

Seeking queer people to collaborate with on a navel gazing thesis work

Hi,

I'm Lin, a non-binary queer person, a choreographer-performer, and a pilates and yin yoga instructor. Since graduating with an MA in choreography in 2016, I have for the most part worked as a freelance dance and performance professional in different kinds of working groups. I am currently enrolled in the Time and Space MFA Programme at the Academy of Fine Arts in Helsinki. I'm seeking queer people to participate in the developing process of my thesis work; people with an interest in formulating a practice that centers around the belly button, touch, and movement, working together as part of a working group, and who would be willing to share the results of this artistic research in the form of a performance over a three day period in May 2023. Participants are expected to commit to the process and to actively participate in the dance-based practices and discussions that we will be working with. It is important that participants have an interest in performing, dancing and movement and a desire to take part in both of the two parts of this thesis artwork. I will be in charge of directing the working group and the formulation of the thesis work, in dialogue with the group.

My thesis artwork comprises two parts, the first of which is an installation made up of belly button sculptures, documented discussions, videos and photographs, while the second part is a performance focusing on the study of the navel through touch and movement.

All adults who identify as queer are welcome to join the working group, with no upper age limit.

Within the group, we will work with ways of making connection with the individual's own body and movement through methods of contemporary dance, improvisation and somatic exercises. No prior experience or background in dance is necessary. The group will include a maximum of ten people.

The group will begin work in January 2023, and continue up until May 2023.



Photo: Lin Martikainen

In my artistic research, I study the navel as an opening space, and its relative similarity to other openings of the human body. The belly button is a corporeal memory of another, a parent. The scarified surface of the navel speaks to me as a haunting trace of a connection to another human, reminding us of humanity's fundamental dependency of one to the other. My work observes what this body part says about itself in the form of sculpture, and also what begins to happen in the interaction between the sculpted object and the living body in a performance situation. As we work with these themes as a group, participants will be asked to be present with their own navels, and to reach both outwards and inwards from their navel, into external and internal worlds. What is it like to touch with a belly button? What kind of a place is the navel? Where does it lead?

I will speak more extensively of the intended work in the first group meeting, including about things that I already know I want to pursue, but also about some of the ideas that are still in process. I will invite each participant to meet with me at the end of January. These one-on-one meetings will centre on shared discussion around the themes of touch and interaction, but we will also take a moment to make a mould of the participants belly button, which will later be used to make a cast sculpture. This sculpture will be part of our group performance and installation. Starting in February, we will meet as a group for workshops at weekends and on weekday evenings. These sessions won't require any preparation from the participants, but I may ask that group members take some time to think about a given topic or question prior to our meeting.

I will be documenting the process of this project with audio recordings, photography and video, which will later be used in the installation part of the artwork. Both the installation and the performance will be part of the Kuvan Kevät MFA Degree exhibition at the Academy of Fine Arts in May 2023.

Consent is fundamental to all group work and to the documenting of the situations we will be sharing together. This means (for example) that we should always ask for permission when touching another person, and that nothing should be posted to social media without asking for permission first. Saying 'no' in any situation is always allowed, and the complete thesis project work will be formed by what we have collectively agreed upon as a group.

As part of this project, I offer participants a working environment committed to Safer Space Principles, in which everyone will have the opportunity to explore their individual relationship with their body and their belly button through movement and touch. The specific Safer Space Principles devised for this project will be gone over in detail in our first group meeting. The ethical foundations of this project are confidentiality, everyone's individual right to both self-determination and indecision in relation to the self, and mutual respect. Discrimination of any form will not be accepted in the group, including racism, transphobia, ageism, sexism, body shaming, class discrimination or ableism. I aim to develop how the group works together in collaboration with all participants.

The work will be in either Finnish or English, depending on the requirements of the group. We will use spaces at the Theatre Academy and the Academy of Fine Arts, both in Haapaniemi, Helsinki. Accessibility info for both may be found here:

<https://www.uniarts.fi/en/locations/academy-of-fine-arts-main-building-mylly/>

<https://www.uniarts.fi/en/locations/theatre-academy-main-building-kookos/>

You may apply to participate in this project by filling in the form below. Please also outline your personal interest in participating in the project.

The call is open until 9.1.2023. You can access the form via this [link](#).

Spots in the group are limited, and I will inform all interested parties about the selections by 12.1.2023

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact me at lin.martikainen@uniarts.fi

Participation in the thesis project is not financially compensated, and taking part is free of charge. If you are currently a student, you may be entitled to study points in your study programme in exchange for participating in this project.

Projected schedule (2023)

9.1. Last day of open call for applications, Monday

12.1. All applicants contacted with news of selections, Thursday

20.1. Group meeting in which we will view the studio spaces that we will be working in, and Lin will introduce the plans for the thesis project, Friday 6pm - 8pm

21.1.-29.1. One-on-one meetings and mould making, Sat-Sun and Tue-Sun, (please choose a suitable date for yourself in the initial application form)

11.-12.2. Collective workshop weekend, Sat-Sun 1pm - 4.15pm

2.3. Collective workshop meeting, Thursday 6pm - 8.30pm

11.-12.3. Collective workshop weekend, Sat-Sun 1pm - 4.15pm + discussion in two breakout groups, one group on Saturday and the other on Sunday, both 4.15pm - 5pm (each group member will take part in only one of these sessions)

23.3. Collective workshop evening, Thursday 6pm - 8.30pm

1. - 2.4. Collective workshop weekend, Sat-Sun 1pm - 4.15pm

22. - 23.4. Collective workshop weekend, Sat-Sun 1pm - 4.15pm

3.5. Evening rehearsal at KuvA/Tila, Wednesday 6pm - 8.30pm

9.5. Evening rehearsal at KuvA/Tila, Tuesday 6pm - 8.30pm

11.5. Evening rehearsal at KuvA/Tila, Thursday 6pm - 8.30pm

14.5. Sharing the performance workshop with the audience in KuvA/Tila, Sunday 1pm - 4pm

21.5. Sharing the performance workshop with the audience in KuvA/Tila, Sunday 1pm - 4pm

28.5. Sharing the performance workshop with the audience in KuvA/Tila, Sunday 1pm - 4pm

I look forward to hearing from you!

Yours,

Lin Da (artistic alias) / Lin Martikainen

Pronouns: they/them

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