



Becoming Many is an intergenerational reflection on the many ways we are undone, made, and remade by each other. The works of eleven artists come together to reflect on how our lives aren't just our individual lives, but deeply weaved with the lives of others.

Few experiences are as radically grounding and at once capable of shaking our ground as the experience of caring for others in our everyday, sustaining a life, listening to them with our heart, being there with our entire being, or trying to be, despite strains, complex circumstances or competing desires. Kinship, chosen or not, has the power to shape who we are in ways we may not suspect, to split us apart, give us unexpected courage and resilience, but also can drain us physically and emotionally to the very last reserve. It can be as fulfilling and generous as it is demanding. Kinship changes us over time in such fundamental ways that if those “many” we become were to be extracted from the picture of who we are, we might not be able to recognize ourselves.

Becoming Many intends to bounce between the personal, the political, and the collective; it is an exhibition reflecting on the constant challenges and (often invisible) negotiations we enter when caring for others —be them our elders, children, or dependent adults in our families, whether biological or chosen— while wanting to thrive as art and culture workers. Artistic methods and practices bring different perspectives to the exhibition to share personal experiences, positionalities, and stories of caregiving, parenthood, intergenerational bonds, reproductive labor, insane practical juggling of tasks, and deep reckonings with love and friendship. We ask: how do kinship and responsibility for others shape our life and vision of the world? And how do they affect other aspects of our identity? We also investigate the overlaps between artistic life and issues of ability, vulnerability, migration, norms, artistic and professional precarity, activism, and interdependence.

... perhaps we make a mistake if we take the definitions of who we are, legally, to be adequate descriptions of what we are about. Although this language might well establish our legitimacy within a legal framework ensconced in liberal versions of human ontology, it fails to do justice to passion and grief and rage, all of which tear us from ourselves, bind us to others, transport us, undo us, and implicate us in lives that are not our own, sometimes fatally, irreversibly.

Butler, J. *Undoing Gender*, 2004

Is there an unconditional care or must one always think of care in relation to some kind of potlatch, some kind of gift, and therefore in terms of obligations of care and, much more, the importance to reciprocate care in equal or ideally greater values as suggested by Marcel Mauss in *The Gift*? So what is it we talk about when we talk about care, especially when care too often implies a disparity, a gradient, a hierarchy between the caregiver and caretaker? What is care in a system built on and framed around limitless profit, solely for profit's sake? And how can we imagine care within the claws of sovereignty and while always in close proximity to the venom of State power?

Ndikung, B. S. B. *The Delusions of Care*, 2021

We begin life in a prepositional relationship with breath: someone breathes for us. We continue that prepositional relationship, breathing for ourselves until we can no longer do so, and it appears that this most fundamental of acts is always a contingent one—breathing for, with, instead of, and into. Survival demands that we learn to breathe for ourselves, but the *sine-qua-non* of our existence is that first extended act of breathing.

Ndikung, B. S. B. *The Delusions of Care*, 2021

Caring is punk.

CH. Fernandez Mirón 2023

Becoming Many presents a kaleidoscope of relations,
paradoxes, and practices of care:

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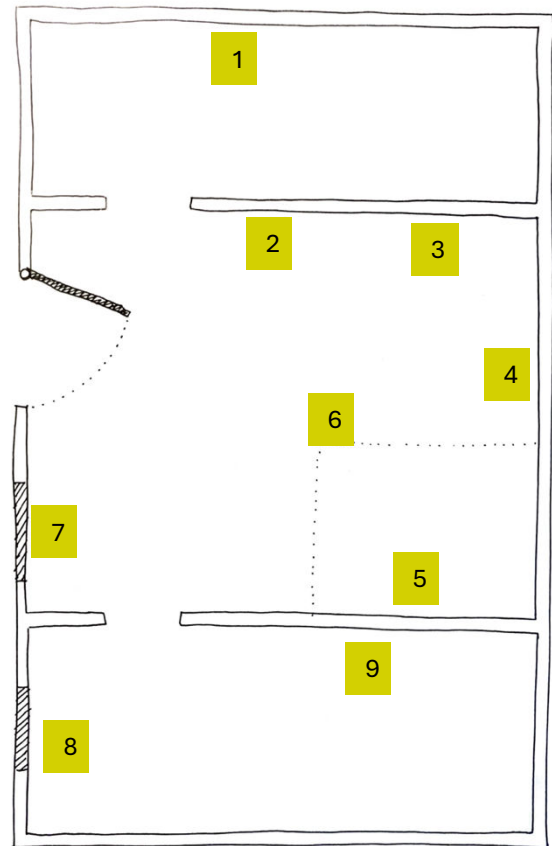
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Christian Fernández Mirón

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7 years of waiting, 24 hours of notice, 7 days of life is a diary of parenting; a collection of reflections, feelings, outbursts and demands that Christian Fernández Mirón has been cultivating since a baby came into his and his husband's life. The child was barely seven days old, after seven years of uncertainty and waiting through an adoption process, and finally a 24 hour notice to become their family. A 4.5 kg bomb. A small earthquake. The diary records his

discovery of accompanying a new life and becoming a parent, a journey of intensities, emotions, exhaustion, joys and learning. From a highly personal voice, the publication aims to be one of the few references in Spanish on parenting and parenthood outside the norm, sharing the vicissitudes and discoveries that come with being an adoptive and LGBTBI+ family in Spain today.

Christian Fernández Mirón develops projects that cross artistic, educational and social practices. He was born in Spain and grew up in Indonesia and Argentina before returning to Madrid. As a child and still, he asks many questions and likes to explore. He is equally interested in leading and being led, sharing doubts and learnings, the search for collective intimacies and questioning conventional forms of learning and legitimation. He works in the independent and self-managed sphere as well as in institutional frameworks, specially in Spain, Colombia, Chile, the Dominican Republic and United Kingdom. Currently, he works on diverse projects for cultural centres, schools and universities, museums and theatres, often through mediation with communities.
www.fernandezmiron.com

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Diana Soria Hernández

7

Practical Matter, performance, installation (clay vessels, text). This work explores Soria's recent experience of dealing with the unexpected sickness and passing of a close relative. The urgency of travel, the decision making, the amount of unknown things, the endless bureaucracy and countless practical chores and actions required, prompted her to become aware of the care we all need, and we must give to others, after life has ended.

Keeping alive the many matters that depended on the deceased person required the temporary suspension of her own life. Holding on to the material and immaterial of what is left of them, and trying to negotiate with herself to keep caring for things that were fully cared for by another entailed almost living two lives, as it overlapped with being an artist in a foreign context and a mother of a small child.

Through everyday objects, Diana's work holds on to unsaid things, lists of chores and finally, as things start falling into place, a possibility of processing and mourning. Taking care of our dead and of our own personal finitude remains something relegated to the realms of the private and or the unknown, yet it is as part of our lives as anything else. This proposal attempts to live besides it, breaking the silence.

Diana Soria Hernandez (Mexico 1983) is a visual artist focused on the exploration of physical and corporeal language, mainly through performance art, live installation and drawing. She studied her BA in Fine Arts at ENPEG La Esmeralda in Mexico City, an MFA in Printmaking by the Academy of Fine Arts Helsinki and is pursuing a MA in Live Art and Performance Studies at the Theater Academy Helsinki, both belonging to the University of the Arts, Helsinki. Her work has been shown internationally in exhibitions and festivals in more than 15 countries. Her artist work has been supported by Kone foundation (2016, 2018-2019, 2020) and Finnish Cultural Foundation (2018). Projects, residencies and travels have also been supported by Arts

Promotion Center Finland (2021), CALQ (Center of Arts and Literature Quebec) and FONCA (National Funds for Arts and Culture-Mexico) (2019), FONCA (2012, 2011)
<http://dianasoria.net>

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Eevi Tolvanen + Jussi Ulkuniemi

1

[Process Wall]

Queer Generations - Crush[ing]

This is something I wished for decades ago. Thankfully, I get to experience it now. Nothing compares to the feeling of being able to simply be yourself, surrounded by people who embrace you as you are. We need safe spaces, meaningful togetherness, and projects that build a future for us all.

—Queer Senior from the project

Crushing is a universal feeling—thrilling, heart-racing, and timeless. It's stolen glances, nervous words, and letters written to past, present, and future loves. The Queer Generations community project transforms these emotions into movement, encounters, and shared memories.

This exhibition captures moments from the *Queer Generations (Sateenkaarisukupolvet)* project and the *Crush[ing]* performance. Through images, we see the joy, vulnerability, care and community that emerged when queer and trans people of different ages came together to share their stories. The Prom *Crush[ing]* spring celebration in April 2024 was the culmination of the first phase of this three-year project where voices and experiences across generations were honored.

The *Queer Generations* project was created to connect queer seniors through art and foster intergenerational encounters. We longed for life stories from times we haven't lived. During the first year of the project we asked people to write love letters. These letters became the inspiration for *Crush[ing]*-performance. The performance is a celebration of infatuation, heartbreak, embraces, and dreams. *Crush[ing]* is a performance as sweet as a spring awakening. It's a moving love letter created with queer people of all ages. The photographs, taken by Jussi Ulkuniemi, document shared moments and details throughout the project: art groups, dance, music, laughter, performance rehearsals and the performance.

This work would be nothing without the community that lives within and around it:

Photos and video: Jussi Ulkuniemi

Queer Generations working group: Eevi Tolvanen (leading artist, dance groups, performing group), Riikka Lakea (producer), Ava Grayson, Hilla Hannonen, Susanna Viljanmaa (music group), Marjukka Irni (photography group), Emma Johansson (illustrations).

Crush[ing]-performers: Ami Leinonen, Andre Vicentini, Juuli Tykyrä, Kuisma Savisalo, Maru Kaila, Meerit Heiskanen, Miio Holopainen, Fri Nilas Lindell, Piki Berg, Rene Tiitto, Seppo Kiuru, Sora Salminen & Vippe Leminen

Crush[ing]-working group: Minna Lund, Eevi Tolvanen, Ava Grayson, Una Auri, Samu Kotilainen

Production: Reality Research Center

Support: City of Helsinki

Eevi Tolvanen (they/them) is a queer dance artist who works on multiple levels in different performance art contexts. They work as a facilitator, choreographer and performer. In their artistic work they are interested in pleasure, orality and the exploration of power relations. Tolvanen has been working in community art since 2012. Experiences of inclusion strongly influence Tolvanen's pedagogical work with all groups. The focus of their work is on building a sense of belonging through shared experiences and discussion.

www.eevitolvanen.com

Jussi Ulkuniemi (he/they) is a Helsinki-based queer artist and photographer who explores themes of intimacy and touch through photography, dance and performance art. Their work focuses on dialogue as an artistic method through which deeply individual experiences find resonances on a broader societal level.

Hänen taiteellinen työskentelynsä keskittyy dialogiin, jonka lävitse yksilölliset, henkilökohtaiset kokemukset yhdistyvät laajempiin yhteiskunnallisiin kysymyksiin.

www.jussiulkuniemi.com

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Ida Nisonen

8

Oracle, 2024. Video performance and installation (iron board, linen, iron), is part of the *Maintenance / Ylläpito* -project that was exhibited in Pesula Gallery, Sipoo in 2024. The work explores, from the perspectives of both an artist and a mother, the significance of domestic work, maintenance, and care in relation to creativity. It reflects on the creation of art as integral to an equitable, fulfilling life, while also advocating for artistic freedom for mothers. One important inspiration for this work is the legacy of Mierle Laderman Ukeles (1939), a visual artist based in New York who established Maintenance Art in 1969.

In line with other of Nisonen's works, *Oracle* works out the tensions between power and resistance, maintenance and creativity, and the intersection of personal and societal expectations. In the shifting boundaries between the private and the public, she questions what is individual choice versus a socially constructed obligations. She reflects on care, embodiment, and performativity—how the body can be both a site of control and a means of defiance and resistance. Questioning dominant narratives, and imagining new possibilities, Nisonen's artworks navigate these tensions in art and her daily life, where care and creation often coexist in complex ways.

Ida Nisonen (b. 1981) is a Finnish multi-disciplinary artist working at the intersection of photography, video, object installations, and live performance. Rooted in performative self-portraiture, her work explores power, resistance, motherhood, and creativity, often questioning the tension between personal agency and societal expectations. Drawing inspiration from feminist philosophy and literature, she delves into gender roles, embodiment, and the lived experience of motherhood.

Nisonen holds a BA in Photography and a MA in Philosophy from the University of Jyväskylä. She

has exhibited and performed widely in Finland and internationally. She has received multiple grants and recognitions, including working grants from the Arts Promotion Centre Finland and an Honorable Mention at the 18th Julia Margaret Cameron Award for Photography.

<https://www.idanisonen.com> | [@idanisonen_motherartist](https://www.instagram.com/idanisonen_motherartist)

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Kemê

6

Nuclear Care Constellation I - Be_ing Many, installation. A tent made of layered embroidery on cotton fabrics containing the silhouettes of her family. This tent exists on different levels — some of which I cannot explain as they are not mine— from a simple cover to a temple dedicated to intergenerational care but also an open, shifting archive of diasporas, supportive practices, a place for rest and refuge.

Life keeps poking every other day on my illusions of control, leaving me soft and tender to soak into a sweet surrender. From there, I see a sky made of bedsheets, crossed by the daily movements of your needs and mine. A cotton sky, mute and perpetually host to our skin, fluids, and dreams. I cut a few meters of the sky, dyed it with our favourite tea, and sewed it back together so we could rest in it, look at it while it looked at us, and maybe heal a little, learn, or just be. This care constellation is an intergenerational tangle both trapping and embracing me. Even though my location and roles have shifted, I have always existed in this endless yet transitional household. I have carried it with me, mounted and dismounted it many times, decorated it, tried to mend it, ran away from it, sung to it, and written poems from pain to rejoicing. It has given me space so I could have space for others. It is a tent with all its sacred and mundane meanings, a place to become one while being many. You are most welcome to enter too.

Kemê (1983) is a neurodivergent polydisciplinary artist based in Helsinki who perceives the arts as tools able to move us through the spiritual and the subconscious, connecting us on a deeper level. Kemê intuitively embraces a diverse range of mediums, including photography, textiles, illustration, performance, installation or text. These mediums serve as languages, attempting to bridge the constructions we inhabit and our complexities and helping her to traverse multiple readings of concepts such as memory, connection, myths, representation, symbols, and rituals. As Kemê's artistic practice evolves, it becomes increasingly malleable, intertwined with facilitation through workshops, readings, talks, rituals or other ways of maintaining dialogue, and also constantly reshaped by her own changing conditions in relation to caregiving responsibilities, such as a colleague, friend, caregiver, and mother.

<https://onehatmanyheads.com>

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Lotta Esko

5

Milk, oil painting (1 x 1,40). This work explores historical and mythological questions of cross-species breastfeeding. Traditional feminine reproductive labour and human exceptionalism are

revisited by reminding humans of our animality, challenging stereotypes of female passivity, and discussing practices of ecological care, domestication, and bonding.

Nursing has been a locus of wild controversies: from the power dynamics entangled in this practice, to the cultural impositions of gender and fertility roles, and the prevalence of essentializing biological narratives. Breastfeeding and milk production were what classified the human species as part of *mammalia* in Linnaeus' taxonomy, reminding humans of our animal nature. However, Linnaeus was not a posthumanist: the term he used was part of a broader 18th-century project aimed at distinguishing the "man of wisdom" from women and nature. Breastfeeding was used to justify a woman's place in the home, reinforcing the idea that she did not require citizenship or the ability to exercise public power.

Many cultures have traditions that blur the boundary between humans and other species, from folk depictions of animal faces and dances to cross-species breastfeeding. In the Amazon, for example, it has been a cultural practice to breastfeed orphaned wild boar piglets left behind as a result of hunting.

Even today, breastfeeding remains a battleground for various agendas, but also a way to examine the significance of deep connections and dependencies between different species. It expresses our being in the world as carnal subjects, edible subjects enmeshed in the flesh of the world and of others.

Lotta Esko (MA in Stage Design 2003 and Visual Culture, Contemporary Art and Curating MA 202) works in visual and performing arts. Esko's artistic work is based on painting, but in recent years she has also used glass and video as materials. Her most recent solo exhibition, *Medeia M(others)* at gallery A2 in Helsinki, explored the myth of motherhood and bad motherhood. She has held solo exhibitions in Helsinki, Amsterdam and Toronto and participated in group exhibitions in Helsinki, Rovaniemi, Berlin and New York. In November 2023, Esko's most recent work was a dance piece *Algoritmi* by the choreographers Illukka and Masali at the Dance Hall in Helsinki, where she used her paintings as prints for the costumes.

<http://lottaesko.com>

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Meri Helmi Särkkä

4

Rewritten in the Shell (intervened drawings on wall). This re-enactment of *The Birth of Venus* intertwines Western art history with contemporary Arab visual culture, positioning the body as a site of paradox, resistance, and cultural negotiation. By adopting the Western name Meri Helmi Särkkä, the artist reflects the complex legacy of colonial influence, where name-changing becomes an act of survival, assimilation, and defiance. This gesture recalls historical patterns of identity reconstruction among Arab diasporic communities, echoing movements such as *Hurufiyya*, where artists reclaimed Arabic calligraphy as a means of cultural resistance against Western dominance — a practice Meri Helmi's father, a calligrapher, brought into her life. The intervened wall drawings reference the aesthetics of displacement and memory seen in contemporary Arab art, drawing parallels to artists like Mona Hatoum, whose work confronts

exile and fractured identity. Yet, these visual symbols exist in tension with Botticelli's *Venus*—a Western ideal of purity and beauty—challenging the canon by inserting narratives of migration, faith, and belonging. This layered interplay critiques not only personal hybridity but also the broader politics of visibility and erasure faced by Arab migrant identities in a Western context.

Meri Helmi Särkkä, also known as Mariam Haji, is a Bahraini multi-disciplinary fine artist who currently lives and works in Porvoo, Finland. She works in sculpture, video, and painting. In 2013, she represented the Kingdom of Bahrain at the Venice Biennale after receiving the Bahrain's Dana Award in 2012. Her debut as "Meri Helmi Särkkä" took place at Helsinki Cathedral in 2022, marking a milestone as Finland's first Arab artist to exhibit large-scale paintings at this historic site. In 2024, her work was showcased at the Bahrain National Museum, and she was invited to exhibit at the UNESCO World Heritage site Suomenlinna Cathedral. She has been invited to lead several international artist talks and workshops, including at the Finnish National Museum of Finland and Oodi Library in Helsinki, Finland. Mathaf Arab Museum Of Modern Art in Doha, Qatar; the Ministry of the People's Republic of China in Beijing, China; Macgregor State High School, Brisbane, Australia; and the Corner College in Zurich, Switzerland. <https://www.merihelmisarkka.com>

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Minna Suoniemi

9

Side/Bond, 2021 4K video (stereo sound, duration 5'10"). *Bond* portrays a mother and son in what appears to be a wrestling bond that the mother repeatedly attempts to escape without succeeding. Closeness and battle intertwine in the protagonists' bodily struggle. In her work Suoniemi draws parallels with the bodily, psychological and societal bonds between and within her protagonists and sets them in the continuation of historical mother and child images. Here, teenage and menopausal bodies tormented with hormonal changes negotiate their co-existence.

Minna Suoniemi (she/her, b. 1972) is a Helsinki-based artist and university lecturer at Aalto University. Her artistic practice draws from embodied experience and feminist knowledge production, and she has worked on themes such as control, body, class, and family. Her latest projects examine the materiality of the ageing body and over-generational bodily experience of being in-excess and excessiveness. Her academic interests include transformative, artistic, and pedagogical practices, questions of class in arts and education, embodied and feminist approaches towards knowing and researching. Her work has been exhibited internationally and her work is represented in Finnish collections including EMMA Espoo Modern Art Museum, Kiasma Contemporary Art Museum, and the Finnish State Art Collection. She has acted in trustee positions i.e. The Finnish Arts Promotion Center and has worked as an artist, curator, and pedagogue with various Institutions. www.minnasuoniemi.com

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Orlan Ohtonen + niko wearden

3

all of the words that are not like is an artwork, or a practice, or possibly doing something together. it is about *what is like, what is like needed and, hating emails, erm, and yeah, like, not knowing or, how it always feels like the wrong moment or, then, otherwise, then, like.*

an attempt to use the technologies of an exhibition about caregiving towards an actual praxis of care – at least enough to make one artwork.

niko wearden is a british performance artist who lives in helsinki now. at the moment, they have a practice of mostly refusing to talk about their practice. niko tends to their body in water, lying on the floor, ecological grief and waiting with his kin. he doesn't want to wait alone anymore.

Orlan Ohtonen is a curator and writer based in Helsinki, Finland. Currently they work as Curator of Exhibitions at the Finnish Museum of Photography. Orlan's practice is focused on producing, exhibiting and preserving underrepresented narratives; and on incorporating means of critical management into the work of curating and production.

/// SAFER SPACES GUIDELINES ///

Becoming Many is a collective exhibition committed to anti-racist and intersectional feminist practices. We aim to hold a polyphonic and intergenerational space for reflection focused on the care practices we are part of. That means we do not aim for a consensus. We want a respectful, safe, and inclusive atmosphere to reflect together about what we share and the deeply varied experiences we inhabit.

We propose these safer spaces guidelines to be actively embraced by us as organizers and anyone taking part in the events programmed.

Our public program invites visitors to hang out, meet other people, share and discuss. By participating in it, we agree to respect each other's physical, mental, and emotional boundaries within the space.

No racism, cissexism, transmisogyny, transphobia, ableism, ageism, fatphobia, or body commentaries are accepted.

Ask for consent always, especially when taking pictures of other participants, touching them, their service dogs, mobility aids, or medical devices or want to share their experiences and thoughts with others outside the happening.

Don't assume the identity, sexuality, gender, pronoun, health or sickness, ability or background of others.

Respect the opinions, beliefs and personal space of others.

Please do not attend the event if you think you might have the flu/cold.

Become aware of your own prejudices & privileges.

Be mindful of others in the space.

Let's always act with positive intent and take care of each other.

Striving for safer spaces is a shared effort among us in this space, either as participants, facilitators, organisers or support persons. We would like you to reach out if something doesn't feel right. For that, you can directly ask the organisers or reach us anonymously at becomingmany@gmx.com