

How to study the spectator's process of value creation?

Case study of contemporary dance spectators

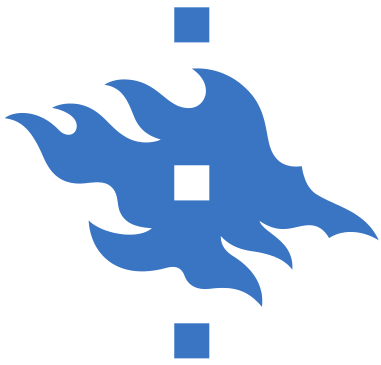
iNarpa Symposium on current audience research across artforms

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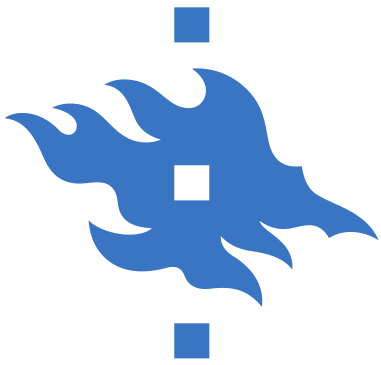
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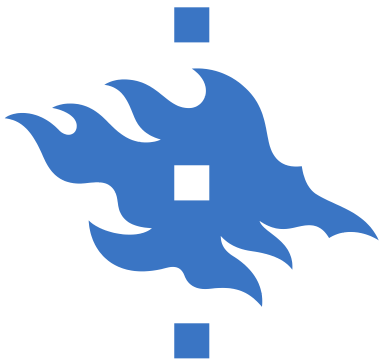
The process of value creation

- Dynamic process:
 - The interaction of artists, producers and spectators.
 - The circulation of multiple meanings and values between the production and reception of performances.
 - Based on embodied experiences; emotions, affects and feelings are intertwined with meanings and values.
 - Value judgments are essential for the continuity of the process.
- Focus: How to bring out the variety of meanings and values, which spectators create in their embodied experiences?



Method

- Qualitative interviews combined with creative workshop (Gauntlett 2007, Reason 2010, Radbourne, Johanson, Glow 2013)
- Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (Smith, Flowers, Larkin 2009)
- I try to make sense of how the participants make sense of the performance, what it meant for them and what they appreciated in it.
- Engagement in creative task can bring about some of the feelings and thoughts connected to the experience more vividly than just talking (Gauntlett 2007, 23).



The case study

- Zodiak Center for New Dance in Helsinki
- Performance: *Epic Failing* by Maija Hirvanen in the fall of 2015
- 10 participants
- Semi-structured interviews
- Creative workshop

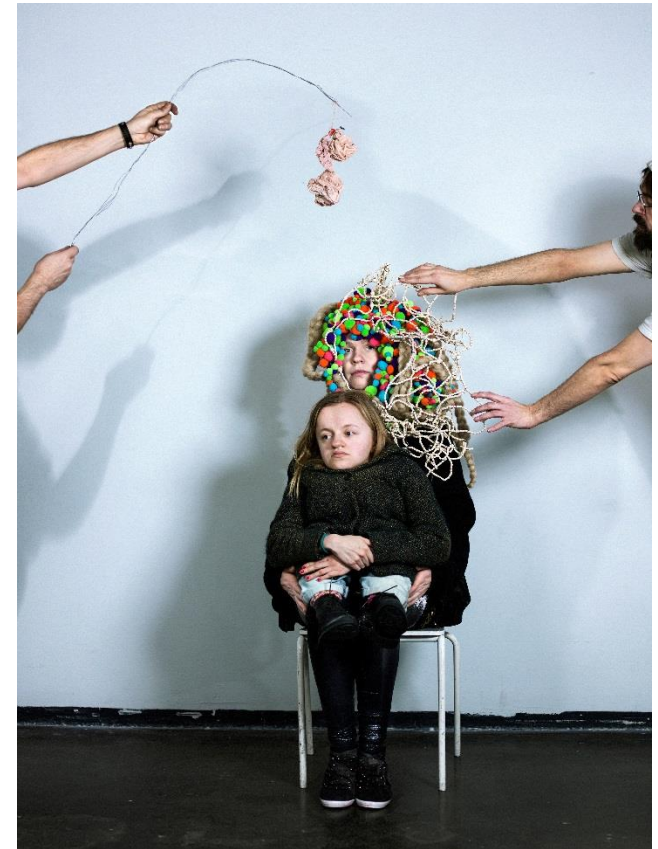


Promotion picture of *Epic Failing*: Maija Karhunen (left) and Maija Hirvanen, photo: Aki-Pekka Sinikoski, Zodiak Center for New Dance

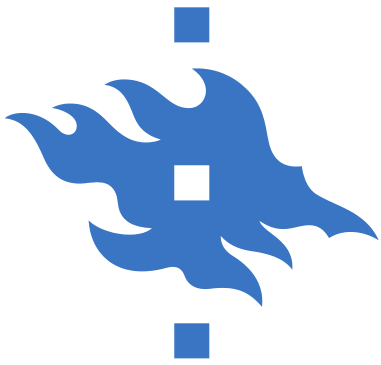


Semi-structured interviews

- Interests, expectations, previous experiences of performances, definitions of contemporary dance...
- Recurring themes and metaphors:
 - "the desire to be touched and moved"
 - "feeling that performers are naturally as themselves and devoted to the performance"
 - "mere technical virtuosity leaves cold"
 - "the feeling of bewilderment is a good sign"



Epic Failing: Maija Karhunen (in front) and Maija Hirvanen, photo: Aki-Pekka Sinikoski



Epic Failing, premiere 11.11.2015 Zodiak Center for New Dance

Evening of two separate duets choreographed by Maija Hirvanen



Creatures from the dark: Pasi Mäkelä (left) & Maija Hirvanen,
photo: Aki-Pekka Sinikoski

After you: Maija Karhunen & Maija Hirvanen, photo: Aki-Pekka Sinikoski





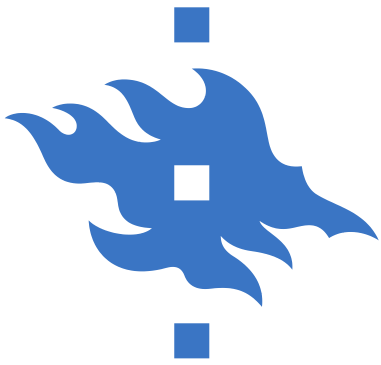
Creative workshop

Making of a collage or installation from various materials.



"The bewilderment over watching very different bodies on stage... so that you need to look at them as a performance and ask yourself 'do I accept this' is something that has remained running through my mind..."

Kahlehdittu? (Chained?) and Evoluutio (Evolution), Male 59.



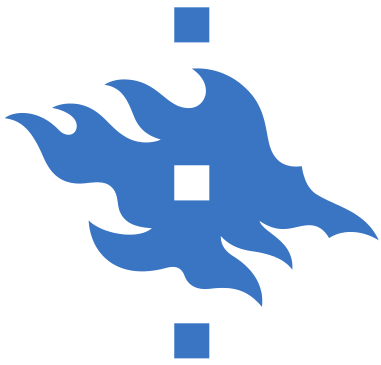
Central feelings and meanings?

- A bewildering experience at first.
 - different bodies on stage,
 - the furry costumes covering the whole body,
 - slow, minimalistic, pedestrian and obscure movement.
- But also honest, peaceful and trusting atmosphere.
- Considerations about:
 - Acceptance of differences.
 - Embodiment of the feeling of failure.
 - Ambivalence and obscurity of human life.



So what?

- Method made it possible for the participants to reflect on their experiences.
- Spectators desire to make meaning and find value in their experiences.
- Seek for "the feeling of being affected"
- The intentions of the artists are secondary.
- Over positive evaluations?
- Bring out the embodied basis of the process of value creation?



Thank you!

- Questions and comments?
- References:
 - Gauntlett, David. 2007. *Creative Explorations: New Approaches to Identities and Audiences*. New Ed edition. London ; New York: Routledge.
 - Radbourne, Jennifer, Hilary Glow, and Katya Johanson, eds. 2013. *The Audience Experience: A Critical Analysis of Audiences in the Performing Arts (Hardback)*. Intellect
 - Reason, Matthew. 2010a. “Asking the Audience: Audience Research and the Experience of Theatre.” *About Performance: Audiencing. The Work of The Spectator in Live Performance* 2010 (10): 15–34.
 - ———. 2010b. “Watching Dance, Drawing the Experience and Visual Knowledge.” *Forum for Modern Language Studies* 46 (4): 391–414. <https://doi.org/10.1093/fmls/cqq014>.