

Ajatuksia
feminismistä
taiteen
tekemisessä

/

Thinking
feminism
in
art
practices

Toimittanut:
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&
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HFS

Helsingin Feministinen
Salaseura 2019

Ajatuksia feminismistä
taiteen tekemisessä

Thinking feminism
in art practices

interview:
**DESIGNER AS
FEMINIST**

[Since five people from DaF were present during the interview, we asked them to answer under one name to keep the conversation from expanding to a huge length. The members were in a shared space together, having a conversation between them before answering. However, DaF is a group of different people with different opinions and experiences.]

HFS:

Hi! It's Katri and Olga here!

DaF:

Hei!! It's Aliisa, Robynn, Eevi, Pauliina and Henna here.

HFS:

Thank you for agreeing to chat with us! Should we get straight to the point?

DaF:

Sure, sounds good.

HFS:

How long have you been working together, and what was the original reason or motive for gathering your collective?

DaF:

We've been working together for almost exactly two years. We first got together on 6.1.2017. One of our members participated in a workshop on feminism in urban planning in the autumn 2016, and wanted to organise something similar for design and architecture students. So she asked a few of her friends studying/having studied design, who she knew were interested in feminism, if they would be into planning something like that together. The motive for this kind of workshop was the lack of feminist perspectives in the education in design and architecture back then in 2016.

HFS:

That is very precise. :) So about the beginnings a bit more... Did you define what you are and how you work and what are your goals etc. from the very beginning? Has the definition changed?

DaF:

When we started we were simply working towards the workshop, so we didn't really define what we are. But as an introduction to who we are as the organisers of the workshop, we did write a mission statement. We also wrote down the goals of the workshop and in the beginning those were the goals of our practice.

HFS:

So when did you start thinking about yourself as a collective, and how did it happen?

DaF:

Perhaps we became a collective through working together during that spring 2017. After the workshop we were quite tired, and didn't really know how to continue. So we discussed our experience of coming together around these topics, working together, and what kind of desirables/motivations each of us had concerning the future. Since we had organised the workshop on a voluntary basis, we discussed the impact of monetary resources in continuing working like this. One of us wrote us a kone application and we decided to think again about organisation if we got some funding.

Since then we've discussed a lot whether we actually are a collective, or rather a platform to practice/research feminist design. Being a platform might also mean that different people are involved in different ways, whereas a collective, for us, seems like something rather set.

HFS:

That is so interesting and so on point! So could you quickly, since we forgot to ask, explain a bit about the workshop: where was it held, how long did it take, what was it called etc. AND have you come to some conclusion about the platform/collective – point, or is it still shifting?

DaF:

So the workshop was held in the facilities of HIAP in Suomenlinna in May 2017. It was a two-day event that called out and brought together 19 (plus us 5) design and architecture students / recent graduates.

We aimed to think about these questions together with the participants: What does it mean to be a feminist designer/architect? What can intersectional feminist perspectives and methods bring to design and architecture? What constitutes a feminist design practice and project? The name of the workshop was "Designer as Feminist" and that also stuck as name for the practice up till now. About the platform/collective question; it's a big ongoing conversation! We are thinking of ways in which we can expand our practice to include more people while securing the continuity of the work. We are definitely working towards becoming a platform.

HFS:

Between the workshop and the Kone grant (in the beginning of 2018?), did you revise the mission statement and the goals of your practise? Do you have some guidelines or principles (rules?) that define how you work together?

Here's a bunch of more precise questions related to how you've organized yourself: Have you defined the hierarchies/relations between you? When did you do this and why? In which way, and based on what, do you or have you defined your roles? How do you share responsibility? How do you make decisions? (No worries about

answering each question individually btw, just trying to get a general feel to how you organize yourself. :))

DaF:

We didn't revise the mission statement before starting the grant work in the beginning of 2018. But as we were compiling a plan for the next two years from now, we checked if the mission statement was still applicable. And it was really satisfying to realise that it was! We practically changed a few words here and there (e.g. added an 's' in feminism(s)) but otherwise it still reflected our ambitions.

We don't have any set rules – we rely on mutual trust, respect and friendship. Maybe friendship is our strongest (as well as an implicit) principle. We don't have an explicit hierarchy or specific roles, but we aim to be aware of invisible hierarchies and we have talked about our differing resources and needs a lot.

We negotiate a lot, which is possible while there are 6 of us, but we also do a lot of personal and collective reflection.

We've set up a bi-weekly meeting schedule starting last autumn, because routines help us get continuity and structure – we realised we were too fluid and things were hard to keep on track.

About responsibility; we have been learning how to share joint responsibility, e.g. for the continuity of the practice, meaning that everyone is responsible for both themselves (self-care!) and the collective as a whole (how my actions impact others). Practical responsibility, on the other hand, we share through discussing who is able or wants to take on a task. So there is no rigid structure, but that doesn't mean that things just "happen". As an example, we decide who plans the agenda of a meeting or facilitates a working session, so that we stay on topic and things get done and decided.

HFS:

So did we get it right that you were all first friends? How has the working together affected your friendship? Or your friendship the work?

DaF:

Well, we weren't all friends initially. Now we are <3 Marja was the mutual link that connected us, and her being friends with everyone probably impacted how our relations emerged. We recently had a new friend join in, and as a matter of fact we did discuss in advance how to welcome a new member into a group of friends that has already developed a dynamic.

It definitely takes attention not to lose friendships to work. We need to make sure we do other things, not only work things, together. Then again some groundbreaking discussions about working

collectively have happened coincidentally, when spending time as friends, not as colleagues. So the intimacy that friendship allows, has impacted working together positively. But it also is a challenge to care for each other as friends and as colleagues, and to know when to do which.

HFS:

<3! Do you share the same values? Do you agree in politics?

DaF:

The values and politics are at least to some extent things that brought us together. In working together, we can assume many shared concerns, though we can have different reactions to issues. This makes our conversations interesting, not always 100% consensual. This allows learning from each other. But the core values are shared.

HFS:

What do you think are the challenges of working in a feminist way?

DaF:

CAPITALISM.

HFS:

<3 <3 <3 YES!!!!

DaF:

Yeah, but seriously, personal practice as a designer or architect (fields in such close proximity to markets) and simultaneously as a feminist has deep contradictions in the current economic system. Competition is so in-built and our fields are instrumentalized to maximize profit at the cost of human and non-human rights.

Also on a more personal level there are challenges in working in feminist ways. Accepting and embracing differences, drawing one's own limits, acknowledging and challenging prejudices and privileges are all examples of things that aren't easy. We need to constantly strive for feminist collectivity.

HFS:

Have you faced a crisis or a heavy conflict (perhaps due to unintended insensitivities)? If so, how did you manage it?

DaF:

Yes, we have. The conflicts we've had are mostly due to unexpressed (and perhaps unconscious) expectations and needs. The way we've dealt with them is through communication, asking each other questions, trying to articulate how we feel and just understand each

other's points of view.

HFS:

We feel that the problem of unexpressed and unconscious expectations or assumptions is sooooooo common, in work and life and every part of life. More talking, vocalizing, expressing! :) So do you have any tools or words of wisdom to share with other collectives?

DaF:

Well, after that last question one thought we'd like to share is not forget the value of crises and conflicts as situations for revealing things that need to be attended to and worked on together.

HFS:

That is an important point too. Ok, the last one. It's a classic. What is love?

DaF:

Following the footsteps of bell hooks we would also like to phrase love as action, in this context as a will to stop competing.

HFS:

Yes to bell hooks! Yes to love as action! What a great thought to end this collegial chat with you. Thank you so much! Let's not compete!

DaF:

Thank you too <3 You had so many inspiring questions.

HFS:

Have a nice evening! <3

DaF:

You too <33

KIPS

Katri Naukkarinen
& Olga Palo:
Alkupöpinä

Interview:
Blau Frau [eng]

Interview:
Designer as
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Katri Naukkarinen:
Heti - Tunnusteleva
valokuvaustyöpaja

Interview :
Intro & Questions
[eng]

Emilia Kokko:
Töhertely -
kieli, kielioppi,
toisinajattelu,
töhertely,
selviytyminen,
kissa

Kollektiivisesti
koottu:
Feministinen
kysymyslista
työskentelyn
tueksi

Saara Kotkaniemi:
Another (safe)
day a the office
(please)

MYÖS:
Tilaa unelmille


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Feministisellä
työpaikalla -
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