

Performing false hope: Ethical outcomes of fictitious pharmaceutical advertising as a performance art intervention

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The dissertation, *Performing false hope*, examines the dialogical outcomes and ethical issues that emerged from Finnexia®[®], the primary artistic production of this artistic research. The Finnexia production consisted of a multimedia advertisement campaign for a (fictitious) medication that helps people learn the Finnish language. Finnexia was presented as a performance intervention in the Helsinki Railway Station over the course of three days, in 2012. The performance intended to generate a space for public dialogue about the experience of the foreigner in Finland and the process of learning the Finnish language. As a secondary goal, Finnexia aimed to present a satirical critique of overmedicalization and the proliferation of pill-based treatments for human ailments.

The dissertation problematizes the approach of framing public performance art as fictitious, satirical pharmaceutical advertising. It describes and analyzes the unexpected emotional, ethical, and legal issues that arose from the response of audience members, performers, and Finnish organizations. The dissertation addresses the following questions, based on the outcomes of the Finnexia artistic production: What is the relationship between artistic decisions and ethical outcomes in public performance? What is the responsibility of the artist in public art interventions,

and in artistic research? What can be learned from the dialogues, and from the unexpected outcomes of the performance?

The research was carried out within the framework of artistic research, which focuses on art practice as the primary form of knowledge creation. In this context, the research employed methods of performance art intervention, pharmaceutical advertising, and ethnography. The dissertation draws from theoretical concepts and literature in the areas of performance, socially engaged art, culture jamming, interventionist art, public pedagogy, and Bakhtin's theories of dialogue, answerability, and unfinalizability. Through an interplay of ideas from various theorists, the literature also explores ethics in relation to art practice and artistic research.

The thesis examines the ethical and legal consequences of generating false hope in the public eye. In this case, 'false hope' refers to the scenario in which some audience members expressed a growing sense of belief in the existence of Finnexia. The dissertation reveals the paradoxes, insights, and potential risks that may arise through artistic interventions in public space. The text also examines the perceived successes and failures of the Finnexia performance, in terms of its dialogical outcomes, and through the interactions with audience members throughout and after the performance. The thesis proposes that artists and artist-researchers might reach for a balance between pragmatism and radicality, through dialogical and self-reflective methods. Alongside this, it emphasizes the importance of preserving the original intent of an artwork in the midst of ethical negotiations.

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