–14:15** **AGORA** Dolly Jørgensen: Extinction Voids – Visualizing the Relational Holes Created by Species Loss ►

**14:30–15:30** **PERFORMATIVE SESSION** Creativity in the Era of AI

**15:30–16:00** Coffee

**16:00–17:20** **THEATRE** Selfportrait – Dreams of the Life and Art of Ellen Thesleff

**17:30–19:00** **CLOSING RECEPTION**

► Pre-recorded talk + live Q&A via Zoom

Location: Sibelius Museum, Piispankatu 17 / Biskopsgatan 17, Turku/Åbo (unless otherwise stated in parentheses).

Changes in the programme are possible. We reserve the right to changes. Please follow [www.aboagora.fi](http://www.aboagora.fi) and our social media channels for updates.

## What is ABOAGORA?

**THE AIM OF ABOAGORA** is to question and deconstruct the juxtapositions between the arts and sciences, to establish new kinds of dialogical connections and to develop experimental models for academic and artistic expression. ABOAGORA promotes dialogue between the arts, humanities and sciences by bringing scholarly debates together with the arts and also by combining artistic expression with scholarly events.

The name 'Aboagora' refers to both Turku (in Latin, *Aboa*) and a meeting place or marketplace (in Greek, *agora*). The idea of ABOAGORA is to create an open forum for thinking and debate and to challenge and break boundaries between the arts and the scholarly world. ABOAGORA aims at encouraging new research and new art as well as new kinds of encounters between the two.

ABOAGORA is a marketplace of open codes: it provides a common forum for academics, artists and the public. This forum is based on openness and open-minded crossing over of different levels.



Photos: Pekko Vasantola

## Why ABOAGORA?

**THE GAP BETWEEN THE ARTS AND SCIENCES** is a product of history, not an inherent given. In the early modern period scientific and artistic activities were not quarantined from each other, but during the past two centuries, the separation between the two has been very stark.

Today it is especially important to also rethink the role of research in terms of artistic expression and, at the same time, to consider cross-disciplinary approaches to artistic activities. Contemporary research often emphasises the need for current social challenges to involve cooperation between academic fields. The idea of ABOAGORA is based on a conviction that comprehensive problem-solving requires not only interdisciplinary elaboration but also acknowledgment of artistic approaches in more concrete and imaginative ways.

Significant innovations often arise at the interface of disciplines. New ideas emerge from unexpected encounters: for this reason, scientific or artistic innovations cannot easily be predicted. The purpose of ABOAGORA is to encourage these kinds of encounters and to promote scholarly dialogue which also takes into account artistic forms of expression.

The Symposium is organised by the University of Turku, Åbo Akademi University, the Arts Academy of Turku University of Applied Sciences and the Donner Institute for Research in Religion and Culture, which is attached to the Åbo Akademi University Foundation.

## ABOAGORA 2019–2023

### The Five Rings

**IN 2019, ABOAGORA LAUNCHED A FIVE-YEAR THEMATIC PLAN** under the title *The Five Rings*. The title refers to the book *The Book of Five Rings*, written by Miyamoto Musashi (宮本 武蔵, c. 1584–1645) in 1645. Musashi was a Japanese swordsman, philosopher, writer, and rōnin – a samurai without a master. He became renowned through stories of his masterful double-bladed swordsmanship and undefeated record of his 61 duels. Many consider him the greatest swordsman that ever lived. Near the end of his life, Musashi retreated to live as a hermit in a cave, where he meditated and wrote a manual of kenjutsu, Japanese swordsmanship, and martial arts. This practical book extends towards a philosophy of life, aiming at simplicity and no-nonsense. Throughout the years, it has also been read by people rethinking ways to lead or do business.

*The Book of Five Rings* (五輪書, Go Rin no Sho) is divided into five books, each examining a different element of battle, just as there are different physical elements in life in Eastern religions. The five ABOAGORA symposia in 2019–2023 delve into these elements: earth, water, fire, wind and void. In 2023 – the fifth and final year of *The Five Rings* – the theme of ABOAGORA is “Void”.



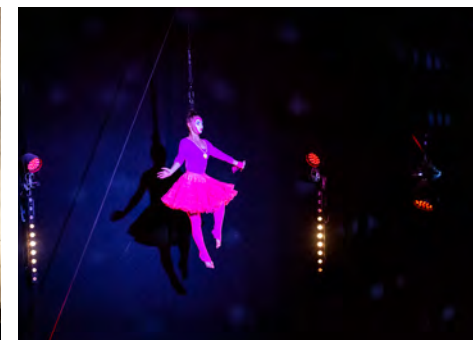
Photo: Pekko Vasantola

## The Five Rings

### Void

**VOID CAN BE UNDERSTOOD AS NOTHINGNESS** – the total lack of perceivable elements. Void is complete otherness, incomprehensible and almost unreachable; it can be perceived by its effects rather than by experiencing it first-hand. This exhaustive otherness has engaged the human mind throughout history. Void is the endpoint of the human cycle of rebirths ordered by the laws of Karma, and it is granted only to the few enlightened ones who reach Moksha – liberation from existence as we know it and complete immersion into nothingness. Void has been called the impetus of regeneration, the source and end of life as we know it. It has been called ether in esoteric circles, Brahman in Eastern religions, or even God in our Western world. Humans have tried to reach even a brief moment of inner nothingness through meditation, yoga, alcohol, drugs, or sex, but our fascination with the void has also inspired new technologies and taken us far into outer space.

Void is the beginning and the end, but where do our voids linger today? Will our external and internal voids engorge us before we learn to make peace with them? ABOAGORA 2023 explores these questions and more in the final event of the thematic plan *The Five Rings*.



Photos: Pekko Vasantola

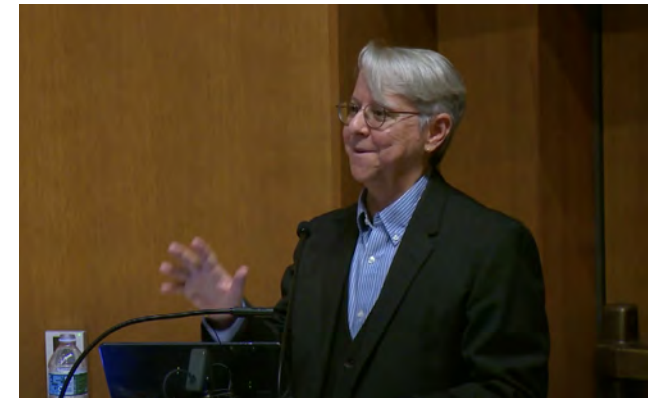


WEDNESDAY 23 AUGUST, 19:00–20:30

## On Touching the Stranger Within – The Alterity that Therefore I Am

Karen Barad

**KAREN BARAD** is Distinguished Professor of Feminist Studies, Philosophy, and History of Consciousness at the University of California at Santa Cruz. Barad's Ph.D. is in theoretical particle physics and quantum field theory. Barad held a tenured appointment in a physics department before moving into more interdisciplinary spaces. Barad is the author of *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning* (Duke University Press, 2007) and numerous articles in the fields of physics, philosophy, science studies, poststructuralist theory, and feminist theory. Barad's research has been supported by the National Science Foundation, the Ford Foundation, the Hughes Foundation, the Irvine Foundation, the Mellon Foundation, and the National Endowment for the Humanities. Barad is a co-founder of the UCSC Science & Justice Research Center and the Science & Justice Graduate Training Program.



TUESDAY 24 AUGUST, 10:15–11:45

## The Way of the Unexpected – The Poetics of Being and Non-Being in Early Greek Philosophy

Hans Ruin

**FROM ITS INCEPTION**, the foremost challenge for human philosophical thinking is how to handle *change*. How can we conceptualize the fact that nothing seems to remain stable and that the world is constantly displaying new features? These questions can lead, on the hand, to the positing of an absolutely stable origin, beyond the reach of all transformations. This is the position of the Presocratic philosopher and poet Parmenides, who also rejects non-being. The other alternative is to affirm transformation as the element of thinking and language itself. Such a philosophy is developed by Heraclitus, around 500 BC. In my talk, I will describe how this leads him to create a new form of writing and representation of thought that can take upon itself the work of nothingness, in a poetics of being and non-being.

Photo: Cato Lein



**Hans Ruin** is Professor of Philosophy at Södertörn University in Stockholm. He is an expert on the philosophy of Heidegger and Nietzsche and has co-edited the collected works of Nietzsche that was recently completed in ten volumes in Swedish (Symposium Förlag). He has

also translated and commented on the fragments by Heraclitus in a book that was recently re-issued in a new and revised edition (Faethon Förlag). Among his recent books is also *Being with the dead. Burial, ancestral politics, and the roots of historical consciousness* (Stanford UP).

FRIDAY 25 AUGUST, 13:15–14:15

## Extinction Voids: Visualizing the Relational Holes Created by Species Loss

Dolly Jørgensen

**WE ARE LIVING THROUGH** one of the most significant changes to the Earth's environment: the sixth mass extinction event. The fact that we have now begun the sixth mass extinction event has struck a deep social nerve, precipitating new kinds of thinking about the vast, irrevocable loss that haunts our Anthropocene moment.

What kinds of voids are created when species disappear? Should we be focused on the void or what once stood in it? Starting with the artwork *RIP Passenger Pigeon, after John James Audubon* (2020) by contemporary artist Brandon Ballengée, this talk will examine the tension between highlighting the gap created by extinction and ensuring that the lost species is not rendered invisible. I discuss artworks and museum displays that grapple with narrating extinction in order to perceive the holes in relationships created by species loss.

**Dolly Jørgensen** is Professor of History at the University of Stavanger (UiS), Norway. She is co-editor-in-chief of the journal *Environmental Humanities* and co-directs The Greenhouse Center for Environmental Humanities at UiS. Her current research agenda focuses on cultural histories of animal extinction and recovery, particularly the implications of extinction for cultural heritage and museum practices. Her book *Recovering Lost Species in the Modern Age: Histories of Longing and Belonging* was published by MIT Press in 2019. She is currently writing a book about extinction in museums.



## Whispering Ink: Echoes of Zen

Maria Lindeman (Performance Artist), Tomi Pajjo (Digital Artist)

**"WHISPERING INK: ECHOES OF ZEN"** is a media installation that seamlessly blends artificial intelligence and interactive elements, drawing inspiration from Japanese culture, particularly ancient ink drawings and the essence of Zen philosophy.

At the heart of the installation lies an unending loop of interaction. Ink, guided by an ethereal intelligence, delicately traces evocative images on a digital canvas, their creation fueled by the conversations taking place on an online forum. Accompanying each image, the artificial intelligence also generates a harmonious haiku poem, carefully crafted to resonate with the aesthetics and emotions conveyed by the artwork.

This interactive artwork invites the audience to experience the fusion of traditional and contemporary artistic elements, as well as the delicate dance between human creativity and machine intelligence.

The installation is open to ABOAGORA participants in the Baeckman room of the Sibelius Museum (to the left from the entrance, at the very back) throughout the event.

## Void Setup – When you move, what do you see?

Artturi Elovirta (Media Composer), Tuuli Lempa (piano, live electronics), Ulf Långbacka (Composer, electronics), Teemu Mastovaara (cello, interactive electronics)

**IN THE INSTALLATION** *Void Setup – When you move, what do you see?* the audience will walk around in the downstairs exhibition hall of the Sibelius Museum. The movements of the audience will trigger images, lights and sounds, derived from the material created for the concert *Void Iteration – If I close my eyes, do I hear?* (Aug. 22 at the Sibelius Museum) by the same artists. The installation is open to ABOAGORA participants on Thursday and Friday, Aug. 24–25.



## Waves of Waves

Nayab Noor Ikram

**THE EXHIBITION** *Waves of Waves* by Ålandic artist **Nayab Noor Ikram** is on display at the Sibelius Museum from 14 April to 3 September 2023. *Waves of Waves* is her first solo museum exhibition in Finland. The exhibition explores cultural identity through care, play and tension in different social contexts through film and sound installations.

[www.nayabikram.com](http://www.nayabikram.com)



## Sit and Blue

Antti Tolvi



Photo: Katri Naukkarinen

**VISITORS TO THE ATRIUM** of the Sibelius Museum will be able to enjoy sound artist **Antti Tolvi's** sound installation *Sit and Blue*. The installation opened on the Night of Museums on 17 May and runs until 10 September 2023.

In this work we rest in Sibelius Museum's atrium on softly massaging, low-frequency armchairs, surrounded by static sound. As we experience the work, our gaze rests on the churning, ever-changing sky above. The work reminds us to focus our attention on the bright blueness behind all that is going on in the sky.

[www.anttitolvi.com](http://www.anttitolvi.com)



TUESDAY 22 AUGUST, 20:00–21:00

Kick-off concert:

## Void Iteration – If I Close My Eyes, Do I Hear?

Artturi Elovirta (Media Composer), Tuuli Lempa (piano, live electronics), Ulf Långbacka (Composer, electronics), Teemu Mastovaara (cello, live electronics)

**THE CONCERT** *Void iteration – If I close my eyes, do I hear?* takes on various ways of approaching the theme of Void. In Ulf Långbacka's newly written piece *Void – searching, staring, leaping* Tuuli Lempa's electronically modified piano sounds combine with Teemu Mastovaara's cello, mixing with sounds from Långbacka's electronic keyboard and pre-recorded sound files. The sound worlds interact with Artturi Elovirta's visual imagery. The second part of the concert consists of an improvisation by the same artists, where both visual and sound elements combine in exploration.

In the installation *Void Setup – When you move, what do you see?* (August 24–25) by the same artists, the audience will walk around in the downstairs exhibition hall in the Sibelius Museum. The movements of the audience will trigger images, lights and sounds, derived from the material created for the concert.



**Artturi "Ami" Elovirta** is a Turku-based urban culture "multiple warhead missile", media artist and creative entrepreneur. Artturi works in the field of creative urban culture and media art and acts as a VJ and visual artist "after dark". He's also a passionate electronic musician and creative generalist. Elovirta works in various cultural contexts, organises events, makes projection mappings (facade projections) and is an active influencer in his hometown Turku. His artistic interests lie in sustainable future, interaction design, creative coding and electronic music. His extensive knowledge and outside-the-box thinking complement many diverse teams, breaking the conventional way of seeing and experiencing things. His visual works have been shown at various events across Europe.

Photo: Jenny Toivanen



**Tuuli Lempa** is a versatile pianist, who uses live electronics in her artistic work. She has commissioned and premiered several compositions for piano and live electronics. She also works with professional singers, instrumentalists and choirs and composes electroacoustic music. Subjects like mysticism and the sublime inspire her and are often the common denominator in her different projects.

**Ulf Långbacka** has worked as a choral conductor and lecturer in music at Åbo Akademi University since 1991. He has also been active as a composer since the 1980s, having written commissions for many choirs and institutions. Among his most important works are the opera *Henrik och Håxhammaren*, performed in Turku Castle in 2011, and the mass *Mässa i Mångfaldens tid*, which was first celebrated in 2018. Recently, he has written many works using electronics in various ways, such as *Tipping Point* (2021), which combines recorded sounds from the seafloor with acoustic instruments.



Photo: Tage Rönqvist

Photo: Venla Kaasinen



**Teemu Mastovaara** is a Turku-based cellist and composer. His artistic practice combines heartfelt cello music with electroacoustic and experimental sounds, exploring questions related to life and death. Mastovaara builds Max/MSP patches to expand his cello playing. In an effort to make his compositions more easily approachable, he likes to include ways for the audience to interact with his works. His works have been performed at, for example, WeWI!, Musica Nova and Helsinki Festival. At UNM in Piteå he was joined on stage by Norrbotten NEO. He is a member of Ensemble for New Music Tallinn and has performed as a soloist with the Turku Philharmonic Orchestra and Collegium Musicum Turku. He is a member of the Society of Finnish Composers and a graduate from Contemporary Performance and Composition, an international master's programme with academic terms in Tallinn, Stockholm, Lyon and Hamburg.





WEDNESDAY 23 AUGUST, 10:15–10:45

Concert:

## The Book of Five Rings: The Void / Das Buch der fünf Ringe: Leere

E-Musikgruppe Lux Ohr feat. Lau Nau

Photo: Jaakko Penttinen



E-Musikgruppe Lux Ohr: Kimi Kärki (left), Ismo Virta and Pertti Grönholm.

**E-MUSIKGRUPPE LUX OHR** is a kosmische Musik group from Turku, Finland. The band members are **Pertti Grönholm** (synthesizers, samplers, sequencers and percussion), **Kimi Kärki** (e-guitar, EBow and effects) and **Ismo Virta** (Memotron, e-guitar and effects). Their music is a mixture of 'Berlin School' style of sequenced space travels, electro-acoustic improvisations and krautrock with melancholic and psychedelic moods. Their third studio album *Non plus ultra* (Svart Records, LP + digital) was released in 2020. In addition, E-Musikgruppe Lux Ohr has released three live albums, a split album and a mini album.

For each Five Rings of ABOAGORA, E-Musikgruppe Lux Ohr produces and performs a composition exploring the theme of the year. Each work features a guest musician or musicians. At ABOAGORA 2023 they will collaborate with Lau Nau for the performance of the fifth and final one of the five thematic annual compositions: *Leere* (The Void).

**Lau Nau**, aka Laura Naukkari, is a composer, whose music is imbued with an idiosyncratic, finely honed sound world. She combines traditional instruments and singing voice to analogue synthesizers and field recordings. Her most recent album *5 x 4* (Fonal Records & Beacon sound



Photo: Camilla Rehnstrand

2023) is recorded with the legendary Buchla 200 synthesizer at Elektron-musikstudion Stockholm. To date, Lau Nau has released nine albums in Europe, USA and Japan, won the Femma and Finnish State Art Prize and received nominations for the Teosto, Emma and Jussi awards, among others. Nowadays, she is known for her music for films and sound installations.

WEDNESDAY 23 AUGUST, 11:15–12:15

## Emptiness – Form, Control, Liberation

Annamari Konttinen (chair), Lasse Lehtonen,  
Tuomas Martikainen, Petteri Silenius

**THIS PANEL SESSION** will discuss the concepts of “void”, or emptiness, in Miyamoto Musashi’s teachings and in Japanese culture, art and religions. Musashi’s *The Book of Five Rings* is a manual of swordsmanship and martial arts, but his wisdom is not limited to survival in battle. Rather, it covers the entire human spectrum, including sciences, arts and religion.

In the context of battle, emptiness refers to controlling the mind and emotions, as well as to the concept of space and the evaluation of distance. When the blows of a wooden sword rain down, how can one control both the mind and the space around the body? The Heart Sūtra, a popular sutra in Mahāyāna Buddhism, famously states: “Form is emptiness, emptiness is form.” How does this idea manifest in Japanese arts and in the Japanese language? How may it lead to the notion that “form is liberating”, which also relates to “emptiness of the mind”? In various religious traditions, *moksha* and *nirvana* refer to emancipation, enlightenment and liberation from the cycle of death and rebirth. How can we approach these concepts through the lens of “the void”?

**Annamari Konttinen** is University Teacher of contemporary Japanese society for the International Master’s Degree Programme in East Asian Studies (EAST) at the Centre for East Asian Studies, University of Turku. Sociologist by training, her field of expertise comprises social movements, civil society, gender, and the environment. As a part-time entrepreneur and shop owner, she specializes in designing and organizing events and tours to introduce Japanese culture and



Photo: Barbara Kaucher

society to the public, and in promoting the everyday use of vintage kimono. In addition to her academic background, she derives inspiration from the classic arts of tea, haiku, flower arrangement and bonsai.

**Lasse Lehtonen** received his Ph.D. from the University of Helsinki, Finland, in 2018, and is currently a lecturer at the University of Turku. He has also been affiliated with the University of Tokyo and the Tokyo University of the Arts as a visiting scholar. Lehtonen specializes in the study of Japanese culture with a focus on music. By combining approaches from Japanese studies and musicology, his research explores modern Japanese culture through a variety of perspectives, including cultural history, sociology and music analysis. His research interests range from Western art music composition to popular music and video game music.



Photo: Sebastian Trzaska

**Tuomas Martikainen** is the Rector of the Swedish School of Social Science, University of Helsinki, and a Docent in the Study of Religions. His research has focused on the religious lives of migrants and contemporary trends of religious change. Martikainen also holds a fourth-degree black belt in the Japanese martial art of Aikido. He has previously worked as a researcher in different universities and been the Director of the Migration Institute of Finland.



Photo: Veikko Somerpuro

Photo: Ollipekka Kangas



**Petteri Silenius**, Aikido 7th dan shihan, has practised aikido for 45 years and is currently chief instructor at the Turku Aikikai aikido club. For 30 years, he has also practised the 600-year-old Japanese martial arts tradition and school Katori Shinto Ryu. His teacher is Tetsutaka Sugawara sensei and Silenius himself is kyoshi menkyo, instructor. Silenius is also a professional budo instructor, shiatsu therapist and artist.



WEDNESDAY 23 AUGUST, 12:15–13:00

Katori Shinto Ryu demonstration:

## The Silent Sword – Reflection of Void

Petteri Silenius, Erkki Mäkimattila, Marko Silanterä,  
Jani Tarvainen, Reima Välimäki, Kaj Westersund

**TENSHIN SHODEN KATORI SHINTO RYU** is the world's oldest living martial arts school. Its founder was Iisaza Chōisai Iano (1387–1488), a famous swordsman in the service of the Chiba clan in Japan. Having experienced the destruction and futility of feudal wars, Iisaza retreated to the Katori shrine, where he founded the school after a vision and a rigorous ascetic training regime. Although Katori Shinto Ryu has been known by many names over the centuries and numerous other schools have branched from it, the school as practised today is based on an unbroken tradition of masters and students that reaches back to the mid-fifteenth century. Katori Shinto Ryu is most famous for its sword technique, and in all of its practice forms (kata), at least one party uses the Japanese sword. The demonstration gives a representative sample of the school's techniques, from drawing and cutting with a blade (iai-jutsu) to pair training with the wooden sword (bokken) against different weapons, such as the short sword, naginata and spear.



Turku Aikikai. Erkki Mäkimattila (left), Kaj Westersund, Petteri Silenius, Marko Silanterä and Jani Tarvainen.

The Katori Shinto Ryu group in Turku is one of the most experienced groups outside Japan.

**Petteri Silenius** started to practise Katori in 1992, and regular training began in Turku the following year. Today, six members of the group have received the teacher licence (kyoshi menkyo) from Tetsutaka Sugawara sensei: Petteri Silenius, **Erkki Mäkimattila**, **Marko Silanterä**, **Jani Tarvainen**, **Reima Välimäki** and **Kaj Westersund**.

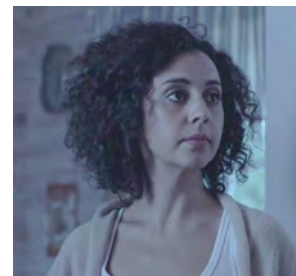
They will present the school's tradition in the demonstration.

WEDNESDAY 23 AUGUST, 14:00–15:30

## Sense and Absence

Elmira Zahra Jahanshah Rad, Camila Rosa, Kari Yli-Annala

**VACUUM IS A KIND OF ABSENCE** that has different effects on sensing. Looking at different phenomena from a physicist's point of view, absence is necessary to sense and, in some situations, there is no sense in absence! A good example of the former is scanning electron microscopy (SEM), which is only possible in a vacuum, and as an example of the latter, sound does not propagate in a vacuum. Vacuum, absence, void are never absolute. Even in a vacuum, there is bubbling (appearing and disappearing) of elementary particles at the quantum level. This bubbling at the quantum level has some similarity to the philosophical concept of "sombre precursor", which is a kind of "pre-flash" of becoming into being, preceding all phenomena in the expanding universe. There is an improvisatory playfulness in the universe. We, too, bubble: a smell instantly reminds us of something, but we also suddenly forget a word; we have mixed-feelings; our certainties flicker... But the global space seems to be operating under different rules, not sensible to these bubblings. In this space, where the Other and I coexist, politics and economy seem sustained by the determinations of "their culture", "your ethnic background", "our origins". What would the world look like if it were based on the playfulness of indetermination?



**Camila Rosa** is a performance artist and doctoral researcher based in Tampere. Her research explores the intersections between art practice and philosophy, often focussing on collective practices of memory storying. She considers autobiographical memories as rich entry points to the entanglements between temporality and raciality, exploring the limits of what can be grasped through

linear understandings of time. She creates performances examining relationality and participation, diving into our ability to sensibly perceive others, blurring borders between the individual and groups, private and collective.

**Kari Yli-Annala** is a Helsinki-based moving image artist, writer, lecturer, curator and doctoral researcher. His current project *Kinimata* is a research project on movement and time and "analogical" qualities and features in



the cosmos, told by moving images, texts and sounds. He has graduated from The Finnish Academy of Fine Arts and is a founding member of the Finnish moving image artists' cooperative FixC, established in 2007. He was the artistic director at the film & media art festival AAVE (Alternative Art Event) from 2010 to

2018. In 2017, he received the AVEK Award, the most significant accolade in the Finnish field of media arts.



**Elmira Zahra Jahanshah Rad** is a doctoral researcher in Materials Science at the Department of Physics and Astronomy at the University of Turku. Her Ph.D. thesis is about improving the efficiency and working lifetime of electronic and photovoltaic devices, which are made of semiconductors – devices such as solar cells, smart phones, laptops, etc. She is a co-inventor in four patent families and co-author in 18 peer-reviewed articles. Besides physics, she is interested in philosophy, cognitive

sciences, social sciences and environmental issues. Her best friend of 15 years is her dog Goopi, who has been with her since he was a puppy.

WEDNESDAY 23 AUGUST, 14:00–15:30

## Charting the Void

Shruti Jain, Zoë Robertson, Laura M. Saari

**HOW DO YOU TRACE** an invisible line?

In *Charting the Void*, we explore the relationship between information and the unknown and how we come to interpret the undefined environments all around us. In a journey that ranges from the ocean floor to the Andes Mountains, through vast skies and down to the nanoparticle scale, discover how experts in various disciplines (a maritime archaeologist, an artist-designer and a molecular biologist) interpret different kinds of information to map the many voids we encounter in our world.

**Shruti Jain**, from India, is a doctoral researcher in Molecular Biotechnology and Diagnostics at the University of Turku. Her research focuses on establishing effective screening and detection technology platforms for diseases. This involves the use of nanoparticle-based technologies for early detection. The concept enables the design of simple, fast and affordable tests that can be adapted for resource-poor settings. Her interests also lie in public engagement of science as well as development cooperation work, in which she is quite often involved.



**Zoë Robertson** is a Finnish and Canadian artist-designer. In her creative work, she combines a background in journalism, creative writing and audio production to weave narratives into material artefacts. Thematically, her work engages with how identity and agency are moderated by space and language and, more recently, explores themes of memory, grief and legacy. Currently, she is based in Helsinki, Finland while enrolled in the Contemporary Design Master's programme at Aalto University. Visit her website at [www.zoerobertson.ca](http://www.zoerobertson.ca)



**Laura Maria Saari** is a maritime archaeologist and doctoral researcher in Latin American Studies at the University of Helsinki. Her research focuses on dynamic shoreline contexts in Pre-Columbian South America, approaching landscapes and their uses over time with reference to climate change, resource use and regional connections. A beach-comber since her Australian childhood, Laura's research interests lie in aquatic life-ways, shoreline ecosystems and the comparative analysis of archaeological collections and current datasets for the reconstruction of periodically and partially submerged landscapes.



WEDNESDAY 23 AUGUST, 15:40–18:35

📍 SAARONNIEMI BEACH, RUISSALO

## Regenerative Void, and What Floats to the Shores: A Sensory Excursion on the Ruissalo Island

Riikka Armanto, Kirsikka Paakkinen, Kenneth Siren,  
Heini Uusisilta-Immonen

*We will meet in front of the Sibelius Museum at 15:40 and walk together to Kauppatori. The bus 8 to Ruissalo departs at 16:00. The return bus leaves at 18:00 and is back at Kauppatori at 18:35. We will stay at the beach for approximately one hour. A complimentary snack is provided.*



**WE HAVE LOOKED AT WAYS** of arriving at the void, and many of them have been surprising. They could be a surprise to you, too. A gesture and a ritual with no true ties to anything could lead to nourishing encounters or to more considered ethical action. What ends up being created if futures are seen and felt as looming, delightfully welcoming nothingness?

Collaboratively, we have been delaying making decisions and determinations. We have been illustrating the thoughts we no longer have: all the material contested and abandoned that still ends up floating to the shore afterwards as flotsam. We have been dwelling on the flows of notions, turning with the tipping points constantly present and still not yet here. And we have been part of what emerges while attempting to conceive *how*. The emptiness comes in waves. But, on the shores of Ruissalo, we welcome you to join us in performative and reflective practices to sense the void with us and within. Could void serve us a pause, creative freedom from engagement, attachment, prediction and understanding, allowing for important questions to arise without immediate answers?

Some words we keep repeating and some experiences we return to. Some moments at the brink may bring us to the brink of something new.

Our multidisciplinary team is as follows: **Riikka Armanto** is an ecologist and doctoral researcher in the field of Futures Studies at the University of Turku, focused to study on how futures are used (imagined, contested, created and pursued). In her thesis, she examines how climate-wise farming is performed through anticipation within farms' dynamic socio-ecological processes and various human and non-human interactions. The issues of de-colonizing futures and inclusion in participatory futures research are especially in her interest. She wishes to explore her own paths of academic work through intuition, embodiment and creativity to engage with the biosphere. **Kirsikka Paakkinen** is a Karelian-Finnish filmmaker and artist. She lives and works in Rovaniemi, Finland. Paakkinen has graduated with an MFA in Film from HDK-Valand in Gothenburg, Sweden. Her first short documentary film, *When the Mill Hill Trees Spoke to Me*, has been screened at numerous festivals in Europe and won the Films for our Future award at Lucca Film Festival in 2022. She is curious about humans' relationship with nature in its various forms and contradictions. Cultural history and anthropological perspectives as well as dreamlike visions and experiences of the sacred in nature inspire her. **Kenneth Siren** is a doctoral researcher in theatre arts at the Performing Arts Research Centre (Tutke) of the Theatre Academy, and a lecturer in University Pedagogical Studies in the Arts. Their research incorporates Deweyan pragmatism and collaborative theatre practices that allow participants to identify and transform their habits. Often, their performances combine lyrical text with movement and touch on topics relating to gender diversity. **Heini Uusisilta-Immonen** is a visual artist living and working in Järvenpää, Finland. She is currently studying in the Visual Cultures, Curating and Contemporary Art Master's Programme at Aalto University, after receiving her BA from Kankaanpää School of Fine Arts, Satakunta University of Applied Sciences. She likes to combine and experiment with different mediums. Collaborative art-science projects as well as projects that focus on care and sensitivity towards our surrounding environment have been at the centre of her work in recent years.

Please note that this excursion requires signing up in advance online. For details, see [aboagora.fi/programme/regenerative-void/](https://aboagora.fi/programme/regenerative-void/)

THURSDAY 24 AUGUST, 13:15–14:45

## Edges of Knowing

Taru Elfving, Ida Grönroos, Aditya Jeevannavar, Sanna Lehtinen, Carlos Lesmes, Saara Mildeberg, Sanna Ryyänänen, Alizée Ville, Nina Vurdelja

**ABOAGORA HOSTED A PRE-SYMPOSIUM** research retreat for Doctoral Researchers and MA Arts Students on the island of Seili in the Turku archipelago on 20–22 August. The participants, led by the curator and researcher Taru Elfving, were invited to reflect together on what haunts the systems of knowledge and the limits of the thinkable at this time of omnicrisis, uncertainty and change. Through the prism offered by the changing ecology of the Archipelago Sea and the dense history of the island of Seili, a plurality of perspectives and multisensory approaches, they discussed a range of questions related to the topic of void, such as: How to address the hauntings in the landscape, in the archive or data sets, which gesture towards something that has been omitted or erased or simply gone unnoticed and unnamed? How to attune to and approach these signals and signs of “nothingness” with a sense of urgency and curiosity, yet without hastily presuming access and opportunistically extracting from or filling the perceived void in a colonial manner? What lies beyond the bounds of knowledge(s), the reach of senses, and tools of sensing? The island of Seili with its complex history of institutions of care and control – from the leprosy colony and mental asylum for women to the current environmental research, nature conservation, and tourism development – played a key part in choreographing the discussions. In this joint panel session, the Pre-symposium participants will discuss their own academic and artistic work as well as the questions explored during the retreat.

Photo: Pekko Vasantola



### Taru Elfving

I am a curator and researcher of contemporary art, focused on nurturing undisciplined and site-sensitive enquiries at the intersections of ecological, feminist and decolonial practices. As Director of CAA Contemporary Art Archipelago, I have examined ecological transformations in the Turku Archipelago region for over a decade and currently lead the research platform Spectres in Change on the island of Seili in collaboration with the Archipelago Research

Institute of the University of Turku. I have a Ph.D. from Visual Cultures, Goldsmiths University of London (2009), and I supervise doctoral students at the University of the Arts Helsinki.



### Ida Grönroos

I am a trained archivist with professional experience from various Swedish public agencies. Since 2020, I have been a doctoral student at Uppsala University, in the Engaging Vulnerability research programme. In my Ph.D. project, I want to shed light on the way professional archivists perceive and judge vulnerability and how they deal with the disclosures and redactions of sensitive information in psychiatric and social care records. I am interested in the intersections between individuals, families and other units in society that intertwine through affection, blood or law. In my research, these intersections are brought to the fore by the unveiling or concealment of family secrets.

Photo: University of Turku



### Aditya Jeevannavar

I am a doctoral researcher at the Department of Biology, University of Turku. My research is focused on high throughput analysis of microbial communities, with relevance to algal blooms, spread of superbugs, etc. Microbial communities are every-

where, from the bottom of deep seas to the surfaces of our skins. I look at some of these communities and try to discern which micro-organism is present in what proportion, what each of them is doing, and who they are interacting with to share food or information on antibiotic resistance or to hide from predators. I mostly write computer code.



### Sanna S. Lehtinen

I am a Doctoral Researcher at the Faculty of Law, University of Helsinki. My study field includes critical heritage law, blue humanities, (eco)feminist jurisprudence and spatial justice. In addition to legal studies, I have a background in art research. My ongoing multidisciplinary Ph.D. project explores future generations' rights to coastal and liminal heritage that is drowning because of the ecological crisis. I have served as a Visiting Scholar at the University of California (2022–2023) and conducted a research period at Università Ca' Foscari Venezia (2021).



### Carlos E. Lesmes

I am a Colombian film director currently living and working in Estonia. I graduated as a Filmmaker from Universidad Nacional de Colombia in 2010, and received my MA from the Baltic Film, Media and Arts School in 2014. I have been an active member

of the Estonian film community and taken part in different feature films while developing my own film projects. I am currently pursuing a Ph.D. degree at Tallinn University and developing my first fiction feature film. I am interested in science fiction, science, comic books and particle physics but most of all in how all of this can be tied together and used to try and tell stories about the experience of being a human.



### Saara Mildeberg

I am a doctoral student of cultural studies and a junior researcher at the Centre for Landscape and Culture at Tallinn University, Estonia. I hold a bachelor's degree in photography (Estonian Academy of Arts, 2015) and a master's degree in ethnology

(University of Tartu, 2019). In my previous work, I have explored the relationship between people and landscape in the Lahemaa and Soomaa national parks. My current research focuses on how difficult heritage, including rural and urban (post-)industrial landscapes and Soviet architecture, is perceived and used in cultural tourism.



### Sanna Ryyänen

I am a Ph.D. student in Contemporary Culture Studies at the University of Jyväskylä. My dissertation is about racism in Finnish press texts. I compare the way Finnish newspapers and magazines wrote about Jews before the Second World War to the way they now write about migrants. Can old press texts with their more recognizable racism help us see the racism of our own time? What has changed in two hundred years? What has not?



### Alizée Ville

Currently a doctoral researcher at the University of Helsinki, I study different perspectives of inequalities born from the Central African forest, the Congo Basin. My work within the Department of Forest Sciences centres around historical and current timber trade, and how it affects current governance structures. One of the perspectives I am interested in is the apparent lack – a void, if you will – of trade data. Though economist by training, I have slowly shifted towards the shadows of multidisciplinary, finding my place in this protean confusion.

Being of French American nationality, living in Finland since 2021 and studying Central Africa has sharpened my interest in the ways scientists produce, disseminate and legitimize different knowledges, and how this gets filtered into action.



### Nina Vurdelja

I am a performance researcher and cultural worker. My research is based on exploring cultural practices of relating to the environment, with a special interest in bodily knowledge and how non-human nature is experienced by the senses. As a cultural worker, I am interested in the 'ecology of being together' and ways of nurturing responsive and attentive more-than-human encounters.

I have collaborated with a variety of independent and institutional cultural spaces in Serbia, Belgium and Finland. I am dedicated to fostering horizontal and artistic practices in dealing with the complexity of cultural phenomena. I am a doctoral candidate at the Centre for Practice as Research in Theatre T7 at Tampere University.

**CAA** Contemporary Art Archipelago

UNIVERSITY OF TURKU | Biodiversity

**ARCHIPELAGO RESEARCH INSTITUTE**

TURKU ARCHIPELAGO - SEILI

THURSDAY 24 AUGUST, 15:15–16:45

## Close the Borders!

Anu Almagro, Volodymyr Andrushchak, Eero Erkamo, Fiikka Forsman, Kari Kallioniemi, Jaana Kurttila, Kimi Kärki, Petri Kuljuntausta, Turku Synth Club Opera Orchestra (TSO)

**FASCINATING FASCISM AND ITS AFFECTIVE HERITAGE** in Finnish Culture is a research project that combines research and artistic activity, funded by the Kone Foundation in 2021–2024. The researchers and artists create a series of collaborative performances that will build a unified work of art (*Gesamtkunstwerk*) titled *Close the Borders!*, framed initially as a “Machine Opera”, that will be premiered in 2024. The project also produces other public events and several academic publications. In ABOAGORA 2023 the project will present its research that feeds the artistic work, as well as a workshop module that the artistic group is currently working on, with public engagement.

### Panel



Dr. **Kimi Kärki** (chair of the panel) is the director of the project. He works as Lecturer in Cultural Study of Music at the University of the Arts Helsinki (Seinäjoki campus) and holds a title of docent in Cultural Heritage Studies (University of Turku), and Area and Cultural Studies (University of Helsinki). He has mainly published on the history of stadium rock spectacles, talking machines, future imagining and fascist aesthetics in popular culture. He is also an internationally touring musician and singer-songwriter, with more than forty releases in heavy metal, progressive rock and ambient. In the project he is researching Finnish fascism, Ariosophy, and esoteric takes on *The Kalevala*.



Dr. **Kari Kallioniemi** is Senior Research Fellow in Cultural History at the University of Turku, where he also holds a title of docent. His research interests lie in the relationships between different notions of nationality, neo-right and popular culture. His recent book on the subject is *Englishness, Pop and Post-War Britain* (Intellect, 2016). His research in the project focuses on the aesthetic-exploitative play with fascism in cold war era Finnish (popular) culture.

Photo: Vesa Väärä



**Fiikka Forsman** is a theatre director with a longstanding career in a variety of productions around Finland during the last 27 years. She is the director and main writer of *Close the Borders!*

Photo: Vesa Väärä



Eero Erkamo



Jaana Kurttila

### Performance

**On stage:** Anu Almagro, Volodymyr Andrushchak, Turku Synth Club Opera Orchestra

**Director:** Fiikka Forsman

**Composer:** Petri Kuljuntausta

**Lighting Designer:** Eero Erkamo

**Costume Designer:** Jaana Kurttila

Actress Anu Almagro, opera singer Volodymyr Andruschahk and the Turku Synth Club Opera Orchestra will give an open rehearsal (fifth of its kind). The open rehearsal will be followed by reactions from the panel and discussions with the audience. These encounters will, in turn, become part of the process. The performance is in Finnish and Swedish, but the audience can participate in the conversation in English, Ukrainian, Polish and French if they wish.

Photo: Veera Tiainen



**Anu Almagro** is a Finnish actress, acting teacher and director. She works internationally around the globe. Her interest in performance work is deeply rooted in cultural traditions and born out of authentic and energetic connections between people.

Photo: Wojciech Heino



**Volodymyr Andrushchak** is a Ukrainian opera singer (baritone). He has studied music in Poland and Germany and worked and recorded with numerous vocal ensembles around Europe. He has also collaborated with the widely acclaimed Song of the Goat Theatre as singer, actor and conductor. In 2022, he created a solo musical performance in collaboration with Finnish, Polish and Ukrainian artists, based on poetry from *The Garden of*



*Divine Songs* by the Ukrainian poet and philosopher Hryhorii Skovoroda (1722–1794).

Photo: Fredrik Willberg



TSO. Teppo Toivonen, Ossi Hätönen, Markus Kaunismäki, Jaakko Penttinen and Jesse Juup.

*the Borders!*, composed by Petri Kuljuntausta and directed by Fiikka Forsman. In its concerts in 2023, TSO will also perform the opera music on its own. TSO made its first public appearance at Akusmata Polyphonic festival in January 2023, performing three pieces composed by Petri Kuljuntausta. TSO is composed of the key members of Turun syntetisaattori-seura (Turku Synth Club): **Ossi Hätönen, Jesse Juup, Markus Kaunismäki, Jaakko Penttinen** and **Teppo Toivonen**. All of them, save Penttinen, will perform at ABOAGORA.



**Petri Kuljuntausta** works as a composer, sound artist, musician and writer-researcher. As an artist, he works with environmental sounds and live-electronics and creates sound installations for galleries and museums. Kuljuntausta has performed music for an underwater audience, improvised with birds and made music from whale calls and the sounds of the northern lights. Kuljuntausta has published three books on electronic music and sound art. Over 130 electroacoustic compositions and sound works by Kuljuntausta have been published on various record labels in Europe, Australia, India and the USA. Kuljuntausta is Adjunct Professor (Docent) of Sound Art and Electronic Music (University of Turku) and a visiting lecturer at the University of the Arts Helsinki and Aalto University in Espoo.

**The Turku Synth Club Opera Orchestra** (Turun Syntetisaattori-seuran Oopperaorkesteri, TSO) is a Turku-based electronic music orchestra that was formed in 2022 to perform experimental electronic and electro-acoustic music. The first major work for the TSO in 2023 and the following years will be making music for the experimental opera *Close*

THURSDAY 24 AUGUST, 19:00–20:00

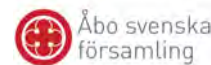
## 📍 TURKU CATHEDRAL

Concert:

## Void

Vocal Ensemble MMXX: Marika Kivinen (alto), Mats Lillhannus (tenor), Kristoffer Malm (bass), Maikki Säikkä (soprano)

**THE MUSICAL EXPLORATION** of the theme “void” starts with the home venue of the Vocal Ensemble MMXX, the magnificent Turku Cathedral, whose lofty vaults in themselves constitute an enormous void, but at the same time are packed with contexts: historical, social, religious, architectural and so on. With their programme, MMXX uses this space for a series of reflections on emptiness, labyrinths, absence, longing and sorrow. The repertoire forms a meeting of music both ancient and contemporary, stretching from Renaissance polyphony to contemporary minimalism. Among the composers featured are Guillaume de Machaut, Bernard de Cluny, Johannes Ockeghem, Pierre de la Rue, Steve Reich, John Cage and Urmas Sisask.



The concert is organised in collaboration with Åbo svenska församling.

Photo: Matilda Saarinen Fotografi



**Vocal Ensemble MMXX** was formed as a direct result of the Covid-19 pandemic which reached Finland in early 2020. The four singers suddenly found themselves without work and deeply worried about their professional future.

In order to stay in good singing shape, they started convening however the current restrictions allowed, just to sing together on a weekly basis. As restrictions were eventually eased, it became possible to develop the ensemble further, and MMXX established a bi-weekly Monday lunchtime concert series at the Turku Cathedral. The core idea of this format is to provide opportunities for anyone interested in listening to polyphonic singing in magnificent acoustics, with minimal thresholds, during a normal lunch break or the like. This cycle of 15-minute performances has been running since late 2021, with only short summer breaks. On occasion, the ensemble also make an appearance in larger-scale concerts, but for the time being the main focus remains on the lunchtime concerts.

FRIDAY 25 AUGUST, 08:15–10:00

Workshop on creative writing:

## The magic of the blank page / Tyhjän paperin lumo / Den tomma sidans förtrollning

Emilia Karjula

**FORGET ALL THE TALK ABOUT** writer's block. In this workshop we approach the empty page as an invitation. We will stay with the emptiness, studying and wondering at it, delaying the gratification of writing the first word.

Then we will write the first word, and possibly a few more.

The workshop will be an exploration of the writing process, not a lecture on how to write better, or more.

We will also do a little experiment with drawing. In this case, drawing means holding a pen to paper and moving your hand. You don't need to show anyone what your hand comes up with.

You can write in any language you like. No one needs to read or hear your writing for it to matter. Sharing anything you write is optional.

Please bring with you the thing/s you're most comfortable writing with (e.g., laptop, tablet, notebook and pen/pencil). You can also bring some paper and a pen (any kind will do) for the drawing experiment. Pens and paper will also be provided at the venue.



**Emilia Karjula** completed her Ph.D. in Creative Writing at the University of Jyväskylä in December 2020. Her doctoral thesis *Sommitellut muusat* (ntamo 2020) applied the concepts of ritual and play to the processes of creative writing. She has published short stories in literary magazines and anthologies and edited/co-edited two books on creative writing. Part of her Ph.D. was an artists' book *Museion Tarot* made in collaboration with visual

artist Eero Merimaa. Her first novel *Kuningatar Mab* will be published by S&S in 2024. Currently Emilia teaches writing at the Open University of the University of Jyväskylä.

Please note that this workshop has a cap of 15 participants and requires signing up in advance online. For details, see [aboagora.fi/programme/the-magic-of-the-blank-page/](https://aboagora.fi/programme/the-magic-of-the-blank-page/)

FRIDAY 25 AUGUST, 10:15–11:45

## Studying the Void

Timo Lähivaara, Christof Pearce, Anna Törnroos-Remes

**THE VOID IS THE PHILOSOPHICAL CONCEPT** of nothingness manifested, often discussed within metaphysics. *The void* is also relevant to several scientific disciplines such as physics, particularly astrophysics and cosmology, particle physics and material science. *The Void*, however, is seldom reflected upon when it comes to “empty spaces” underneath our feet, that is, in our soils or marine sediments. But they are there, in various forms and shapes, filled with something, nothing or perhaps many things.

In this performative session, we study voids in the soils, underground, and in marine sediments from the perspectives of marine biology and ecology, geology and paleoclimatology, as well as computational physics. We will discuss what voids are (or are not) in the different disciplines, from what or whom they exist, how we can study and “see” them, why we need to understand them and what we can learn about them from each other.

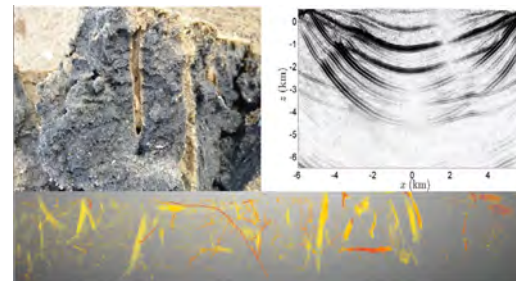


Figure. A sneak-peak into the voids of the ground (soil and sediment) that we will study in the performative session. What are they, who/what forms them and why should we care? Top-left corner (picture by Törnroos): animal-caused void structures in seafloor sediment. Top-right corner (picture by Lähivaara et al., 2015): a snapshot of seismic waves propagating through a porous aquifer. Below (picture by Pearce et al.): CT scan of marine sediment core sample with voids.



**Timo Lähivaara** is currently employed as Senior Researcher in the Computational Physics and Inverse Problems research group at the Department of Technical Physics at the University of Eastern Finland. Lähivaara's research primarily focuses on computational techniques applicable to solving wave-dominated inverse problems using high-performance computing. He is particularly interested in the potential of wave-carried information to contribute to scientific breakthroughs in various areas, such as monitoring of groundwater resources using seismic data and microwave-based drying applications.



**Christof Pearce** is Assistant Professor in Arctic Paleoclimatology and studies marine sediments as archives to reconstruct climate variability of the past. A key motivation is to investigate how the ongoing modern changes in climate and environment relate to natural variability in the past and how this knowledge can be used to understand and predict future scenarios. Pearce specializes in the reconstruction of past ice conditions, both sea ice and land-based ice sheets, on decadal to millennial time scales. He employs a wide array of methods, including micropaleontology, organic biomarkers and analyses of physical properties of sediments, and he is especially interested in chronology and improving the age determination of sedimentary layers. After studying and working in Sweden and the Netherlands, Pearce is now based at the Department of Geoscience of Aarhus University in Denmark.

Photo: Linda Svarfvar



**Anna Törnroos-Remes** is Associate Professor (tenure track) in Environmental and Marine Biology and the interdisciplinary research profile The Sea at Åbo Akademi University. Her research focuses on the functioning of coastal areas, marine environments and particularly the seafloor. She is especially interested in what organisms do in the system, that is, what roles or functions they perform and how that translates to services for us humans, such as food resources, stabilisation of coastal landscapes and carbon sequestration.

With a passion for life in the sea, her recent work also brings her across disciplines such as social science, business and technology and humanities to investigate our human relationship with the sea and marine socio-ecological challenges, or wicked problems. In this session she will act as moderator as well as a discussion participant.

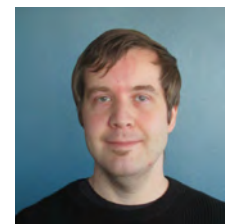
FRIDAY 25 AUGUST, 14:30–15:30

## Creativity in the Era of AI

Jari Björne, Johanna Hautala, Maria Lindeman, Tomi Paijo, Roosa Wingström

**HUMANS ARE COLLABORATING** with Artificial Intelligence (AI) that can learn and generate novel outcomes, such as images, text or music. Prominent examples include the picture-generation model Midjourney and the chatbot ChatGPT. The surge of AI raises profound questions about the nature of creativity itself: Who or what can be considered creative? How does AI contribute to the work of scientists and artists? What are the ethical implications of AI? On the one hand, AI can serve as a partner that enhances our creativity. On the other hand, it appears to lack many essential human traits. Could AI be the embodiment of the void in human creativity – the beginning and the end of the cycle?

The LuotAI project (2020–2024), funded by the Kone Foundation, investigates the intersection of human and AI creativity in the realms of science, arts, and their boundaries. In this panel session, LuotAI brings together artists and scientists to discuss the implications of AI in creativity. The panellists include LuotAI researcher, associate professor Johanna Hautala, artists Maria Lindeman and Tomi Paijo and AI Academy lecturer, Ph.D. Jari Björne. Through their own artistic and academic work, the participants search for answers to compelling questions surrounding AI and creativity.



**Jari Björne** is a docent and University Lecturer at the cross-disciplinary AI Academy project at the University of Turku. Before his Ph.D. in computer science, he worked in the field of biotechnology. Björne's research involves applications of artificial intelligence on topics such as computational linguistics and bioinformatics.



**Johanna Hautala**, Associate Professor at the University of Vaasa, conducts research on creativity, knowledge creation and innovation processes between humans and advanced technologies. She applies perspectives of space, time, place and mobility in her research. She leads several research projects in this thematic area: Co-Creativity in the Era of AI (Kone Foundation, <https://sites.utu.fi/luotai/>), Second Machine Age

Knowledge Co-Creation Processes in Space and Time (Academy of Finland, <https://sites.uwasa.fi/smak/>) and Being(s) There(s): Geographies of Knowledge Creation Processes in Extended Spaces and Times (Academy of Finland, <https://sites.uwasa.fi/beth/>).

**Maria Lindeman** holds degrees in acting (GITIS), teaching drama and acting (NOVIA and UNAM), dramaturgy and directing (SKH) and is active as a professional within all these fields. She has been teaching, working and studying in several different countries, such as Finland, Sweden, Denmark, Germany, UK, Italy and Mexico – mainly in intercultural and international contexts. Recently, her main focus has been art as interdisciplinary expression and an interactive experience, including opera and installation art. At the moment, she is studying for a Ph.D. in directing contemporary opera at Stockholm University of the Arts.



**Tomi Paijo**, a pioneering media artist, intersects art and technology to transcend traditional art boundaries. His work, ranging from installations to dynamic stage pieces, showcases the potential and complexities of artificial intelligence. Deeply comprehending the opportunities and challenges of AI, Paijo employs them as artistic inspiration, reflecting humanity's relationship with technology and prompting ethical considerations. His art tells a compelling narrative of our digital era, underscoring our evolving interaction with AI.

jo employs them as artistic inspiration, reflecting humanity's relationship with technology and prompting ethical considerations. His art tells a compelling narrative of our digital era, underscoring our evolving interaction with AI.



**Roosa Wingström** is a doctoral researcher in Economic Geography at the University of Turku and acts as the chair of the panel. In her Ph.D. thesis, she studies the processes of creativity and knowledge creation in the work of scientists and artists. Her research focuses particularly on the spatial and temporal contexts of creativity.

FRIDAY 25 AUGUST, 16:00–17:20

Theatre:

## Selfportrait - Dreams of the Life and Art of Ellen Thesleff

Anu Almagro, Johanna Jauhiainen, Jaana Kurttila, Pauli Lyytinen, Janne Teivainen, Hanna-Reetta Schreck

**SELFPORTRAIT** – *Dreams of the Life and Art of Ellen Thesleff* is a dreamlike performance based on the artist Ellen Thesleff's (1869–1954) life and work. The performance follows Thesleff's handwritten letters and pieces of art at the brink of imagination and remembrance.



Photo: Ulla-Mari Lindström

We, as a team of artists, reimagine her artistic and emotional being through all the dimensions of her expression: painting, writing and music. Our aim is to awaken Thesleff's expressions – lines and strokes – by bringing them to life on the stage through the actors' movements and sounds. We create a void, an echo, with an intent to catch the ripples of the echo of Thesleff's being.

The shape and the structure of the scenery and staging leave space for the audience's imagination and reflection.



Thesleff prepared her drawing *Selfportrait* (1894–1895) for a year. In the drawing, she looks straight at the viewer, leaving no other option but to fall into the void of her deep gaze and be fulfilled. The drawing inspired us to create new lines on stage, as if they were sketches based on her letters and paintings. Between us, Thesleff herself and her contemporaries exists a void made of time.

Thesleff travelled by train from Italy to Finland through the troubled and war-torn Europe of World War I (in the spring of 1915). Did the experience of the war not draw a line strong enough, leave a scar deep enough?

Then why should we remember? Art and cultural historian **Hanna-Reetta Schreck** reminds us that the future lies in the way we do or do not remember and understand the past. Our reflections on Thesleff's life and work create a bodily and imaginative remembrance that stretches back in time so that we can reach out into the future.

*Selfportrait – Dreams of the Life and Art of Ellen Thesleff* was first a vision created by two actors, **Johanna Jauhiainen** and **Anu Almagro**, to realize a dream-like theatrical staging based on the life and art of the artist Ellen Thesleff. The performance draws on the research conducted by art and cultural historian Hanna-Reetta Schreck on Thesleff. Schreck is now finishing her Ph.D. studies on the life and work of the artist at the University of Turku. This artistic and academic study on stage is part of her final thesis. Schreck also appears in the play. Musician **Pauli Lyytinen** paints Thesleff's reality with his live electro-acoustic music. Stage designer **Jaana Kurtila** and light designer **Janne Teivainen** create the dream-like world on stage using light, costumes and video.

Photo: Lauri Schreck



Selfportrait ensemble. Pauli Lyytinen (left), Anu Almagro, Hanna-Reetta Schreck and Johanna Jauhiainen.



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**Martin Cloonan**, Director, Turku Institute for Advanced Studies (TIAS), University of Turku

**Emilie Gardberg**, Dean, Sibelius Academy, Uniarts Helsinki

**Ruth Illman**, Director, The Donner Institute for Research in Religion and Culture, Åbo Akademi University Foundation

**Leena Kela**, Performance Artist & Curator, Executive Director of the Saari Residence and Co-Artistic Director of the International New Performance Turku Festival

**Joanna Kurth**, Project Director at The Museum Center of Turku, City of Turku

**Seppo Parkkinen**, Playwright and Dramatiser, Kolmas tila – Tredje Rummet – Third Space

**Hannu Salmi**, Professor, Cultural History, University of Turku

**Cecilia Sahlgren**, Professor, Cell Biology, Åbo Akademi University

**Ilari Sääksjärvi**, Professor, Head of the Biodiversity Unit, University of Turku

**Timo Tanskanen**, Dean, Arts Academy at Turku University of Applied Sciences

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City of Turku

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WE THANK ALL OF THE STUDENT ASSISTANTS FOR THEIR  
INDISPENSABLE HELP THROUGHOUT THE EVENT!

Photos: **Pekko Vasantola** (cover, pages 8, 14, 41)

Layout: **Frida Backman**

## Past events

**ABOAGORA 2022** The Five Rings: Wind

**ABOAGORA 2021** The Five Rings: Fire

**ABOAGORA 2020** The Five Rings: Water

**ABOAGORA 2019** The Five Rings: Earth

**ABOAGORA 2018** The Threads of Fate: Burden/Skuld

**ABOAGORA 2017** The Threads of Fate: Becoming/Verđandi

**ABOAGORA 2016** The Threads of Fate: Fate/Urđr

**ABOAGORA 2015** Precious Moments – Extreme Events

**ABOAGORA 2014** Chaos and Cosmos

**ABOAGORA 2013** The Human Machine

**ABOAGORA 2012** The Power of the Sacred and the Secular

**ABOAGORA 2011** Rethinking Enlightenment

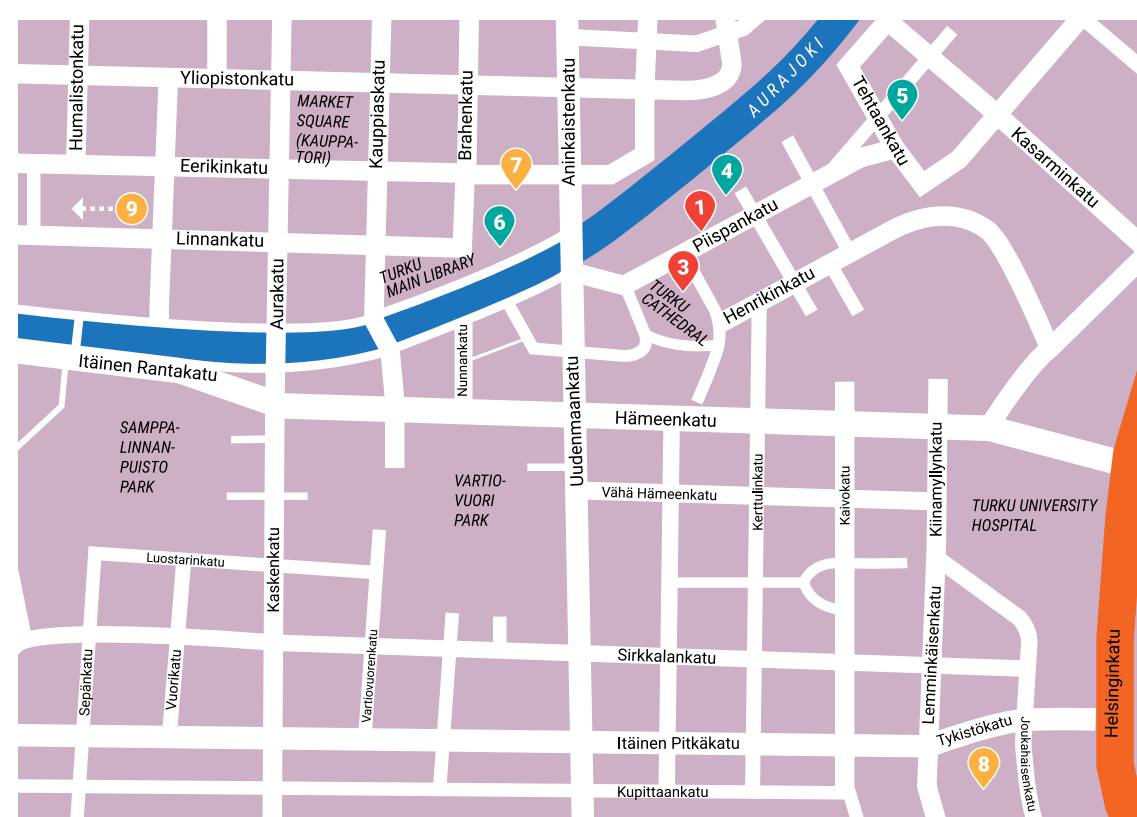
*ABOAGORA is a joint effort by the University of Turku, Åbo Akademi University, the Arts Academy of Turku University of Applied Sciences, and the Donner Institute for Research in Religion and Culture, which is attached to the Åbo Akademi University Foundation.*



Photos: Pekko Vasantola

## Notes

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.



### ABOAGORA venues

1. Sibelius Museum (Piispankatu 17)
2. Saaronniemi Beach, Ruissalo (Saarontie 59) *Not pictured on the map*
3. Turku Cathedral (Tuomiokirkonkatu 1)

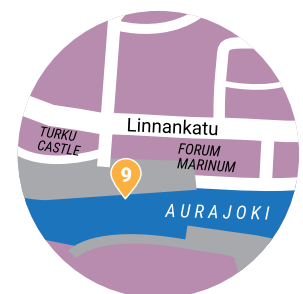
### Suggested lunch restaurants

4. Grädda (Piispankatu 15)
5. Fabbes Café (Tehtaankatu 6)
6. Tiirikkala (Linnankatu 3)

### Accommodation

7. Hotel Scandic Julia (Eerikinkatu 4)
8. Original Sokos Hotel Kupittaa (Joukahaisenkatu 6)
9. Hostel Ship S/S Bore (Linnankatu 72)

ONLINE MAP: [aboagora.fi/info](https://aboagora.fi/info)







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RESEARCH INSTITUTE**

TURKU ARCHIPELAGO - SEILI



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församling



SIBELIUSMUSEUM



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