

# *Theses*

Over the past five years of artistic research and, later, while writing and analyzing my dissertation manuscript, I have uncovered findings that have significantly affected my thought process and my way of seeing, observing, and working with art. Some of these findings are listed below.

1. Artworks are active participants in perception and memory. They co-create perception of reality with the viewer and the artist, intervening in how experience is formed and felt.
2. Borrowing perspective and methodological inspiration from archaeology, perception and alteration of it can be revealed by following a certain attitude, which I call perception excavation. Through slowness, self-observation, and repeated return to documentation, perception excavation made the transformation of perception traceable.
3. An artist becomes a participant observer through embeddedness in a situation, double attention (participating while observing), and translation of that experience into artistic form.
4. Art participates in memory by triggering hidden layers. These memories resurface as a bodily experience of familiarity. Artworks, images, and places can reorganize mnemonic chronology and produce new recollections, which are half-memories and half-fiction.
5. Documentation became a model of memory: it presents a fragment of an absent event. Because it points to what is hidden or no longer present, documentation can activate associations and operate as a cryptic encounter in itself.

6. Authentic artistic encounter requires intimacy and personal connection; working from distant or borrowed sources without lived proximity produces ethical and creative distance.

7. In the project Archive of Absence insight, archiving is also subtraction, in the sense that removing and preserving an artifact creates an absence at its place of origin, and that absence later also ceases to exist and is overwritten by time.

8. Materials are active memory agents. Dust, touch, wear, and prior use charge objects with specific energies. When objects from different sources are placed together, their material histories interact and affect perception.

9. There is a metaphorical parallel between artist and archivist. Neither of them is neutral. They both create meaning through selection, omission, and intuitive human choices. Therefore, an archive and an art exhibition are both subjective curated narratives.

# *Abstract*

This dissertation is a subjective artistic research into art as an active participant in memory and perception. I work through my own ‘cosmos’ (heritage, biography, intuition) using a method I call perception excavation—slowness, attentive observation, self-observation, and documentation of shifting impressions. Chapter I frames the dissertation within the context of artistic research (Mika Hannula, Henk Slager) and phenomenology (van Manen). It sets the theoretical base for the dissertation. Chapter II turns to anthropology (Tim Ingold) and asks how an artist can be a participant observer. The thought process unfolds through Georgian painter Niko Pirosmani (1862-1918) and a meditative dialogue with his painting, *The Feast of Molokans*. Chapter III enters Jung’s cryptomnesia and participation mystique, tracing how an image of Macedonian/Serbian painter Ljiljana Blaževska (1944-2020) rearranges my architecture of memory and leads to a research trip to Belgrade. Resources from Walter Benjamin and Boris Groys sharpen the problem of documentation. Chapter IV gathers five years at the Hungarian University of Fine Arts as layered reports of practice, failures, and reorientations. What I have learned in this process and how my perception of art has shifted are synthesized in the chapter. Chapter V, on the artistic project *The Lingering Presence*, threads through an exhibition and two films; this triad forms my masterpiece for the dissertation. This project treats the archive as an active, non-neutral process.