

Performance-in-Business: Armi Ratia's Marimekko

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ABSTRACT

My article, "Performance-in-Business: Armi Ratia's Marimekko", examines what happens to artistic performance in the concept of *arts-in-business*. In theatre and artistic performance, artistic thinking has traditionally been considered primary over economic thinking, but in *arts-in-business* the goal has been economic. The concept of *arts-in-business*, created in the 2000s, involves the strategic use of artistic elements in business in order to develop the creativity, problem-solving abilities, and innovativeness of employees as well as the brand of the business company. I will analyze the use of theatre as part of two historical forms of *arts-in-business*, the Bauhaus movement in Germany from 1919 to 1933, and the 2000s concept of *arts-in-business*. Regarding the latter, I will draw meanings from Lotte Darso's (2004), Giovanni Schiuma's (2011), and Jon McKenzie's (2001) research on performance in business. After initiating a dialogue between these two approaches, I will provide a new theory for *arts-in-business* and apply it to Marimekko's business practice. McKenzie (2001), as well as other studies of *arts-in-business* in the 2000s, does not emphasize the role of the *manager-as-an-artist*. In this article, I claim that only if the manager initiates artistic practice and the arts are interrelated to the product, can the arts penetrate the whole enterprise because of the role of managers in making constitutive decisions for the business. I will argue that some managers are able to do this. Ratia's Marimekko is my exemplary case. As the key concept of my new theory of performance-in-business I employ performance scholar Josette Féral's (2002) cognitively-oriented theory of theatricality based on the concept of a cleft and its variants in other theories. In the last section of this article, I will examine the Finnish fashion design company, Marimekko, under the management of Armi Ratia, as a business that employs the theatricality of clefts.

KEYWORDS

Performance-in-business, cleft, theatricality, innovation, work

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INTRODUCTION

In this article, I will examine what becomes of artistic performance in *arts-in-business*. In theatre and artistic performance, artistic thinking has traditionally been considered primary over economic thinking, but in the arts-in-business the goal has been economic. The concept of arts-in-business, created in the 2000s, involves the strategic use of artistic elements in business in order to develop the creativity, problem-solving abilities, and innovativeness of employees as well as the brand of the business company.¹ In this article, I will analyze the use of theatre as part of the arts-in-business trend, showing its relationship to the Bauhaus movement in Germany from 1919 to 1933 that aimed to unite arts, crafts, and industrial production.² After initiating a dialogue between these two approaches, I will provide a new theory for arts-in-business and apply it to the Marimekko business practice .

Perhaps the most prominent theoretical model in performance studies concerning the theatricality of business is Jon McKenzie's analysis of NASA's Challenger 51-L space shuttle project at Marshall Space Flight Center in the 1980s.³ It introduces three paradigms of performance: *cultural performance*, *organizational performance*, and *techno-performance*.⁴ Cultural performance applies to performance arts but also to performativity in public spaces like parades and weddings.⁵ As in this development, when arts and business become combined, the paradigms of legitimation become combined. According to Lyotard, public values after World War II were put in crisis with former values like *justice* and *equality* being replaced by *efficacy*, *efficiency*, and

1 Darso 2004, 14–15.

2 Whitford 1984, 8–12.

3 McKenzie 2001, 139–153; see also 83–88.

4 McKenzie 2001, 22–23.

5 McKenzie 2001, 29–54.

effectiveness.⁶ Therefore, in performative culture, activities were not seen as artistic performances, but performances of capacity. McKenzie (2001) shows that this mixture might lead to dysfunctionality in business organizations.⁷ It also leads to a competition between two legitimations. By contrast with modernism's (Bauhaus's) artistic principles being emphasized over economics, in the 2000s, arts-in-business economic principles seem to take over the arts and their dialogue seems false.

In his analysis of NASA, McKenzie points out that the workers were not intentionally artistic, which many scholars see as a condition for performance.⁸ Both McKenzie and the 2000s studies of arts-in-business do not emphasize the role of the manager-as-an-artist. In this article, I claim that only if the manager initiates artistic practice and the arts are interrelated to the product, can the arts penetrate the whole enterprise because of the role of managers in making constitutive decisions for the business. I will argue that some managers are able to do this. Furthermore, I will show that these artistic individuals do not employ the traditional representational forms of arts but *theatricality*. I will theorize theatricality as a very important *metalevel* of meaning-making which emerges through collective excitement between the managers of business companies, their staff and customers. I will theorize this metalevel by employing performance scholar Josette Féral's cognitively-oriented theory of theatricality based on the concept of a *cleft* and its variants in other theories.⁹ In the last section of this article, I will examine the Finnish fashion design company, Marimekko, under the management of Armi Ratia, as a business that employs the theatricality of clefts.

UTOPIA AS ONE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK CONNECTING THEATRE AND BUSINESS

According to Antti Ainamo, a scholar of innovation and organizations, the key background term that binds together artistic performance and work places has been social *utopia*.¹⁰ In the 1960s, artistic design was strongly associated with the cultural spirit of the 1960s and the younger generation's revolutionary spirit. Italian philosopher Gianni Vattimo has conceived 1960s design as "an ideology" as part of a larger Marxist utopia, and has considered utopias as mainly negative.¹¹

McKenzie describes the 2000s neo-liberal technological performative utopia as a "mist which envelops any living thing and without which life becomes 'withered', hard, and barren."¹² However, in contrast to Vattimo, Ainamo thinks

6 McKenzie 2001, vii, 162–165; Lyotard 1984.

7 McKenzie 2001, 139–153.

8 Carlson 2004, 5.

9 Féral 2002.

10 Ainamo 2003.

11 Vattimo 1992, 62–64.

12 McKenzie 2001, 3.

that shared utopias may, in some closed circles of people, stimulate creativity and concrete accomplishments that may indirectly have a large positive influence on a society afterwards.¹³ It seems to me that the possibility for arts in business lies in the personalities of artistically talented individuals, and I will argue that novel utopias of new lifestyles and new values can generate creativity and artistic expression in business. In the next sections I will examine two key utopias connecting performance and business: the 2000's arts-in-business model and Bauhaus.

2000S ARTS-IN-BUSINESS

Arts-in-business belongs to the historical context of freeing the neo-liberal global economy, where the concept of performance has been stripped of its human values and it enacts the "Lyotardian" non-humanistic legitimation in which the criteria of a good performance is capacity or productivity.¹⁴ Here, we are confronted with a new kind of utopia that believes that everything can be seen in terms of efficiency or effectiveness, especially one that can be counted by numbers, like economic performance. Giovanni Schiuma's theory of arts-in-business replaces a *conventionalist* definition of arts that is based on the practices of historical institutions of the art-world by a *functionalist* definition, which defines arts according to its aesthetic features.¹⁵ In the first pages of Schiuma's study of arts-in-business, *The Value of Arts for Business*, the feasibility of arts-in-business is defined solely from the perspective of whether it helps the management to make more money instead of less.¹⁶ This theory, advanced by Schiuma, aims to harness the emotive energy of workers.¹⁷

Lotte Darso, a Danish scholar of arts-in-business, brings the artists and their practices more to the fore.¹⁸ Darso describes arts-in-business as the mutual involvement of artists and business people in business encounters: "The new trend [in the 2000s] seems to be that artists are now getting directly involved with business, whereas the relationship used to be a more distant one, based on philanthropy or sponsoring."¹⁹ The motive of business people to employ the arts seems to be, as reflected in Darso's and Schiuma's examples, that the arts help business people to "think differently."²⁰

According to Darso, arts traditionally appeared in business as *decoration* (office employees might display posters, photos, and children's drawings) or as *entertainment* (giving the employees benefits such as tickets for perfor-

13 Ainamo 2003, 20–21.

14 McKenzie 2001, 162–165.

15 Schiuma 2011, 34.

16 Schiuma 2011, 1–3.

17 Schiuma 2011, 3.

18 Darso 2004.

19 Darso 2004, 40.

20 Schiuma 2011, 2.

mances and arts exhibitions to use in their leisure time).²¹ As a higher level of arts-in-business, Darso defined the integration of arts as *instruments* for teambuilding, communication training, problem solving, and innovation processes, and as “*a strategic process of transformation*, involving personal development and leadership, culture and identity, creativity and innovation, as well as customer relations and marketing.”²²

Darso mentions the Danish pharmaceutical company Novo Nordisk as an example of arts as *strategic decoration*: the company decided to hang provocative art on the ceilings, including a painting of the words “Be aggressive!” and a photo of a ballet dancer giving the public her middle finger.²³ According to Darso, these ways of employing art are intended to signal that the employees at Novo Nordisk are free to think differently.²⁴

The level of mutual involvement between the arts and business varies from case to case. One type of involvement is *the use of the arts as a role model*, in which employees of a company learn from artists’ intensiveness and creativity.²⁵ The artist Alastair Creamer and photographer Rut Blees Luxemburg created a project called *Urban Fiction* at Unilever that was understood as such an involvement. The workers at Unilever learned to take photographs (and become artists) in order to alter their ways of seeing.²⁶ According to Creamer: “You also need to give people permission to express [...] THEMSELVES and not just ‘I am an employee at Unilever and therefore I have to talk in this tone of voice.’”²⁷

In Unilever’s project, *Sticky*, the staff was educated in workshops with Improbable Theatre.²⁸ One of Unilever’s employees tells about this process:

*We did a lot of exercises, which were quite uncomfortable. For example, we were animating things, bringing things to life, and we had to bring newspaper to life. [...] I found it very challenging [...] If you can have the same intensity of experience [as artists] in your job, then that is what matters.*²⁹

Sometimes artists create utopian plans in order to promote products. In 2001, Artist Michael Brammer designed a plan to promote Volvo at a car exhibition in Detroit. In Brammer’s plan, a large catapult would literally throw a four-wheel drive Volvo for about seven meters. The Volvo would land onto a

21 Darso 2004, 14.

22 Darso 2004, 14–15.

23 Darso 2004, 15.

24 Darso 2004, 15.

25 Darso 2004, 14; 40.

26 Darso 2004, 110–113.

27 Creamer in Darso 2004, 111.

28 Darso 2004, 14. Improbable Theatre is an English theatre company founded in 1996 by Lee Simpson, Phelim McDermott, Julian Crouch (artistic directors) and producer Nick Sweeting. See <http://www.improbable.co.uk/>

29 Darso 2004, 14.

soft target, in the form of a heart – so that “the car would hit love” instead of being destroyed, and it would be driven away in front of the festival audience. However, Bremmer’s project was cancelled in 2002 because Volvo considered it too risky.³⁰

The Theatre Academy in Helsinki arranged an educational program for artistic interventions into work spaces, *Taiteilija-kehittäjäksi organisaatioon – taiteelliset interventiot* [*Artist-as-developer in an Organization – Artistic Interventions*] during 2014–15. Its motive was that artistic logic and methods would strengthen interaction and creativity, develop working conditions and skills, and support change inside the community.³¹

BAUHAUS

Bauhaus – a German art school founded by Walter Gropius and operational from 1919 to 1933 in Weimar, Dessau, and Berlin – was the modernist counterpart of arts-in-business. Bauhaus combined industrial production of household items, crafts, and the fine arts. It was famous for the approach to design that it produced and taught. Ainamo argues that Bauhaus is the paragon of arts-in-business. It served as a model in the 1960s for the cultural elite in the United States, Europe, and Finland,³² and its influence still continues in the 2000s.³³ The Finnish design industry and architecture was under the strong influence of functionalism through, for example, Alvar Aalto. In the 1960s, designer Kaj Franck was the director of the Finnish Institute of Industrial Arts and applied many of Bauhaus’s principles.³⁴ Bauhaus’s principles prescribed that it was each designer’s responsibility to create design that would have a positive influence on social life, through beauty or practicality.³⁵ In Bauhaus, arts represented social progress. Bauhaus aimed to lower “class-distinctions” and to democratize high arts by designing artistic objects for everyday use at cheap prices.³⁶ Moreover, the utopias of social change influenced consumer patterns because people sympathized with their motives.³⁷

In terms of McKenzie, Bauhaus represented the industrial paradigm of scientific management but did not involve the “artistic” freedom of the individual workers.³⁸ Even though Bauhaus’ theatre studio was envisioned as a place to integrate industry and theatre,³⁹ theatre was never brought into the daily in-

30 Darso 2004, 104.

31 Lehtikoinen, Pässilä, Martin and Pulkki 2016, 7–8.

32 Ainamo 2003, 22.

33 <http://www.designbycaleb.com/2015/05/08/apple-and-the-bauhaus/>

34 Vihma 2011, 21–22.

35 Whitford 1984, 8.

36 Whitford 1984, 12.

37 Ainamo 2003, 21.

38 McKenzie 2001, 56–64.

39 Carlson 1993, 352–353.

dustrial working environment. However, Bauhaus demanded that managers and management have the skills of artists and apply these in the development of their products. Bauhaus's director Walter Gropius wrote as follows:

*The invention of new, expressive forms demands a strong artistic [...] personality. Only the most brilliant (genialsten) ideas are good enough for multiplication by industry and worthy of benefiting not just the individual but the public as a whole.*⁴⁰

SHOULD THE MANAGER BE AN ARTIST?

The question as to whether the manager who makes constitutive decisions about business can be an artist is revealed to involve crucial differences between examples from Bauhaus and the 2000s arts-in-business approaches of Darso and Schiuma. In Darso's and Schiuma's exemplary cases, we cannot detect such an "artist-manager" or guidance. The management were not involved with artistic practices. Artists were hired, but they did not have a say in the core business. The ultimate travesty of the 2000s arts-in-business was evidenced in the operations of the global banks who had been involved in criminal actions and afterwards "cleaned" up their public brand by funding theatre and circus in order to exploit the public's view of arts as representing "transparency, trust and openness."⁴¹ In the above light, Darso's claim about the mutual involvement of arts and business seems a little bit false. The arts were hardly an essential part of the production process of Unilever's or Novo Nordisk's products. In my opinion, eating Unilever's ice-cream does not reflect artistic influence, and neither does the use of Novo Nordisk's medicines.

At Bauhaus, the artistic activities were initiated by the manager. As the arts guided their business thinking, the influence of arts penetrated the production at Bauhaus from the idea to the final products. I think that it is an ideal example of arts in business. One could say that such an artistic personality as manager is a necessary feature, but it has not often been implemented in the 2000s. However, Bauhaus' principles have been followed very successfully in the 2000s by some business managers who are capable of artistic creativity.

Esa Ojala, a former graphic artist and a specialist of business organization development in the 2000s in Finland, has argued that the use of an artistic personality as a manager may be an excellent approach from the perspective of 2000s business management. In his lectures on the development of business institutions, Ojala conceptualizes the role of an expressive individual as a *possibility involved in a personality*.⁴² By emphasizing the manager's personality, Ojala can be understood to reflect Gropius's principles. Pentti Sydänmaanlakka, a scholar of innovations in business, has defined an *innovator* as having a personal talent to know instinctively how to connect differ-

40 Forgács 1995, 7.

41 Schiuma 2011, 143.

42 Ojala 2003.

ent central elements in a new way in the work place:

*[An innovator is] a cross-pollinator i.e. a person who combines things that he has found from different cultures and branches of business [...] [or] a collaborator i.e. gathers together different capacities in order to develop new combinations.*⁴³

Are there any managers who would carry on Bauhaus' principles in the 2000s? I propose that Ojala's principle – a possibility involved in a personality⁴⁴ – and the Bauhaus tradition can be seen to be fulfilled, at least partly, by Steve Job's management at Apple. The documentary movie *Steve Jobs: Billion Dollar Hippy* (2011) emphasizes the social utopia of hippies in the 1960s as Job's background – as a part of the larger American social utopia of the 1960s that was strongly related to the humanist utopia of Bauhaus.⁴⁵ Job's co-operation can be conceived as arts-in-business because his designer, Jonathan Ive, created soft, smooth shapes at Apple which influences the user's personal brand in ways that involved artistic expression – and their design was strongly influenced by Job's knowledge of Bauhaus.⁴⁶ As a private person, Jobs incorporated Apple's innovations in his private household. The ultimately ascetic interior design of Job's private home can be interpreted as symbolizing Ludwig Mies van der Rohe's principle "Less is more."⁴⁷ Jobs associated Apple computers with a new lifestyle that represented freedom for ordinary people. Jobs had to fight for his visions against the normalizing influence of a rival manager at Apple, John Sculley, whose rhetoric appears to match with Schiuma's views of traditional economic calculation. Thus, Bauhaus's principles were not outdated by the 2000s. In terms of McKenzie's theory, their cultural performance seems to have successfully competed with their organizational performance at Apple.

CLEFT AS THE THEORETICAL CONCEPT DEFINING THE ROLE OF THEATRE IN ARTS-IN-BUSINESS

Theatricality in organizations and innovations plays an important role in Jobs' business and other innovative companies. This theatricality does not take the form of artistic representation. Instead, the arts seem to become theatricality in business on a very important metalevel of meaning making, which emerges through the collective excitement of the managers of business companies with their staff and customers, sharing experiences of change and new ideas. Although an integrating theory about the artistic dimensions of theatricality in business has not been made, such a theory can be created on the basis of

43 Sydänmaanlakka 2009, 132–133.

44 Ojala 2003.

45 *Steve Jobs: Billion Dollar Hippy*. 2011. 1:50–3:30.

46 <http://www.designbycaleb.com/2015/05/08/apple-and-the-bauhaus/>
Steve Jobs: Billion Dollar Hippy. 2011. 32:00–34:40.

47 *Steve Jobs: Billion Dollar Hippy*. 2011. 17:25–18:20.

Féral's theory of theatricality.⁴⁸

According to Natalie Corbett, Féral's theory of theatricality conceptualized "theatricality as an attribute that is generated primarily through the cognitive activity of reception."⁴⁹ According to Féral, a spectator's perception of a *cleft* (any deviation of the quotidian reality) in the quotidian environment activates a cognitive process in which the spectator's *gaze* arranges deviations from the everyday continuum so that it frames the deviation as a theatrical event.⁵⁰ Fiction and alterity can emerge from this theatrical space, i.e. the spectator sees the quotidian reality within the frame *as if* it was an alternative reality.⁵¹ An empty theatre stage functions as a cleft because a spectator knows that acts can happen that deviate from the everyday continuum.⁵² Equally, if a witness sees somebody smoking in a subway where smoking is prohibited, the witness may frame the act as theatrical, and begin to imagine what will happen next.⁵³

Féral's theory functions in business as follows. Firstly, in business, the cleft may be a new idea or utopia that creates an unusual situation and makes one see the everyday space from an unusual perspective. From this space of "otherness", the collective excitement can be generated: when business people start envisioning together what kind of product can be created to fulfill new needs, they share their visions collectively through theatricality because a new idea might not be grasped through words. Secondly, once this product has been made, its appearance may involve the same dimension of a cleft: a concrete form of design may materialize a cleft by which the product stands out as different from others and that may stimulate customers to envision new possibilities of change more generally.⁵⁴ An important feature of clefts is accumulation: one cleft tends to generate another in another context and this causes other clefts in different contexts.

Clefts in products generate clefts in narratives of media tales. The theory of *natural narratives* denotes that a problem, a *rupture*, an error, a disorder, or a contradiction in the everyday continuum is the source from which alterity, fictive meanings, and theatrical forms of storytelling spring.⁵⁵ The public begins to imagine when they perceive a deviation from the everyday continuum. Thus, when a business company is marketing its new ideas, they may tell stories about how their products changed their lives.

Clefts may be caused by the unusual mixing of social *matrices* as *bisociation*. Social matrices involve *mental habits*, routines of thinking, and associ-

48 Féral 2002.

49 Corbett 2009, 12.

50 Féral 2002, 97.

51 Féral 2002, 97.

52 Féral 2002, 95–96.

53 Féral 2002, 96.

54 Norman 2004.

55 Hyvärinen 2010, 139–142.

ation – more or less fixed sets of rules connected to a particular social situation.⁵⁶ For instance, practicing the logic of theatre in the context of business is bisociation.⁵⁷ Innovative problem solving can employ an intentional choice to borrow hitherto different codes of social behaviour from one matrix and shift them to another:

*The Latin cogito comes from coagitare, to shake together. Bisociation means combining two hitherto unrelated cognitive matrices in such a way that a new level is added to the hierarchy, which contains the previously separate structures as its members.*⁵⁸

Eventually, a new design of an object can embody all the above features which affect the consumer's cognition. An object may be designed to cause a cleft in its environment: it differs from other objects, it contradicts expectations, it makes people laugh, it brings a change into everyday space, and it stimulates users thinking about how the world could be organized differently than we are used to, and it is still feasible for practical purposes of use.⁵⁹

In business during the 2000s, *user-centered design* functions through clefts: business companies like Microsoft intentionally leave weaknesses in their products. These weaknesses are clefts that make users active in searching for corrections and informing Microsoft about solutions.⁶⁰

CLEFTS IN MARIMEKKO

Marimekko is a Finnish fashion design company that was founded in 1951 by its long-term manager Armi Ratia and her husband, Viljo Ratia (Armi Ratia was the manager of Marimekko during 1951–68, 1971–77, and 1977–79). Marimekko continued the utopia of Bauhaus design that activated cultural elites in Europe and the United States in the 1960s.⁶¹ In its global phase from 1959, it co-operated with a Bauhaus-oriented U.S. company, Design Research, managed by Benjamin Thompson, professor of architecture at Harvard University and a student and work companion of Gropius, Bauhaus's manager.⁶² Marimekko's media tale and its extremely free working culture anticipated the 2000s arts-in-business.

The intentional use of clefts can be detected in many levels of business in Marimekko – however, the issue is such a large one that I can only refer to a few examples in the following. Firstly, I will examine how the ethos of clefts appeared in Marimekko's abstract business principles that can be detected

56 Koestler 1976, 642; 643.

57 Koestler 1976, 645–649.

58 Koestler 1976, 644.

59 Norman 2005, 36–39; See *Steve Jobs: Billion Dollar Hippy*. 2011. 23:30–26:00. 32:00–34:40.

60 McKenzie 2001, 114–115.

61 Ainamo 2004, 22.

62 Saarikoski 1978, 68–71.

from the company's action plans. Ratia's action plan in 1951 was as follows: "Marimekko's functional idea is to apply creative thinking to the world around us."⁶³ A variant of this action plan was manifested in 1965 in a U.S. issue of *Vogue*: "Marimekko is done by people for people who also have the eternal misery of questions why, how, when, what, and again how the world is going to develop."⁶⁴ We can see here the idea that Marimekko aimed to produce design products that would be capable of stimulating its customers to ask questions about the world – products that correspond to the idea of a cleft.

The difference from the average action plans of business companies can be seen by comparing Ratia's action plan with Marimekko's later official action plan from 1971 when Ratia had been replaced as manager of Marimekko by the "economically oriented" Heikki T. Tavela. In this we can see what an average business plan looks like:

*1. The company will focus on the design, production and sales of its currently most profitable products: printed textiles and dresses. 2. The company will also use its capacity of design and marketing to promote other companies' products as part of the Marimekko brand. 3. The above activities will also be determined by the achievements of the plan for increasing profitability.*⁶⁵

This contrasts with Ratia's action plan which reflected the idea of clefts: to make design that would generate new thoughts and deviating practices.

ONE CLEFT GENERATES OTHERS IN MARIMEKKO

The utopia of Bauhaus design and its liberal social promises can be understood as a cultural cleft that influenced Armi Ratia as a specialist in design.⁶⁶ A new cultural space of "otherness" in the 1950s made it possible for Armi Ratia to introduce an industrial cleft: through bi-sociation, she changed the production system of Printex, a company that was partly owned by her husband, Viljo Ratia. Printex had produced large household fabrics such as tablecloths, curtains, and oilcloths, but Ratia used print textiles for a radically different production system: *haute couture*.⁶⁷ Armi Ratia – from now on "Ratia" – combined two systems of production. She ordered a fashion collection from a young Finnish fashion designer, Riitta Immonen. The collection was made from textiles printed by Printex's technique used on oilcloths, which created a novel trademark, Marimekko.⁶⁸ This was an unforeseen idea in which simple patterns, bright colours, and thick, comfortable and practical textiles that had been formerly seen on tablecloths and curtains were used in a small hand-

63 Karsi 1995, 48.

64 Karsi 1995, 50. This sentence was written by Anneli Karsi, the former communications chief at Marimekko, who was not a native English speaker, and, therefore, the grammar of this sentence is not correct.

65 Karsi 1995, 50.

66 Ainamo, 2004, 22.

67 Ratia 2002, 14.

68 Ratia 2002, 51.



FIGURE 1. Annika Rimala. "Oasis" 1967.
Photo Designmuseo Helsinki

made series of *haute couture* and sportive "playwear for adults".⁶⁹

As an innovator in Sydänmaanlakka's terms: Ratia was a cross-pollinator who combined a production system of household items with another of haute couture, and a collaborator who gathered together young designers and financiers to develop new combinations.⁷⁰ In Ratia's business management, theatrical eventness was a characteristic of her management style: ideas were introduced to the public in spectacular events from the very beginning. In 1951, Marimekko's first fashion show in Kalastajatorppa, a fancy restaurant in Helsinki, was an unexpected and enormous success.⁷¹ The excitement of customers was arguably based on the cleft generated by the products themselves: the products were startlingly different from the usual fashion design and introduced clefts on several different levels: external influence, mechanisms of production, marketing, use of products.

69 Ratia 2002, 57.

70 Sydänmaanlakka 2009, 132–133.

71 Karsi 1995, 8.

SYSTEMATIC GENERATION OF CLEFTS IN MARIMEKKO THROUGH MEANS OF THEATRE

Marja-Leena Parkkinen and Jörn Donner have demonstrated the artistic nature of Ratia's social activity within Marimekko's working culture.⁷² According to Donner, who was a former member of Marimekko's board of directors as well as, significantly, a famous theatre and film director, Marimekko's economic history tells us less about finance and more about artistic activities:

*From many perspectives, Armi Ratia was a creative author, if by an author it is understood that such a person invents novel things creatively, builds amazing connections, or sees reality and dreams in new ways.*⁷³

Such features as "seeing reality in new ways" and making connections relate to the theory of clefts. Parkkinen described Ratia's personal involvement in the company as a sort of shamanism and Ratia's principle, metaphorically, as follows: "She changed reality into play and play into reality."⁷⁴ It can be understood that "reality" meant a continuum of everyday reality, and "play" the space of otherness from which fiction emerges. Ratia employed theatricality in the generation of clefts:

*I was playing the role of a great manager with a magic stick in my hand. I played the role of a director, a set designer, an actor, a leader of an orchestra, a choreographer, a cleaner, a child, a jester, a woman, and a man. There was not a role into which I was not able to adapt.*⁷⁵

CLEFTS IN THE LEVELS OF SOCIAL BEHAVIOR IN MARIMEKKO

Ratia seemed to aim to build a working culture in which workers and designers made social clefts in order to stimulate each other's creativity. In terms of Darso, this is arts as a strategic process of transformation.⁷⁶ One example is Ratia's meeting with designer Liisa Suvanto. One afternoon, Suvanto could not find Ratia in the company. Eventually Suvanto found Ratia in her living room at her home in Kaivopuisto, sitting naked in the bathtub while having a telephone conversation (Ratia's bathtub was actually in the living room, which was also an intervention). Suvanto could not wait for Ratia to finish the call. She tore away the telephone, which accidentally sunk under the water. Ratia screamed that the telephone would cause an electric shock, and that Suvanto's intention was to kill her. Suvanto proposed that they call the telephone company and ask if it is possible to die from a wet telephone. They did, and the answer was no. After their quarrel, Ratia and Suvanto discussed work issues as if nothing had happened.⁷⁷ Such strategic processes of trans-

72 2005; Donner 1986.

73 Donner 1986, 8.

74 Parkkinen 2005, 183.

75 Parkkinen 2005, 183.

76 Darso 2004, 14–15.

77 Gummerus 2003.



Figure 2. On the cliff at Bökars 1969. Photo Designmuseo.

formation involved unusual behavior in some contexts, in other words bisociation. Such bisociation can be interpreted as intentional because Ratia repeated it herself and allowed workers to create such social clefts.

Ratia dramatically announced one day that everyone should stop working and instead arrange a summer picnic inside the Marimekko factory. She insisted that the workers create “summer” inside the factory by using Marimekko textiles and their imaginations. Food, wine and musicians were also ordered.⁷⁸ The staff improvised a set design and created a theatrical performance.

Another example was a birthday present for Ratia’s close friend, the Finnish ceramist Birger Kaipiainen. Ratia asked Kaipiainen what he wanted as a birthday present. Kaipiainen answered, “a pond full of lily pads”. Ratia ordered the Marimekko staff to set design the yard at Bökars, Marimekko’s manor. They built an artificial pond made from hundreds of designed glass containers, lighted candles, and real lily pads, which were gathered from the environment of Bökars with the permission of the Bökars county council. When the pond was revealed in the evening, a surprised Kaipiainen burst into tears.⁷⁹ This also exemplifies Darso’s notion of *prototyping*, what busi-

78 Parkkinen 2005, 183.

79 Ratia 2002, 32.

ness can learn from arts: “Externalizing a mental image or a feeling, putting thoughts into matter.”⁸⁰

CLEFTS AS A MEDIA STRATEGY OF MARIMEKKO

Ratia employed clefts in her marketing of Marimekko’s idea as a media performance. The strategy to transform everyday space into an event (corresponding to the 2000s media strategies) shows that Marimekko cannot be solely understood in the context of the 1960s and 1970s. The major site of Marimekko’s media performance was Bökars, Marimekko’s manor near Borgå, in South-Eastern Finland. Hundreds of visitors were brought to Bökars annually. Visitors were sometimes dressed in Marimekko clothes upon arrival at Bökars.⁸¹ This ritual created the magical environment of a play. The visitors to Bökars felt that they had left the normal world. The environment was artificially decorated – lights (hundreds of candles or torches) and flowers were often used (arts as decoration).⁸² Happenings were arranged, such as when naked models (professionals and female members of Marimekko’s staff) ran around the meadow near the manor carrying Marimekko-textiles.⁸³ In the 1960s, activity at Bökars was carried on by a collective that seemed to believe that fashion design would truly change the world into a better place, similar to the hippie movement’s idea of esoteric spiritualism. Interventions, such as ridiculous and spontaneous acts were performed. Once, a helicopter was sent to buy milk from a nearby village. Ratia’s son, Ristomatti Ratia describes Ratia’s spontaneous behavior:

*Bökars was again full of international guests. [...] We decided to take a boat and drive to [...] the nearby island. [...] When we arrived there] a helicopter landed [...] and Armi walked out carrying a basket of provisions with two American friends. Obviously she decided that her idea was not successful. She left the basket with us and disappeared roaring into the sky with her friends.*⁸⁴

Tarmo Manni, an actor at the Finnish National Theatre and a close friend of Ratia, manifested arts as entertainment.⁸⁵ He acted as a master of ceremonies, performed poetry, played fictive “gypsy” characters, sung, arranged theatrical events for the business associates of Marimekko, and accompanied visitors in saunas.⁸⁶

On the basis of the above anecdotes, it seems that Marimekko corresponds to what Darso thinks that business can learn from the arts: “qualities such as

80 Darso 2004, 150.

81 Ratia 2002, 32. This notion is also based on my own experiences at Bökars.

82 Darso 2004, 14.

83 Ratia 2002, 26; 35.

84 Ratia 2002, 35.

85 Darso 2004, 14.

86 Ratia 2002, 27, 30–32.



FIGURE 3. Armi Ratia. Photo: Arto Hallakorpi

energy, imagination, sensitivity and expression” and prototyping.⁸⁷ I suggest that the cleft-based theory can be integrated into earlier theories of arts-in-business. The emphasis on the special talent of an “artist-manager” is my new addition to these theories. The fact that these cases are rare does not undermine this theory because excellent art is rare. One explanation for this rareness can be drawn from McKenzie’s notion that cultural, organizational, and technological performances try to take advantage over others. In McKenzie’s case of NASA this led to a disaster.⁸⁸ Both Ratia and Jobs were sacked from their companies by authorities who represented organizational performance and argued that Ratia’s and Jobs’ ideas were too utopian: Ratia was sacked in 1968 by the board of managers of Marimekko,⁸⁹ Jobs was sacked by the manager of Apple, Sculley.⁹⁰ Yet both were asked to return afterwards – maybe because their companies were cleft-oriented and therefore traditional managers did not have the knowledge and talent to manage them.

87 Darso 2004, 149–150.

88 McKenzie 2001, 139–153.

89 Parkkinen 2005, 219; Koivuranta, Pehkonen, Sorjanen, Vainio & Karlsson 2015, 81.

90 *Steve Jobs: Billion Dollar Hippy* 2011. 23:30–26:00. 32:00–34:40

CONCLUSION

In this article, I have examined what role theatrical performance has in two kinds of arts-in-business, the one based on the utopia of Bauhaus, and the other based on the utopia of the neo-liberal economy. I have arrived at the conclusion that the integration of arts and business requires that the manager follow artistic principles: only then can the arts penetrate the business organization. Theatrical performance in arts-in-business seems not to be a traditional approach but a cognitive metalevel of the gestural collective sharing of excitement of new ideas, and a level through which clefts are made in order to stimulate creativity. I have shown that Féral's theory of a cleft explains why and how this theatricality generates creativity. I propose that a theory of *clefts-in-business* is needed in arts-in-business because otherwise the role of arts and theatricality in business cannot be fully appreciated.

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