



Exchanging Artworks A Dialogue with Matter and Meaning

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Abstract

In this article we discuss our experiences in a process called Art Exchange. In this working method, two artists share and exchange artworks and after interpretation and personal reflection create new art works based on the experience. In our case, there were eight exchanges, creating 16 individual art works. This article discusses the background to the method, our experiences during the process, and finally we reflect on the experience as a whole and try to explain how it became meaningful for us.

Two important phenomena arose from the process, namely dialogue and reflection. In the article we observe these by using theoretical viewpoints offered by philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer's hermeneutics, as discussed by artist and scholar Jouko Pullinen. We also draw on theories on reflection as discussed and elaborated by university researcher Kaisu Mälkki.

Keywords: Art Exchange method, reflection, dialogue

The Context of Art Exchange

Aalto University organized a program in university pedagogy in the fields of art, design and architecture (60 ECTS) between March 2012 and January 2015. A total of 20 university teachers and professors from the aforementioned disciplines committed to the studies. Coordinating teachers for the program were Educational Developer Kari Nuutinen and Academy Research Fellow, Teija Löytönen DA. The focus of the program was to explore practices in teaching and studying in art, design and architecture, and to analyze the pedagogical specificities in the Bachelor's and Master's programs within these disciplines.

The pedagogical program aimed to support teaching in the disciplines by critically discussing methods of working specific to these art forms, such as hand crafting, and by acknowledging both the art-making process and the final product. Critical thinking and theory-related discussions were supported by reading materials and invited guest speakers. In the end the aim was to use the notions and understanding created during the program as tools in developing and investigating university pedagogy in these disciplines. This publication is one of the results of the program.

The main approach of the program was participant-driven and process-oriented working methods. One of them was “Art and Design expression as a tool for developing university pedagogy”, which included a process called “Art Exchange” (description in the syllabus). The Art Exchange process began in November 2012 and continued until the end of program in November 2014.

In the Art Exchange, process two participants exchange their own pieces of artworks. They analyze them and react to each other's work by creating a new work of art for the next exchange.



Figure 1. Description¹ Photo: Antti Huittinen



Figure 2. Description² Photo: Anne Kinnunen

The basic instructions for the Art Exchange process were fairly simple. Each participant selected one of her/his (art)works as a starting point for the exchange process. Any work—textual, audible or visual, ready or unfinished, or even an idea—was sufficient, as long as it was somehow meaningful for the author. Then an exchange partner was assigned for her/him from the group.

During the first Art Exchange meeting partners exchanged (art)works with each other. Both presented their interpretation of her/his partner's work. At this point it was encouraged that the author of the work should refrain from commenting or explaining anything in response to the partner's interpretation. After this, the meeting was summarized and presented to the whole group.

Between the Art Exchange meetings partners produced a new piece of work as a reaction to the partner's previous work(s) and the interpretations of one's own work. These works were then exchanged during the next meeting. This process continued during the whole length of the pedagogical program.



Figure 3. Description³ Photo: Antti Huittinen



Figure 4. Description⁴ Photo: Anne Kinnunen

The dialogical partners were raffled. The duration of the Art Exchange process was defined from the very beginning of the program, and lasted for two years in total. Artworks were exchanged approximately once every three months. It was also decided that the whole exchange process would be evaluated in the end. The oral instructions at the beginning of the process caused some concern among us; for example the instruction that encouraged participants not to respond to the reflections of the partner during the actual exchange session. During the process some pairs, however, created their own rules, for example by starting traditional two-way discussions during the exchange to create a process that better suited their respective needs. During our dialogue we followed the instructions quite strictly but also created our own way of working by writing individual notes during the process, for example. The process proved meaningful for both of us as a pair in the Art Exchange process. In this article our aim is to look more closely into the process and our experiences of meaningfulness. The main idea is to describe the process from our perspective of being both an artist and a teacher. In addition we will use some theoretical

concepts that we have found helpful in making sense of the process. Thus, our aim is not a (large-scale) theoretical discussion on diverse reflective practices but a (small-scale) conceptualization of what happened during our process. This article is based on our journal notes as well as our artworks.

The process of exchanging artworks – meaningful highlights

In this section we contemplate the process we underwent and describe some observations that were meaningful for us during the process. A total of eight art exchanges were conducted during the two year period. During the process we produced 16 pieces of art altogether. For the first piece of work, both of us chose a piece from our own artistic career. Antti, the photographer, brought a photograph (Fig.1), and Eeva, the ceramic artist, chose a porcelain bowl (Fig.2). The motives we had for choosing these artworks were the need to hear an outsider's review of our work and possibly to get answers to some questions that had bothered us at that point in our careers.

“I’ve been thinking about how blind I have become to my own pictures. Do I over-analyze them? Do people other than photographers see the same things? Do the clear mistakes that I see also reveal themselves to others? I thought this would be an excellent opportunity to get some answers.” (Antti’s note, 30.11.2012)



Figure 5. Description⁵ Photo: Antti Huittinen



Figure 6. Description⁶ Photo: Anne Kinnunen

At the beginning of the Art Exchange, the vagueness of the instructions caused confusion. However, both of us had a strong will and interest towards the Art Exchange as a learning process, so we just decided to follow the odd instructions and see what happened.

In the early stage, one of the most meaningful effects in the exchange came to the fore:

“It’s a great feeling to have someone stop and spend time with your work and really look at it and talk about it. That’s very rare. Too often the talk or feedback is technical, or just “that’s nice”. Technical questions or flat praise is not interesting to me as an artist. I don’t try to express technique. What is interesting is how others experience my work. What kinds of images and conceptions develop for them. That’s what I’ve got out of the exchange. And the stories I’ve heard have also opened up new points of view for me.” (Eeva’s note, 8.3.2013)

The beginning of the exchange was tentative. We searched for the right path between the instructions and our process. Somewhere during the third exchange we had a shared feeling that the exchange process began to flow and it became more natural. Art exchange ceased to be just a part of the pedagogical program. Instead it became a meaningful way in itself to process questions involved in the teaching practice and in being an artist. Common themes could be found in the exchange works and we seemed to find a natural way to be together in the process.

Notes from both of us support this notion:

“While making the third work I became more relaxed. The piece may be a comment on all previous works and my thoughts about them. It’s interesting how similar the themes are in our works. We share some common things.” (Eeva’s notes 23.8.2013)

Antti’s notes from the same session:

”I thought about how our works began to intertwine. How the first works and shared analysis have started to lead us towards a common theme. In our case it was about the interaction between nature and human culture and ethical choices made by humanity.” (Antti’s notes 23.8.2013)



Figure 7. Description⁷ Photo: Antti Huittinen



Figure 8. Description⁸ Photo: Eeva Jokinen

Some problematic moments during the exchange process arose, and interestingly we shared them as well. Antti's feeling of failure in trying to develop his own process led to Eeva's reaction:

“Antti's work feels cumbersome and strange. Why did you create this kind of work? It's even ugly, though I didn't say that out loud.” (Eeva's note 15.11.2013)

In his observation, Antti fears failure caused by trying too hard and, in a worst case scenario, where it could derail the whole process. Without having the opportunity of immediately being able to discuss the situation, it could only be fixed in the next artwork by attempting, with visual and expressional means, to guide the dialogical partner to also understand the previous work. Antti writes:

“I made an effort to shift my own work process from intuitive reaction towards a more conceptual thinking. Afterwards it feels forced and contrived and it made me think about failure's role in the art exchange process. What is the relationship between feeling responsible for the process and being experimental and plunging in? For whom do we make our pieces – the process, our partner or ourselves? Can we accidentally “sabotage” the process by making a work which, even in our own opinion, was ‘failed’?” (Antti's note 15.11.2013).

In practice the “failed” work (Fig.7) didn't affect the process at all. It raised opinions and feelings but despite its quality, reflection was expressed and processed, and it led to another artwork in accordance with the broader process of the art exchange. This episode, however, increased our trust in the process. It revealed that we could not destroy the exchange process with the wrong kinds of works, even if we tried to. That may have made us feel freer in terms of the ways we could execute our ideas and artworks in the future.



Figure 9. Description⁹ Photo: Antti Huittinen



Figure 10. Description¹⁰ Photo: Anne Kinnunen

Because we knew that the duration of the process was two years, there was a noticeable aspiration to “close the circle” or to pursue some sort of narrative arch. Mistakenly, Eeva had thought that the seventh exchange was the last one. With the round thrown bowl, she wanted to get back to basics.

“The round shape of the thrown bowl; spirals made by my fingers. A view. Wintery lakes observed from far and above, blue skies and ice. Illusions created with glaze chemistry, by knowing a system. Knowledge.” (Eeva’s note 7.8.2014)

Antti’s feedback supports her perception:

“A giddy bowl from Eeva. Simultaneously organic and cosmic, again. It reminds me that the circle is closing and we have started to say our farewells to the Art Exchange. There’s much of the same as in the first work, but from a different angle. In the first bowl I found human culture, while this one is more about the elements and physical forces.” (Antti’s note 20.8.2014)

“We have visited each other’s lives during this exchange and after this we will go on with our separate lives again. What happened, what did we gain from all this?” (Eeva’s note, 12.11.2014)

A classical manuscript form can be interpreted from our collective notes. After the tentative beginning, the process stabilized until it was tested with a crisis. Then the process matured and we let the flow of it take over. Towards the end of the process, the search for meanings and the creation of closure became important. We both felt that documenting the process and transcribing it into words (for example in this article) made the process more meaningful as a learning experience and left a trace, a mark of what has happened.

Theorizing the Art Exchange

In retrospect, by observing the Art Exchange process between us, the writers of this article, two main themes rise above all others: dialogue and reflection. We must note that the diverse dialogical pairs during the pedagogical program produced different processes and though some common features could be found in all of them, in this article we observe only what happened between us, this particular pair of artists, and from our own personal viewpoints. Despite the instructions, each process was modified by the personalities and expectations of the individuals involved, and so the meanings and effects of the Art Exchange varied accordingly.

The absence of immediate dialogue or open discussion caused by the instructions provoked resistance, especially in the beginning. It is rare, in today's busy work environment, to be able to stop and concentrate on another person and his or her artistic work safely. The process was unfamiliar and we couldn't yet trust it. However, by the third exchange our notes show that the distress had transformed to acceptance, and the instructions had become a frame which we could lean on.

“Thoughts about the exchange situation. Both sit in peace and type up their notes. I'm always excited to hear Antti's thoughts about my work. I'm not anxious or nervous at all. It's quite a relaxed and safe feeling to be here. The exchange is not an agonizing chore, but an interesting experiment in which one can take part in a way that comes naturally.” (Eeva's note 23.3.2013)

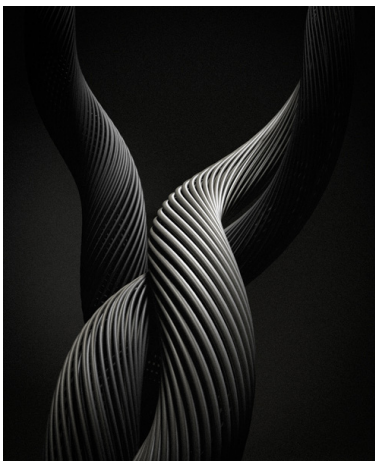


Figure 11. Description¹¹ Photo: Antti Huittinen

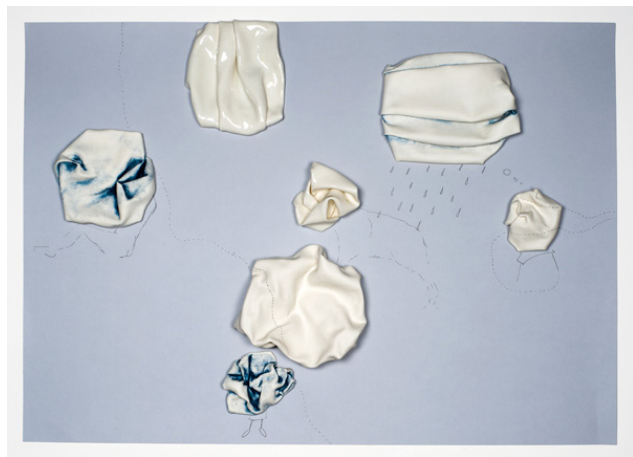


Figure 12. Description¹² Photo: Anne Kinnunen

The nature of an artwork is that when the artist gives it up for display, the viewers are free to interpret it as they like. In the Art Exchange process, the artist could have had an excellent opportunity to open up the artistic ideas and processes, which is why it felt even more artificial to constrain verbal dialogue. Especially when the process was part of a pedagogical program and our approach towards it, at least in the beginning, was goal-oriented: to learn more about ourselves as teachers. The constrained dialogue

affected the exchange process at least two ways: The maker couldn't tell and the receiver wasn't allowed to hear. However, we both felt that the feedback from our own artworks was valuable and interesting.

Observing the Art Exchange in retrospect revealed a level that we possibly could not have reached if dialogue had been possible. Not having the open dialogue turned the focus towards our individual processes. The partner's artworks were a kind of mirror to our own reactions and ourselves as well. A level of reflection was created where the interpretation of the other's work was an interpretation of our own process and a communication with ourselves. Since we didn't know the motives of our partner, we couldn't react to them and thus our reactions were instinctively responses to our own conceptions and visions. We were in dialogue with ourselves. The series of artworks created during the exchange process can be observed both as reactions to the work of the other and as a continuation of our own artistry.

In the following, we will discuss the dialogical process and reflection during the Art Exchange process by the theoretical viewpoints offered by philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer's hermeneutics as discussed by artist and scholar Jouko Pullinen, and by discussing theories on reflection elaborated by university researcher Kaisu Mälkki.

Merging of horizons in dialogue

In his doctoral thesis *Mestarin käden jäljillä* the artist Jouko Pullinen (2003) considers dialogue in picture-making as a hermeneutical process. He leans on Gadamer's hermeneutic theory in which one can find four basic elements: acknowledging preliminary understanding, dialogue, merging of horizons, and application as a circular and intertwining process (ibid., p. 37). Pullinen talks about a hermeneutic attitude in which openness, a will to learn and a will to open oneself to the new emerges in dialogue with a text. However, he sees the concept of a "text" broadly, as any phenomenon under observation, like a work of art (ibid., p.34).

In the Art Exchange process, we can clearly perceive a circular movement in which themes open and cross each other, while new works reflect both the respective exchange works and the themes that emerged from the whole process. In the exchange sessions we spent peaceful and silent moments immersing ourselves into the given artwork and creating a preliminary understanding of it. Then we expressed our understanding of the work verbally to the other person, the creator of the artwork. In between the actual exchange sessions, we processed our interpretations which produced parallel artworks in which we projected not only the first impressions and ideas, but also the whole exchange process. In addition to our own artistic being, during the creation of the artworks there was a learning process about being a teacher who is studying to understand the teaching profession and its undercurrents in order to become a better teacher. We were in dialogue with the artworks and the overall process. Out of all this an interpretation emerged, which can be understood as a merging of horizons. It was concretized in a new application, a new work of art. Our works were constantly in dialogue between our own previous works and our partner's previous works, realizing the hermeneutic trajectory and circularity quite purely.



Figure 13. Description¹³ Photo: Antti Huittinen



Figure 14. Description¹⁴ Photo: Anne Kinnunen

Reflection

Educational scholar Mälkki has examined the nature of reflection in her doctoral dissertation, entitled *Theorizing the Nature of Reflection*. In her theory, Mälkki (2011) combines the transformative learning theory created by Jack Mezirow and Antonio Damasio's neurobiological theory of emotions and consciousness. Mälkki speaks of a reflective man as a "Bodily Agent", in which not only cognitive but also emotional and social dimensions combine (ibid., p.35). The concept is interesting from the perspective of the Art Exchange process. We were present in the exchange in many different roles: as a teacher and a learner, as a member of a group of students, as an artist and as a colleague, and we also brought our personal selves and experiences into the reflective process.

As noted above, Mälkki sees reflection more widely than just a cognitive process. She examines the phenomena that trigger reflection through the concepts of comfort zone and edge emotion. When leaving the comfort zone our biological instincts trigger emotions in an effort to restore it. With the help of reflection, one can modify and extend the borders of the comfort zone, and also the person's meaning perspectives. By meaning perspectives Mälkki refers to Mezirow's notions of the individual's personal frame of reference, which guide their attitudes and behavior (ibid., pp. 29-30). Mezirow believes that reflection is triggered by experiences within everyday life, which call our previous assumptions into question. The most concrete form of such an experience is encountered in a time of crisis, which can force one to consider things in a new light (ibid., p. 20). Mälkki complements this by bringing the instinctive emotional functioning and social dimensions into a process of reflection. In effect, each artwork in the exchange process could be called such a crisis. Similarly, the vagueness of the instructions, which forced us to look at the exchange from the outside and to determine a clear position towards it, also enhanced and triggered the reflective processes. We both handled this in an instinctively emotional way, complaining and feeling uncertain and insecure, wanting to return to the easy and safe "given rules" and looking at our peers and trying to find out how they handled the same crisis. Only afterwards did the cognitive side of reflection become apparent and arise from the very wholesome reflection process. We believe that in

the process of the art exchange the change in meaning perspectives occurred slowly over time, and the comfort zone may have changed without being noticed, due to small everyday reflections.

Observing our reflection raised a third meaningful theme in the process: namely the presence of our professional artistic lives. Eeva the ceramist and Antti the photographer worked with the instruments that are characteristic to their professions. The study methods that felt important from the very beginning were given even deeper meaning when we were able to tie them to our personal artistic and teaching processes. Even though the Art Exchange process was part of the pedagogical studies, the idea that it could support both our artistic development and the teaching practice was strongly interlocked in the process. Our learning expanded to cover the whole field of our being. The Art Exchange provided us with a space to deal with the pedagogical phenomena at our own pace through our own professional identity and artistry, using the tools that were most meaningful to us.

Our experiences are in line with those of Professor Ronald Barnett, who speaks about a comprehensive learning process through the concept of life-wide learning. Here, learning is not only about acquiring knowledge and skills defined in curriculums; it is also affected by the students' individual study skills, qualities and characteristics as well as one's own experiences in and outside one's professional fields. Simultaneous learning in time (lifelong learning) and space (life-wide learning) in different areas increase not only the student's knowledge and skills but also their understanding of the complex nature of information and their ability to react in new ways by combining information from different sources (Barnett, 2010, p. 24). Barnett notes that this kind of interaction gives rise to professionals, such as university teachers, who find their place in an ever-changing society of uncertainty.

“If lifelong learning is learning through one's lifespan, life-wide learning is learning across one's life experiences.” (Barnett, 2012)

From our perspective, Barnett's ideas align well with Mälkki's theory of reflection. Learning is not only a cognitive function, but emotions and social conceptions have an effect on it too, creating a complex and network-like cycle of events that fundamentally change our meaning perspectives. In his interview study, Barnett (2010) found out that the students' confidence and commitment increases and strengthens when the time to learn and space to learn are spread over the traditional curriculum structure. He also proposes that by creating structured opportunities for reflection, universities could deepen the effects of life-wide learning even further (p. 38). In the Art Exchange process, we used the whole spectrum of our abilities in reflecting those abilities during the pedagogical program in which we participated. A similar kind of process that is both separate from the studies but still part of them could, in our view, support learning and reflection in many kinds of university programs.

The duration of the exchange process and its effect on reflection arose as an issue at the end of the process. A need to talk about the process as a whole, and the wider meanings and thoughts that it accumulated, started to become important. We found it interesting that, ultimately, we did not need to return to our

thoughts that were important during the exchange process. Instead, reflection transformed the whole process. In fact, Mälkki (2011) notes that a person's meaning perspective is not necessarily the same in all situations and the context in which one reflects can change it (p. 20). It is interesting that the inhibition of dialogue during the process did not cause the need to go over the missing dialogue afterwards. Instead, the need to reflect was directed towards the changes in our thinking and how we ultimately looked at ourselves differently, both as artists and teachers.

“I see now that the same atmosphere has been present [in my works] from the beginning. I do rather little of my own expressional, artistic work. Maybe this is then my own style. Funny that I’ve never thought about it before. I also think about intuition – how it is different from emotion to me. Maybe that is why there is such a cool and distanced atmosphere, at least for myself.” (Antti’s note, 11.4.2014)

Time between reflection and its subject changed both the reflection and the subject. Jouko Pullinen (2003) talks about a hermeneutic precept in the interpretation of a text, in which the whole must be understood by the details and details from the whole (p. 42). During the exchange process, we reflected or would have wanted to reflect on the details, as after the process the entirety of the Art Exchange and the learning process became more important.



Figure 15. Description¹⁵ Photo: Antti Huittinen

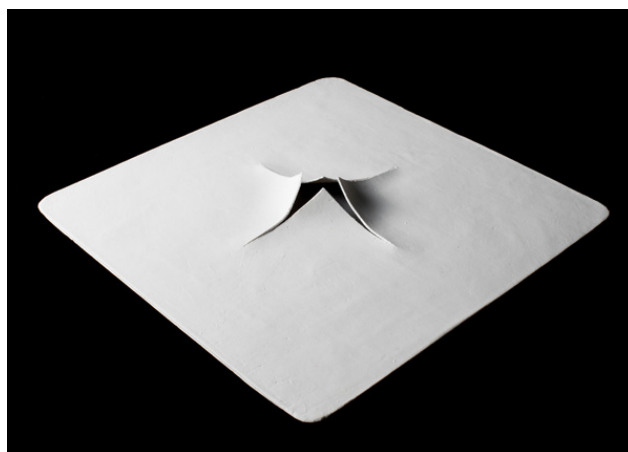


Figure 16. Description¹⁶ Photo: Anne Kinnunen

Concluding remarks

During the process we created the strong view that our own artistic being and the teacher in us are not separate entities; they intertwine and inform each other. The artist as a teacher also teaches through her or his artworks. In the exchange process our work was constantly the target of the partner's viewpoints and ideas. That forced us to make conscious choices between our own ideas and our partner's feedback and to

critically reflect on our process. That effectively crumbled the myth of lonesome, self-absorbed artistry, replacing it with a more communicative and educational process of creativity.

Our respective reflections also changed how we communicate with our students. We have begun to encourage the students to think about their process by circling around their works verbally, reflecting their ideas from various viewpoints and giving them an agile stream of feedback from which they can pick out what they need. We have encouraged them to express themselves more freely in relation to the works of others. This may seem obvious, but the process has made it visible how much the students will benefit from it.

A conscious reaction to visual resources is a powerful tool with which new expression and understanding of one's motives can be found. It is challenging to teach in a field where skill, the most vital part of professionalism, must be achieved without words. The greatest offering of the Art Exchange process is that it has taught us something about how to communicate skill in a new way: By looking at another person's work, and commenting on it both in words and by making a parallel work that visually reflects the original work, thus showing ideas and emotions in a wordless, visual mode.

Looking back on our own and to the other participants' Art Exchange processes, we can say that it can be viewed as a wide frame for teaching and learning processes that can lead to new visions among students.

“Even though I analyze Antti’s work it tells me more about myself than about him. The process has opened my eyes to what kind of an artist or a craftsman I am. Like a collage I pick up elements from my environment to create new connections and meanings. Causal working that draws from things felt and thought of before.” (Eeva’s note 11.4.2014).

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(Endnotes)

1. Antti's work no. 1

Eeva's notes: Still life; clematis; focused on the flower. I wonder if this is something typical for you? If you do these kind of works. A magnifying glass that does not magnify. Hard metal and a beautiful plant. There is same kind of rambling form on the metal and the plant ... human form ... a dance. The metal is throughout unfocused; the plant is really crisp and fresh. Frame. Black backdrop; vanished; an empty and vast space. Alone, yet not alone. It is difficult to pinpoint the mood of the image—hopeful, a little bit grotesque. Nature always wins. Something kind to start with that transforms, becoming ever darker the longer you look at it.

2. Eeva's work no. 1

Antti's notes: A lot of starting points for reflection. Ceramics is close to my heart; there is an emotional connection involved. Transparency—light: shared mediums with photography. Shininess; reflections—also used in photography. A three-dimensional piece—spatiality. Ornamental pattern. History; foreign cultures. A beautiful, romantic piece. A lot of starting points for stories. An illustration for book of fairy tales. A broken piece—it has lost its function, which boosts its aesthetic side. Since you have chosen a broken piece, it establishes a new layer. Open starting points for interpretations. To get full profit from my reflection, you must have thought about this aspect too. Is it just a simple trick to gain “profundity”? How could you take it further? Torn apart: perforation, honeycomb. Graphic line. The attempt to fix the base looks like cracked ground. The sprout of a plant. Character ...

3. Antti's work no. 2

Eeva's notes: A flock of birds; the silhouettes of trees. I can see the connection to my first piece, what it meant to me—being in the woods. The webbing of the treetops; swarm intelligence; the ornamentation of nature; fractals. White and black; matt surface. Peaceful but a bit threatening. What happened? Why have all the birds suddenly flown off? Instinct?

4. Eeva's work no. 2

Antti's notes: The themes from my first work come across from Eeva's work. The compulsive need of human nature to research and understand how things work, at the same time losing the capability of comprehensively understanding about life—about nature and technology or the interaction of nature and human culture. Human culture has traveled into the space ethos of future research, but it only leaves destruction behind.

5. Antti's work no. 3

Eeva's notes: Framing—in all of the works. The loop of Moebius; the continuity of everything. Two figures; a mirror image? The Big Bang. What was before it? Infinity. Something shell-like and protective. Things are at the same time this and that way. Many points of view. Black velvet; a closed world; there is very little light. A stagnant feeling. The start of life; single-celled organisms. Life in the deepest, darkest basins of the sea. A moon of Jupiter; water under the icy crust. Mysteries. Funnily, there is same turquoise color as there is in my “cake” work. Pixels, closely inspected, produce their own micro-universe. Macro-universes; micro-universes; parallel universes; over-lapping universes. Two sides that are one. Paradoxes. A riddle that is visible, yet hidden—the ambiguity of art and artworks.

6. Eeva's work no. 3

Antti's notes: Burned ground; familiar from the first piece. Pure, clear layers. Cardboard, packaging, cheap: Why? Refined, arranged. Product. The strong belief in survival. Things can be sorted into an order. One layer protects the ones below. Fragile glass; sculpted crumbling gypsum; depressing cardboard. Sidetrack: another interpretation—cake. Ecological reserves: Who is going to get the biggest piece? Groomed and racy at the same time. Interesting combination. Balance. The continuing whole is already wrapping up. The interaction of nature and culture. A pedestal: Is it part of the piece? It is the same from any side; emphasizing symmetry. Introverted; hermetic. There it is—rotating in space.

7. Antti's work no. 4

Eeva's notes: Totally different from the previous works. The same wooden table as in the first piece. The same black backdrop. Still-life-like; like an old painting—surrounded by important belongings (important for the boy or for the photographer?). The artist's son? A stagnant feeling. The will to stop time? Another world accessed through the phone. Our children are not ours ... Symbols of time; pieces of a broken-down clock. Syrupy colors. Is the facial expression of the boy bored? Stagnant? An ugly and strange image.

8. Eeva's work no. 4

Antti's notes: A lot of visual clues to my own previous works. A photograph; a monochromatic tonal scale; a certain type of symmetry / infinite loop. Reflection of the loop. The yin and yang of trees and sky. Dark and upside down. It could refer to destruction but the mood suggests something else. Calm, transparent; life, even in the shadows. The lightness of the sky; the screams of swallows in the summer night sky. On the other hand the dark upside-down world offers an adventure and an entrance into a new unknown. Reeds as clouds or the scratches of nails. The fascinated marvel of the upside-down reflection still even captivates the hardened. In the previous “cake” work, there were layers. One can see them here too. Dark terracotta cracks; emerald shiny glass. The mind seeks for meanings through the maker. Everything that you know about the maker of the piece affects to your interpretation of the piece.

9. Antti's work no. 5

Eeva's notes: Back to the colors. Depth, strengthened by the prisms. Reflections from other worlds. Great background, I get the feeling of movement. Who's there? Antti himself or someone else? Summer. This is completely different than the previous one. In this one there is movement and warmth. Prisms bring to my mind the winter of 2008, when there was no snow on the ice on the sea and one could see deep into it, all the bubbles layering inside the ice and even some dead fish under it. On the other hand I think of microscopic worlds. As children we collected tiny fish in jars and in the cavities in rocks there were warm small seas full of seaweed with completely separate microcosms—in different sections, different worlds. Summer and ice. Crystallized atmospheres. Memories. Maybe there is a link to the previous work. Preservation. Together. Family. Honey.

10. Eeva's work no. 5

Antti's notes: The test cones for the burning times of ceramic glaze. Dealing with time in many ways. Like a dinosaur; the rib cage of a dead animal in the desert. Functionality has produced the visually-interesting phrasing of a question. The "wrong" results can be visually more interesting. Hard, angular, omnipotent: young. "Wiser", tired: old. The circle from birth to death. The circle of functionality. The direction spirals inside—to the level of the "event horizon." A continuation of a series of round shapes. Even the numbers of test cones vanish when the meaning of functionality is diminished. One could think of this as a comment on an intensive productivity society. Ceramics as an organic material of life.

11. Antti's work no. 6

Eeva's notes: Black and white; soft. Three spiral "ropes" in the space, vertically tapering upwards. Dramatic lighting, but the mood is very silent. A dune; sandworms; some kind of living organisms—despite the otherwise very geometric cable-like structure. The spiral movement produces the idea of it being organic. A little bit scary, threatening. The information highway, a world of bits, where information moves through the wires on the verge of our understanding. Zeros and ones. The thought of moving information is getting stronger. It is not flawless, without problems. The mood carries thoughts of threats—the twisting form of the ropes makes the impression stronger. On the other hand, the form resembles the twisted horns of an ibex. The interrelationship between nature and technology. The image moves one's gaze like music. Or waves. Tango; slow, slow, quick-quick, slow. From the shadow into the light and back. A sensual movement, drowsy and caressing.

12. Eeva's work no. 6

Antti's notes: A cornucopia. Lot of things are happening. How do they connect? Or do they at all? The possibility of a story; the dashed line, paths, and overlapping elements would suggest it. One piece is apart and the displayed pen offers the possibility for participation, incorporation, unification. The viewer needs to decide her/his role in relation to the artwork, as with any participatory work. Will she/he stay as a passive observer (internal change) or actively participate (internal and external change)? A treasure map; a rebus. A mystery to be solved. Funny and sensitive. There are contradictions in the materiality. The ceramic pieces look like fabric, metal, paper. Forms are ambiguous. Crumpled metal; the head of a dog; folded fabric; nimbus. The three-dimensional parts say one thing, but the drawn figures change it mischievously into something else. The ceramic parts are serious, self declaring, but drawings give them more conceptual meanings, despite being lighter, more playful and sensitive. A small bundle, oozing blue color, above the dry, clean, airy cloth. The drawn characters give them more conceptual meanings. Puffs of smoke; thoughts or feelings. Speech bubbles.

13. Antti's work no. 7

Eeva's notes: Elements; the periodic table; tarot cards; origami. The periodic system brings up some warm thoughts. Elements are close to my heart. All the items in the picture are flat, as is the picture itself. The folds give the illusion of three-dimensionality and a recollection of my previous job, where ceramic "paper" was folded. The origami bird is very sharp and hard; it feels metallic and computerized. The tarot cards are a source of tales, offering different meanings to believers and non-believers. The presence of nonsense. The dark, soft space. The beginning and the end. Elements, like planets in the emptiness. White paper shimmers like the sun in the darkness. Skill, nature/science, and a belief. A sad and lonely table. Silence. Emotions are missing. The elements are as traces or clues to our culture. Origami represents skill, the periodic system represents science and the human ability to go deeper into issues, and the tarot cards represent life, mind, beliefs, disorder. The finality of death and what clues are left of humanity if we perish? Cold items. I'm so sad because the bird is so cold. It's missing traces of folding and the paperiness; the presence of the author.

14. Eeva's work no. 7

Antti's notes: The reference to the first work. The pattern; physics and the laws of nature. The organic atmosphere. A wonderful organic form. The stormy sky; fish scales; tree bark; rust; gold; ink. A warm, romantic subject. A reference to the spirals. The work has terrific pace. A time vortex; yin and yang; dark and light; water ripples; a reflection of the landscape. The pacing leads my mind to the idea of a refined material that moves from the middle to the edge and, on the outside, from the edge to the center. The door to another reality?

15. Antti's work no. 8

Eeva's notes: A quagmire, the old slough; sleety weather, changing to high pressure. Soon there will be frost. Fo-

cus threaded discharge wires as trees and branches. The residues of reflections. Lots of references to previous works, as well as to Antti's and my own. The landscape is like the Art Exchange process. Ideas and meanings wind and unwind with each other, leave and come back. The focus remains unclear; sometimes it's blurred and sometimes the common thought is clear and crisp: like how frosty air feels in one's lungs. In the borderlands between crisp and fuzzy, sleep and wakefulness. Blood vessels; a map. The round shape also brings to mind a lens through which the landscape is distorted. The lens in projections; memory layers. The neurons and neural pathways that merge and disappear, and store memories and meanings. The picture is like a poem, with electricity and silence. The round shape is like an opening from which one can look inside. You may ask where you are. Not in the landscape but somewhere else.

16. Eeva's work no. 8

Antti's notes: Sophisticated; clean; perfect; cosmic; mathematical. Mathematical calculation; a 3D-model. The play of material. Thick leather; richness of expression. Looking closely one can see the tool marks—charming, a physical feeling. The tactile feel of working the cuts. The surface is punctured; something has come out, once and for all. A monument. A pharaonic pyramid with the wow-effect. Immateriality is a possibility. A specially-made drug, just for me.