

OK Talk



Design Dialogues Between Helsinki and London



Making Places in Helsinki

Issue 1 of 3, September 2010:

Four Brunch Events and a Morning Paper

OK Talk brings together designers, artists and theorists from Finland and Britain to talk about emerging questions in design philosophy and strategic design. The series of four breakfast 'talks', accompanied by the morning paper you are holding, starts at Helsinki Design Week on 4 September, and travels to London Design Festival as part of the pop-up restaurant and exhibition HEL YES! on 18, 23 and 25 September.

The series of events consists of four brunch discussions, one in Helsinki and three in London, dealing with a total of three topics – Making Places, Strategies of Participation and Borderlands – exploring social, cultural and ethical viewpoints around different applications of design. Twenty designers and artists have been invited to attend the OK Talk sessions, each consisting of a panel discussion informed by a brief presentation of list-making and cross-question tasks given to the participants before the event and featured in this paper. In addition to the speakers, a small professional audience has been invited to join the events.

In putting together OK Talk, we were inspired by the Brutally Early Club, a project by one of the OK Talk participants, Markus Miessen – together with Hans-Ulrich Obrist – about meeting up to think and discuss in London cafés before the rest of the world wakes up. Having learned that creative work often happens outside of office hours (through personal experience!), we believe that off-schedule and intimate environments, like homes – combined with good food – create a fruitful framework for discussion.

Aiming to further establish a critical and intriguing dialogue between creative practitioners in Finland and Britain, we met up with the OK Talk participants before the events to discuss their varying interests and the methods through which they will approach the topics as part of the panel discussion. In addition to presenting the speakers to the audience, we wanted to introduce them to each other through a participatory narrative in print, supported by lists and questions. After the events, another tabloid will be published presenting insights, questions and propositions that came up during the talks. The events will also be documented online at www.ok-do.eu and www.helyes.fi.

OK, let's talk!

Anni Puolakka & Jenna Sutela, OK Do
September 2010, Helsinki

OK Talk is curated by OK Do, and produced in collaboration with the Finnish Institute in London, with help from Helsinki Design Week and the British Council's Creative Cities project.



Jenna Sutela and Anni Puolakka (photograph by Kaarle Hurtigl).

OK Do – A Creative Practice for Thinking and Doing

OK Do is a year old creative practice founded by two designers and writers, Anni Puolakka (b. 1983) and Jenna Sutela (b. 1983). Originally from Helsinki, OK Do is currently based also in Paris and London. It operates through an online publication as well as events and projects, bridging design, art and science with an interest in the future.

OK Do explores the roles and methods of the new designer with an aim to cultivate interdisciplinary discussion and exchange. Its most recent undertakings include *Science Poems*, an independent project on the poetry of natural sciences that manifested itself in a book and a travelling exhibition; *Double Happy*, a publication on emerging Finnish and Chinese architecture for the Shanghai World Expo; as well as *Clues to Open Helsinki*, a series of ideas for a better city created in collaboration with Sitra, the Finnish Innovation Fund.

www.ok-do.eu

Colophon

Editors: Anni Puolakka & Jenna Sutela, OK Do
Graphic design and art direction: Åh

Proofreading: Sarah Trounce
Printer: Lehtispät Oy

Programme

OK Talk Helsinki

Making Places

Saturday 4 September at ONNI home shop,
Kulmakatu 5 a 4, Helsinki

Breakfast and discussion 11:30-13:30
Bryan Boyer, Hanna Harris, Amanda Levete, Markus
Miessen, Nene Tsuboi

Ticket: a breakfast ingredient specified in an e-mail
following registration

OK Talk London

Making Places

Saturday 18 September at HEL YES!, Wenlock Road
1-3, London

Breakfast and discussion 11:30-13:30
Åbäke with Nene Tsuboi, Sarah Ichioka, Teemu
Suviola, Tuomas Toivonen and Finn Williams

Free entry

Restaurant open for breakfast orders. For menu
and prices, please see www.helyes.fi.

Strategies of Participation

Thursday 23 September at HEL YES!, Wenlock Road
1-3, London

Breakfast and discussion 8:30-10:30
HyperMarketo, Ulla-Maaria Engeström, Suvi
Saloniemi and TBC with special breakfast by Antto
Melasniemi. Please check www.ok-do.eu for updates.

Ticket: any breakfast ingredient

Borderlands

Saturday 25 September at HEL YES!, Wenlock Road
1-3, London

Breakfast and discussion 11:30-13:30
Revital Cohen, Martti Kalliala, Zak Kyes, Max Lamb
and Aamu Song

Free entry

Restaurant open for breakfast orders. For menu
and prices, please see www.helyes.fi.

Registrations and inquiries: hello@ok-do.eu



ONNI Home shop: Kulmakatu 5 a 4, Helsinki. © 2010 Google – Map data © 2010 Geocentre Consulting, Tele Atlas.



London Newcastle Depot, 1-3 Wenlock Road, N1 7SL, London. © 2010 Google – Map data © 2010 Geocentre Consulting, Tele Atlas.

Event Themes

Making Places

Making Places takes a fresh view on spatial practice. It studies both existing and imaginary places, looking at their creation, evolution and essence. The speakers for the two Making Places talks, one in Helsinki and another one in London, range from architects that build, design systems or make music; to researchers and designers who create places through cultural activities or visual identities. Using Helsinki and London as starting points, we will encourage the discussion to revolve freely around placemaking in relation to day and night, the natural and the man-made, infrastructure and spirit of spaces, cities and citizens, or planning and spontaneity.

Strategies of Participation

Strategies of Participation explores the design of encounters, interactions and collaborations. Having used tools and methods such as intuition, friends, different media, travelling, coffee and the paper that you are holding in making OK Talk, we are keen on learning new ways to design participation. The panelists include creative professionals in the fields of interaction design and cultural production specialising in events, online platforms or exhibitions. They are invited to share their skills and insights on creating constructive collisions between people.

Borderlands

Borderlands looks at the crossing of boundaries between design, art and other fields with an emphasis on collaborative practices. The idea of this talk is to discuss the role of the designer in the increasingly interconnected world where we see the ambiguity of professional identity, often connected with varied locations, people and modes of practice, as a positive quality. What can working in between disciplines offer for creative professionals and the world at large? How are design processes changing? The speakers will tackle these questions through their backgrounds that vary from architecture and music to critical and experimental design, to publishing and curating.

The Breakfast Menu and Concept

Antto Melasniemi's Breakfast Facility

The breakfast menu at the OK Talk events is based on an idea by Antto Melasniemi, OK Do's favourite Helsinki chef. Having dreamt of a space, a "food facility", that would enable people to come and make food for themselves under the guidance of a helpful instructor and have a restaurant of their own for a day, Melasniemi came up with a plan to ask people to bring breakfast ingredients with them to two of the events: OK Talk Helsinki on 4 September and OK Talk London on 23 September. The coffee and talks are on OK Do.

In Helsinki, at ONNI home shop, the owner of the house, Tuula Pöyhönen, will act as the instructor together with OK Do, organising a mini workshop and helping people make breakfast out of the ingredients appointed to them upon registering for the event. In London, the participants will be given free reign to choose the ingredients and Melasniemi's task is to make different imaginative breakfast dishes out of them. At the other London events on 18 and 25 September, the temporary HEL YES! restaurant by Melasniemi will be open for Saturday brunch orders.



Antto Melasniemi (photograph by Aino Huovio).

Antto Melasniemi

Antto Melasniemi (b. 1975) is a Finnish restaurateur and hospitality entrepreneur as well as Food Facilitator of the OK Talk events and Executive Chef of HEL YES! pop-up restaurant at London Design Festival. He is known not only for his culinary events and two concept restaurants, Ateljé Finne and Kuurna in Helsinki, but also as an innovator in the other cultural spheres of music, art and design.

Melasniemi is interested in food as a social phenomenon and food as language. "Food has the ability to break down walls in different situations," he says. "Rather than being a very technical chef, I enjoy working with conceptual ideas and performances related to eating and restaurants, as well as collaborating with friends from different fields." At the moment, in addition to working with OK Do for OK Talk and the Finnish Institute in London for the HEL YES! pop-up restaurant, Melasniemi is planning different projects with designers such as Martí Guixé.

Interested in experimenting outside five-year plans required for eateries with heavy equipment and many employees, Melasniemi does not like to restrict himself when it comes to the time or place where food is served. And his previous projects have proved the infrastructure of dining rather flexible, too. "I organised an event in Helsinki where every participant was offered a dinner in exchange for an old plate and a story of its journey," Melasniemi explains. "This jumble of crockery ended up at the tables of HEL YES! restaurant, where they are used for dining. All the plates are also documented online with a story included." In general, Melasniemi is building a mobile machinery around his food practice. Designed in collaboration with interior architect Linda Bergroth, the kitchen for the HEL YES! project is easy also to move around. "The ovens, stoves and fridges are completely mobile," he says. "They are easy to connect with different water and electricity sources."

When it comes to food, Melasniemi likes to focus on substance rather than decorative elements. Having worked his way through restaurants in London, Paris and Amsterdam, Melasniemi is currently preoccupied with the delicacies of primitive Finnish cuisine as well as traditional cooking methods, which he likes to imitate and develop. "Finnish food is typically more about pure ingredients than, for example, restaurant culture," Melasniemi says. Hunting and gathering vegetables, fish and people, he is working hard at designing and producing a range of events around and about food.

www.ateljefinne.fi
www.kuurna.fi

Bryan Boyer

Bryan Boyer (b. 1980) is a Californian architect working as Design Lead at Sitra, the Finnish Innovation Fund, an independent fund overseen by the Finnish Parliament. Moving to Helsinki after his graduation from Harvard Graduate School of Design, his current task is to design systemic change that maintains Finland's well-being. He also designs buildings occasionally.

"In a building you're organising systems," Boyer explains when we asked how his work differs from the traditional role of an architect. "Those systems, like plumbing or electrical systems, usually have physical manifestations, and co-ordinating all those systems into a single outcome, from the very beginning to the end, is the magic of architecture. At Helsinki Design Lab we apply the methods and mind-set of design to large-scale challenges such as health care, climate change education, and so on."

Currently working on Helsinki Design Lab, an initiative of Sitra that aims to advance strategic design as a new discipline in tackling the problems of the interdependent world, one of Boyer's main goals is to help government leaders see the "architecture of problems" – the big picture. Boyer sees Sitra as a great asset for the future of Finland: "It's somewhere between an independent think tank and an investment organisation." He also considers it valuable to have people from outside of Finland working at Sitra. "If you look at almost any of the great successes in the past, be they individuals, businesses, nations or otherwise, the conclusion is that melting pots that bring together a mix of different qualities are extremely productive. The big challenge for Finland is to think what it has to offer for the world, to define its global role."

What are the concrete design methods for enhancing the viability of this small, Northern place and its inhabitants, then? "In order to deliver strategic improvement, as opposed to the sluggish evolutionary change that the market alone will offer, we're pursuing projects that not only demonstrate the viability of achieving the goals of society at large, like dramatically lowering carbon emissions, but leave in their wake a set of tools for others to use," Boyer explains. He thinks that the country is, due to its small size, well-positioned to redefine its role in a world that is currently undergoing a great change: "Finland has the potential to be very agile and to experiment – evolving and offering ideas for the rest of the world."

www.bryanboyer.com
www.hdl2010.org



Bryan Boyer's (photograph by Ivo Corda) list of ideas for Helsinki:

1. Continue the effort to upgrade the city's cycling infrastructure in both quantity and quality. This is an amazing asset and it's a beautiful city to bike around if you don't have to worry about getting run over.
2. For a country that dedicates so much care to the middle in other regards, medium-sized spaces are in short supply. Interiors of homes, shops, and offices tend to be tiny or huge which limits growth.
3. Helsinki is an intriguing mystery. Can it be more welcoming without losing this quality?
4. Under Russia, this city played a role as pivot between east and west. Now Finnair aims to reclaim this position in a different way. Is the city ready to think beyond tourism and into multiculturalism?
5. Stop peeing everywhere.



Clues to Open Helsinki project (www.ctuestoopenhelsinki.fi) by Sitra and OK Do presented a bundle of hints about what might make Helsinki a more open and happier place. Illustration by Nene Tsuboi.

Are outposts such as the Finnish Institute in London more relevant than embassies?

Bryan Boyer's question to Hanna Harris

Helsinki, September 2010

Hanna Harris

Hanna Harris (b. 1976) is a Finnish-British curator, producer and urban researcher who works as the Arts & Culture Programme Director at the Finnish Institute in London. Her current projects include HEL YES!, the host event for OK Talk, that manifests itself as a pop-up restaurant and exhibition commissioned by the Finnish Institute and created by some of the most interesting Finnish designers of today. Harris has previously worked as a producer and concept designer for festivals and television.

"My task is to identify emerging ideas and projects within Finnish contemporary arts and culture and amplify them in collaboration with the right British and Irish partners," Harris describes. "We try to build meaningful bridges between the two places. In practice, I'm constantly looking for Finnish individuals and collectives who would be interesting for the British society, and vice versa." Currently, the Institute is focusing on projects that explore changing spaces, be they physical, social or imaginary. According to Harris, the most awarding part of her job is to create new encounters. She sees her work as a match that, when thrown into the right puddle of petrol, "flames up" and catalyses new partnerships, projects and ultimately, new perspectives on society.

At the moment, against the backdrop of Helsinki preparing to step up as World Design Capital in 2012, the Finnish Institute is focusing on design – "and especially new thinking and practice in the field", Harris says. In the temporary restaurant HEL YES!, design and food work together towards building encounters. Finding the right venue [the Londonewcastle Depot located on Wenlock Road near Old Street] for the event was important: "the disused warehouse with its large outdoor area offers a blank canvas for the designers to manipulate, but also provides a surprising platform for social experiences," Harris explains. "The designers are creating a camp-like atmosphere to dine and mingle in. In the end the people and the physical aspects of the space merge and open up a window for something special."

Harris' post at the Institute is complemented by her doctoral research in the area of urban studies. "The starting points for my research are the different cultural processes and activities that take place through using – or 'misusing' – spaces. For example, the night interests me as a particular kind of clandestine urban space," Harris explains. In her research, she is currently exploring how public city spaces are imagined in and shaped, or 'screened' as she calls the process, through street media practices." As an architect's daughter I'm taken by impressive buildings but, in the end, it's people who make the places by engaging with them," she concedes.

www.finnish-institute.org.uk

An OK Do event at Helsinki Design Week and London Design Festival



Hanna Harris' (photograph by Kristina McArthur) list of methods for placemaking:

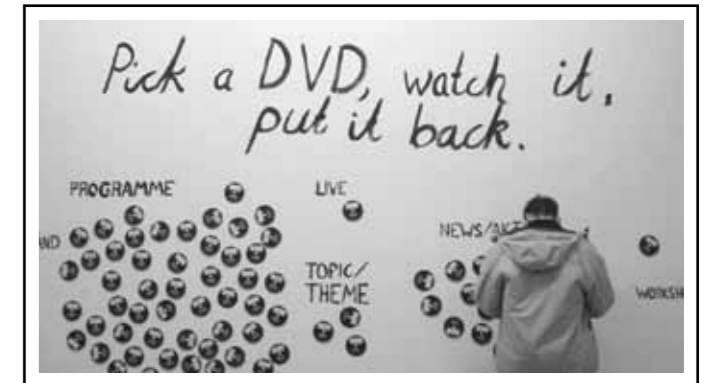
1. Walk: Walking has always been a crucial method for capturing the city and its central arteries, the streets. From aimless flânerie to artist-led walks (among my favourites are projects by Francis Alys or Janet Cardiff and George Bures Miller); systematic urban pilgrimages (such as Iain Sinclair's walk around London's orbital motorway the M25) to everyday walks; vote with your feet and engage with the city.
2. Urban media: Nurture and explore the relationship between people and their media in the city. From "street television" to activist media, from community broadcasting to artist led projects developing new content, technologies and production models, the new practices of urban media are screening the city from surprising angles and, in the process, creating public spaces that matter. Listen, look and amplify what's out there.
3. Night spaces: The city at night is a different space from the 9-5 city of work and production. A space of dreams and loneliness, pleasure and fear; the nocturnal city opens up important questions of access and imagination alike. Artists and designers can offer unique explorations into the future of the urban night.



Installation view of the Meta7Medium project by the Italian Telestreet Orfeo Tv from the 'Satellite of Love' exhibition and broadcast event at Witte de With, Rotterdam, 26.1.-26.3.2006 (photograph by Hanna Harris).



Installation view from the 'HEL?' exhibition (Hanna Harris, Antti Lassila, Tommi Mäkynen, Tuomas Toivonen), Gallery Pro-funders, Cable Factory, Helsinki, 3.4.-3.5.2003. The exhibition offered 'free help for the growing aches of the metropolis' and the wall provided a platform for debate within the gallery (photograph by Hanna Harris).



Installation view of the TV TV info wall from the 'Satellite of Love' exhibition and broadcast event at Witte de With, Rotterdam, 26.1.-26.3.2006 (photograph by Hanna Harris).

You have currently been involved in the Serpentine Gallery's Skills Exchange Project in which artists, designers and architects work in collaboration with older people, care workers, young people and activists to develop ideas for social and architectural change in London. How do you think a cultural organisation such as a gallery can best set up a space and model for what you call "conflictual participation" to take place? Hanna Harris' question for Markus Miessen

Markus Miessen

Markus Miessen (b. 1978) is an internationally operating architect, consultant and writer. In 2002 he set up Studio Miessen, a collaborative agency for spatial strategy and cultural analysis, and in 2007 was a founding partner at nOffice, an architectural practice based in Berlin and London. Miessen is also a doctoral candidate at the Centre for Research Architecture at Goldsmiths, London, investigating conflict- and non-consensus-based forms of participation in spatial practice, as well as Professor for Temporary Architecture at the Hochschule für Gestaltung in Karlsruhe.

According to Miessen, architecture with a capital "A" almost doesn't exist anymore. "There is no more money and most large projects have been eaten up by multinational developers," he says. "It's important to ask questions and use this crisis, which is both an economic crisis and a crisis of content production, as an opportunity to develop new models of practice."

His recent book 'The Nightmare of Participation (Crossbench Praxis as a Mode of Criticality)' (Sternberg Press 2010), suggests a model of "conflictual participation" where an uninterested outsider or uninvited participant enters the (architectural) arena with creative intellect and the will to generate change. "It's all about approaching topics and alien fields of knowledge with a healthy naivety, from the perspective of an amateur who is willing to generate change," Miessen explains. "The questions asked by an outsider are genuine, because he or she is not looking for a consensus, but an answer."

Miessen likes to refer to architect and writer Cedric Price who once said that an unhappy couple might be better advised to get a divorce rather than build their dream house. "According to Price, an architectural building or project does not have to be an object; it does not necessarily have to be physical," he says.

In the same vein, Miessen is interested in temporary spaces, and spaces as "magnets and enablers" These concepts are tackled, for example, in nOffice's spatial hybrids for two Biennials, Performa 2009 and Manifesta 2010, which can be understood as content production machines beyond the traditional definition of a gallery, library, archive, bar, or cultural centre. The projects work as a kind of spatial inquiry in order to find out more about how people behave in such spaces and what effect their inhabitation has in regard to the content of the space – another model of architecture out of the ordinary.

www.studiomiessen.com
<http://noffice.eu>



ACAF June 2010 (photographs by Pablo Ferao).

WSME 2008 (design by Zak Kyles).

Performa Hub (photographs by Paula Court).

Markus Miessen's (photograph by Armin Linke) list of tools needed to make a place:

1. Space
2. Content
3. Conviction
4. People

Archive Kabinett (photographs by Chiara Figone).

Thinking through alternative notions of city planning and the – sometimes romantic – idea of the action of the individual as generative force, could you please elaborate on your understanding of custom spaces in the city. Is there a hidden potential for such self-initiated processes of customisation to essentially become modes of corruption, which – through their potential as breakages and stoppages – can mobilise a different kind of urbanism?

Markus Miessen's question to Nene Tsuboi

Helsinki, September 2010

Nene Tsuboi

Nene Tsuboi (b. 1976) is a Japanese graphic designer and artist living in Helsinki since 1999. She started her work with ANTEEKSI collective in 2001, already then working in a multidisciplinary environment with architects, fashion designers and furniture designers, organising fashion shows for buildings and dressing up furniture. "Tasting a bit of different fields," as she puts it. It was at ANTEEKSI where Tsuboi also met Tuomas Toivonen, her husband and partner at NOW for Architecture and Urbanism since 2005.

"We wanted to create a machine that can do everything we want to," says Tsuboi, explaining the idea behind NOW office. "Something very wide. More than one person can do." Creating the company was the project in the beginning. "Unlike architecture offices normally start, we had no project – but a company first," she says. "And we were willing to take on very different types of work."

Coming from Japan, Tsuboi finds it interesting how a certain culture of monopoly reigning in Finland, when it comes to things like the main newspaper, the national broadcasting system or the one and only department store, can give life to varied roles in individuals. "Compared to Japan, where there's so much of everything and someone is typically only a mother or a special craftsman at one time, in Finland people have many roles in the society," Tsuboi argues. In the same vein, Tsuboi is interested in non-typical ways of working in the city where the boundaries between design, manufacturing and marketing are blurred. As an example, she mentions Salakauppa, a small kiosk in the centre of Helsinki put up by two designers, Aamu Song and Johan Olin, who not only design but also make and sell their products on the spot. "In this kind of activity, there are no typical outcomes," she says.

Tsuboi claims that many of her projects with NOW are based on the idea of giving people spaces and seeing what kind of places they make out of them. "It's all about the freedom of using spaces and living in them," she says. "Tuomas and I are always developing ideas about how we want to live. At the moment, our bedroom is on one side of the city in a one-room flat and our living room is on the other side of it in a big office space. Next, we would like to build our own space by the waterfront at the tip of the Kalasatama harbour. We want to make it the oldest building in the new neighbourhood, and we want to start with building a public sauna, this is the traditional way to start construction in Finland – building a sauna house first and then the main house." Ten years from now, Tsuboi dreams of being a sauna owner. "It's a comforting idea to have a proper profession waiting for me, making people happy, clean and relaxed," she says. "Public sauna is urban culture."

www.nowoffice.org
www.nenetsuboi.com



"I'm doing things I can't do." (photographs by Nene Tsuboi).



Nene Tsuboi's (photograph by Heritta Kiiskil) list of things that she would take with her on a deserted island:

1. Tuomas Toivonen. He can handle many things that I can't. He's entertaining and good company.

I think places are made of overlapping layers of people's interests, activities, dreams or ideas. And spaces don't always become places... So, my question is how can architecture create spaces which become places?

Nene Tsuboi's question to Amanda Levete

An OK Do event at Helsinki Design Week and London Design Festival

Amanda Levette

Amanda Levette (b.1955) is an award-winning London architect and designer. She founded her practice, Amanda Levette Architects (AL_A) in 2009 together with Alvin Huang, Kwamina Monney and Ho-Yin Ng, following the end of her 20 year partnership with the late Jan Kaplicky at Future Systems architecture and design office. She is a visiting professor at the Royal College of Art as well as a regular TV and radio broadcaster.

"Architecture embodies values that go to our very core," Amanda Levette says. "I think that architecture more than art, touches on the most fundamental aspects of what it is to be human; it holds cultural and social meaning, it places us in a cultural and historical context, it provokes emotions, it changes the way we interact, the way we think about ourselves – it shapes the way we live our lives." Instead of distinguishing itself from art, however, Levette's architecture is very much connected to it. She has recently collaborated with the Turner Prize winning sculptor Anish Kapoor on a Naples metro station that is, in her words, a fully-functioning work of art in which purpose and beauty are synthesised. The process of making it explored the borderland between design and art. Levette explains that in the project "the eternal tension between form and function was tested to its limits yet the resulting work preserves the singularity of purpose and conceptual integrity".

The station, an aluminium form that appears almost impossibly supported as it slips into the void below, demonstrates Levette's interest in challenging conventions and the expected. "It's important for me to make a contribution, however small, to the wider debate about the significance and meaning of design through the merging of diametrically opposed elements: physical and metaphysical, organic and man-made, digitally-generated and handcrafted," she says.

Amongst other projects, AL_A is currently working on a new media campus for News Corporation, one of the largest developments in London, as well as on a proposal for a high-rise building in East London. As an extension of their design research agenda, the office also uses the design of furniture and objects – in collaboration with, for example, Established & Sons – to explore architectural ideas and test material possibilities at a smaller, more intimate scale. When asked about their design philosophy, Amanda says that the ethos of the office is rooted in design research and exploration of the transformative potential of spaces. "For me, the most important aspect about placemaking is to question our established perceptions and use of space," she states.

www.amandalevetearchitects.com



Amanda Levette's (photo courtesy of Amanda Levette Architects) list of research questions for placemaking:

1. How can we combine creativity (design) with innovation (entrepreneurship) to tackle major social needs and to achieve positive social change?
2. How can we use design research and imaginative use of new technology to influence policy?

How can we create a climate where value is placed on unrestricted thinking?

Amanda Levette's question for Bryan Boyer

Helsinki, September 2010

Helsinki Event Venue and Collaborators

The venue of OK Talk Helsinki: Tuula Pöyhönen's ONNI home shop

Tuula Pöyhönen is one of our favourite Helsinki figures for two reasons: she is uncompromising in both what she says and what she does. Fashion designer by background, Pöyhönen runs a family, a studio and a shop called ONNI (happiness or luck in Finnish) in her home; an old textile factory turned into loft apartments. ONNI is also the home for OK Talk Helsinki on 4 September, and Pöyhönen will hold a mini breakfast workshop with OK Do for the guests who will be asked to present their ingredients as they arrive.

ONNI was started in 2009 by Pöyhönen and her friend who first rented a small space in Helsinki's Punavuori for the shop. In the end, Pöyhönen took charge of the shop and moved ONNI to her home. Nowadays the shop features her own design products that range from clothes and clogs to different accessories. "It felt ridiculous to keep the flat empty the whole day and rent a space for a shop where I couldn't work on my products," Pöyhönen says of her decision to take ONNI home. "This way, I can combine design work and shop-keeping just like the clothiers, shoemakers and other similar professionals did in the olden times. Also, it makes integrating family and work life easier."

Keeping ONNI open by appointment or whenever she's at home, Pöyhönen also lends the space for other purposes such as events like OK Talk. When asked if it ever feels uncomfortable to have her home open for the public, she says: "I don't think about it that much. In addition to the shop, the apartment has been used for photo and film shoots. And if I take on design commissions, I often invite the clients over – I think that showing the atmosphere of my home is a good way to convey to them the mentality that underpins my design. Sometimes I'm wondering if it's dumb to open your home and life, but then again, I haven't got anything to hide. If a visitor feels uneasy entering a place that is my home, it's not really my problem. For me, it has always been easier to invite people to my place and give – rather than go to others' and receive."

Pöyhönen also explains that, although she works at home, collaboration with other people is important for her. "People come to my place and we barter. I sew curtains for my photographer and I'm also lucky enough to have a graphic designer as a husband," she says. "Despite working at home, I don't want to isolate myself – but work with others." What made Pöyhönen invite OK Talk to her home, then? "I'm inspired by discussions in good company. And home is the right place for them."

www.onni.eu



Tuula Pöyhönen (photograph by Paavo Lehtonen) at ONNI home shop.

The Finnish Institute in London

The Finnish Institute is a London-based private trust who invited OK Do to curate and produce a series of discussion events for their HEL YES! project. The mission of the institute is to identify emerging issues in contemporary society and to facilitate social change. Working with artists, researchers, experts and policy makers in Finland, the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland, the Institute aims to promote strong networks in the field of culture and social studies.

www.finnish-institute.org.uk

Åh

The practice behind the art direction of OK Talk is Åh, a Finnish-Swedish multidisciplinary creative studio based in East London. Established in 2008 by Johanna Lundberg (b. 1982) and Elin Svensson (b. 1981), our collaboration with Åh has been close ever since they created the visual identity for OK Do.

www.ah-studio.com

Helsinki Design Week

Helsinki Design Week is a city-wide event encompassing design, architecture and fashion. First organised in 2005, the event offers visitors exhibitions, seminars, workshops, fashion shows and shopping experiences, as well as open days in private homes, public buildings and design studios. This year Helsinki Design Week tells the stories behind the creations and processes involved in design.

www.helsinkidesignweek.com

British Council's Creative Cities project

Creative Cities is an international project designed and managed by the British Council. It explores the ways creativity, entrepreneurship and innovation can help to improve people's lives – making cities across Europe better places to live, work and play.

<http://creativecommons.britishcouncil.org>

An OK Do event at Helsinki Design Week and London Design Festival

In collaboration with HEL YES! and the Finnish Institute in London as well as the British Council's Creative Cities project.

Supported by the Ministry of Education in Finland.



THE
FINNISH
INSTITUTE
IN LONDON



BRITISH
COUNCIL

Helsinki, September 2010