This is the new entrance to FLOW.
Swimming with a singer-songwriter, featuring Mikko Rikala.

Here's what you didn't know about alt-country star Ryan Adams.

Lana Del Rey’s American nightmares, plant cutting craze, the smallest talk etc.

The most quiet places from abandoned villas to forgotten museums.

The design hippie Laura Väinölä creates a flower altar for yoga people.

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Frank Ocean sings about love and God and God and love.

Pool of Alma

Alma: “We never really traveled when we were little. Our parents are both on disability pension and we didn’t have loads of money. Whenever our classmates traveled to Thailand or Tenerife for winter holidays we took a cruise to Tallinn. When me and Anna turned eighteen we traveled to London with our friends. We stayed for five days, drank.”

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CUTTING EDGE

UNITED STATES OF LDR

Lana Del Rey’s American dream consists of lust, joy and gloomy sixties.

STATE OF MIND The breakthrough album Born to Die (2012) introduced a morbid but desperately romantic character. Elizabeth Woolridge Grant was born in June 1985 but it took her over 20 years to realize that the artist Lana Del Rey needs to lower her voice to be taken seriously and gain immortality. “Now I sing quite low... well, for a female anyway”, the singer-songwriter-fashion icon has said.

STATE OF INSPIRATION Lana Del Rey has mentioned she is a fan of Axl Rose and Father John Misty. The hard rock singer has inspired her to write songs like Guns and Roses and the latter performs in her 2015 video Freak.

STATE OF TIME She can always get back to the gloomy sixties, like in the JFK themed video National Anthem. Her album Ultraviolence lends its title from Anthony Burgess’ novel The Clockwork Orange (1962) in which the protagonist Alex encourages his street patrol to be “ultra-violent”. In her 2014 single Ultraviolence the line “He hit me and it felt like a kiss” refers to The Crystals’ song (1962). She sings: “I can hear violins, violins, Give me all of that ultraviolence.”

STATE OF EMOTION Joie de vivre is taking her over on her fifth album Lust for Life (2017). On the title track: a collaboration with The Weeknd - she claims that yearning for fun keeps her alive. “Climb up the H of the Hollywood sign, yeah, In these stolen moments, The world is mine.”

Words Tapio Koli
Illustration Kaarlo Stauffer
Ando Art at Flow 11th Aug

Stimulating quote:
“DO I PRACTICE MAGIC? I AM MAGIC”
- Princess Nokia

UNITED STATES OF LDR

You can have “a child”, give it a good home and watch it grow. You have the opportunity to be creative by creating new life. It’s satisfying!

Plant cutting swapping has become a craze. People are astonishingly excited about getting new green into their pots. The old advice is that talking to plants helps them grow. New wisdom tells us that talking to plant geeks helps your plants grow. You can get deep into plant jargon, drop some Latin and discuss irrigation, soil pH, color of light, room temperature and air humidity. Like fussing about vinyl records but ecological.

People exchange cuttings – it’s a cheap way to get some rare species.

This is no secret society. Just jodel you need a cutting of Philodendron pertusum and exchange them at the Flow entrance. Remember sensitivity; plants are delicate.
WHAT YOU UP TO TONIGHT?

VESTA: “I was planning to go to the publishing of Naška magazine at Tavastia club.”

DAVID LEWIS: “I am gonna watch Veep on HBO and be glad that I don’t live in the US anymore.”

MATTI JÄMSEN: “I’m flying back home to Helsinki. When I get home I’m just going to enjoy milk. Actually I have some with me at the moment. ”

NESTOR KURKO: “Towards infinite opportunity.”

Small Talk

Nothing like Kurko which I think is somewhat scary.”

any long drink but a traditional and authentic one.

usually works.”

When I get home I’m just going to enjoy

milk. Actually I have some with me at the moment. ”

I FEEL LIKE DANCING. ANY GOOD TUNED IN MIND?

VESTA: “Murua Masa’s song What If I Go? It’s great!”

DAVID LEWIS: “I’d wanna dance, but I don’t know how to dance. Mostly I just cross my arms and sort of rock back and forth. There’s a band called Wild Flag – with members of Sleater Kinsey and Helium - that I like and they’re great for that. You can dance, but I’m not gonna dance and you can’t make me.”

MATTI JÄMSEN: “I have lots of them but Madonna usually works.”

VESTA: “I’m not that impressive. I can’t compete with a flower crown really. I think mostly I take a lot of photos of food and my cat and I hope people think, ‘his cat seems cool, so he might be ok too.’”

MATTI JÄMSEN: “I think I make an impression by just being my own wonderful self. And by cooking food to others which I am best at. I also try to behave properly and make good jokes.”

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JUHO “JUN-HIS” VANHANEN: “Beeb beeb beeb...”

VESTA: “Just being honest and myself.”

WHICH ONE HURTS MORE: RECEIVING A MESSAGE REPLY SAYING “OK” OR “OK.”??

VESTA: “The latter one is ruder because it says that the conversation is finished. I don’t like to use periods in messages anyway.”

DAVID LEWIS: “I would say ‘Ok!’ if I was really serious or angry, but otherwise I think ‘ok’ is fine however you want to use it.”

MATTI JÄMSEN: “Ok with a period absolutely. The period implicates something final. It is much more insulting without it. If the message reply just says ‘OK’ it means that it was written in a hurry.”

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VESTA: “Just being honest and myself.”

WHERE DO YOU THINK WE ARE ALL HEADING TO?

VESTA: “Everyone is constantly heading home.”

DAVID LEWIS: “Towards infinite opportunity.”

MATTI JÄMSEN: “We all are heading towards eternity. But before that everybody goes to the Flow Festival of course. After that towards eternity.”

JUHO “JUN-HIS” VANHANEN: “Beeb beeb beeb...”

VESTA: “I hope we’re heading towards a life of happiness.”

OK, BYE.
PIECES OF THE FESTIVAL PUZZLE ARE BEING PUT TOGETHER. THE FLOW AREA HAS GROWN BY 1.5 HECTARES BUT THE CAPACITY IS STILL 25,000 PEOPLE PER DAY. MORE SPACE, MORE FUN FUN FUN.

MAIN ENTRANCE
The gate to Flow is relocated to the top of Parrukatu. Tickets are changed into wristbands nearby. The bike parking is moved next to Marihaan mattalaituri, the “carpet pier”.

BALLOON STAGE
The globe-shaped stage is getting its own area right next to the new main entrance. The Colosseum of Flow has three entrances and double the seats, at over 1600.

THE NEW BLACK TENT
It’s 40 metres wide and 70 metres long; fit for 8000 spectators – that’s 30% more than last year. There’s a new green area, bars, drinks and loads of stuff to spoil your bad mood.

EERO AARNIO DOME
The special place in Balloon area. Sit in design master Eero Aarnio’s classic furniture like the Bubble Chair (1968) and drink champagne or craft beer out of real glasses.

THE NEW BACKYARD
The favorite chill-out zone is getting even more relaxed. Find your inner peace in yoga classes, refresh your body with purest super food and appreciate the beauty of nature in Laura Viikinmäki’s flower altar. Keywords: hippie, tantra, vegan.

TOILETS
This year there’s even more lavatories for your sweet releases.

MAIN STAGE
The great stage is moved back just a bit and many of the obstacles in the pit are removed. Better view and more space to dance!

RESIDENT ADVISOR
FRONT YARD
New venue is like the Backyard but bigger and faster. Go ahead, take over the rough, club-like, container-filled area.

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THREE OF FLOW’S RESTAURANTS REVEAL THEIR SECRET INGREDIENTS. THE MYSTERIOUS GREEN AND BROWN THINGS ARE FINALLY LAID OPEN!

**GRÖN:** PICKLED BIRCH LEAVES

The shelves in Grön are full of boxes filled with special ingredients: pickled pine needles, salt-dried apples, roasted barley and all kinds of plants that chef TOKI KOŠTIAN has foraged and preserved himself.

“What’s in the box filled with large yellow pipe-shaped things?”

“It’s dried wild horseradish that I found in Sipoo”, Kostian explains. Grön is one of Flow’s most anticipated restaurants this year. The contemporary Scandinavian fine dining establishment opened in Helsinki in 2015 and was soon named the restaurant of the year by the Finnish Gastronomic Society. Kostian, one of the owners of Grön, was named the chef of the year in 2016.

“Our food is based on top quality seasonal ingredients. During the winter you cannot get anything fresh in Finland. That’s why we use a lot of preserved ingredients.”

Preserved ingredients will be on the plates at Flow too, even though August is the best time for fresh vegetables. They are also good for seasoning, because they usually taste salty, sweet or vinegary.

Kostian’s plans for the Flow Festival menu are in progress. The style of cooking will be pretty much the same as in Grön restaurant. The experimental chef takes a white bowl-shaped plate and starts composing. First some smoke-flavoured organic quinoa, then some roasted beetroot slices seasoned with rhubarb-vinaigrette and dried thyme. On top of that Kostian arranges leaf chicory, raw rhubarb, wood sorrel and fried beetroot. He adds horseradish cream and dill oil sauce on top.

“And of course the secret ingredient: pickled birch leaves.”

“It is a really Finnish flavour that suits the late summer Flow.”

**LEVANT:** FRESH MINT

Yes, they use a lot of fresh ingredients such as lemon, lettuce and herbs in Levant. “Our food is not too spicy or strong. It’s the freshness that everybody likes”, founder and CEO MAZEN AL KHADOUR says. Eastern Mediterranean Levant opened its doors in Helsinki in 2015 and over the last two years it has grown to span three new outlets. This is their second time at Flow Festival.

Can you reveal the secret ingredient in Levant’s dishes?

“Fresh mint”, chef Al Khadour says immediately. “The mint that we use gives the food extra special flavour which people recognize immediately.”

In his hometown Damascus, mint is an all-purpose herb. The quality of mint is essential for the chef.

“When it comes to mint we have the best supply. Sometimes it comes from Morocco, sometimes from the Middle East. It depends on the season. Although mint is the key element, in the end every dish is the sum of all its parts. “The dish is always combined in such a way that the outcome is perfect.”

**ROOTS HELSINKI:** HOME-MADE PEANUT DIP

Not just another café, this Vaasankatu place serves 100% vegan raw cakes and bowl foods. They also have a yoga studio in the back, so you can combine a vinyasa flow lesson with a post-yoga chia pudding.

This year Roots is attending Flow Festival for the first time and bringing the whole concept with them. There will be yoga classes held at the festival!

The food selection at Flow will include their most popular dish: Nyhtis Goes Oriental. The bowl food that contains marinated red cabbage, tamarin flavored carrots, quinoa, kale, lime, sesame seeds and chilli, among other things. The main ingredient is nyhtikauru aka pulled oats, which Finns went borkers for in 2016. Despite Roots Helsinki being a vegan café, they have a lot of non-vegan clients.

“It is nice to see that even committed carnivores patronize our place and don’t care if the food is vegan or not. Our goal is to make our dishes so good that everyone likes them”, says JOHANNES LAINE, one of the founders of Roots Helsinki.

And the secret ingredient of Nyhtis Goes Oriental is?

“Home-made peanut dip sauce is what makes the dish ridiculously good. We put a little chilli in it and that gives the food a nice spicy heat.”
There are known knowns. Those are things we know that we know.

Known Known: Ryan Adams is a wildly prolific alt-country rocker, who has tried to get away from that label for most of his professional life. In any article or review written about him, his Canadian/cheesemeister colleague Bryan Adams pops up by default, and knowing that I thought I'd get it out of the way in the second sentence. Bizarette, these days Ryan is more popular than Bryan, and Bryan now gets confused them. On his latest record (2017) Prisoner Ryan has (again) embraced a classic 80's sound, and as he's been prone to do in recent years. Beats heckling Ryan is more popular than Bryan, and Bryan now gets the hecklers, I guess; give them what they want and thus we've pretty much come full circle. The only thing missing is a duet, and knowing Ryan's sense of humour it is his first truly postmodern record, the first instance where he blows up his artifici persona, like a snake shedding its skin.

“There are known unknowns. That is to say, there are things that we know we don’t know.”

Known Known: Ryan Adams does his best work when he’s trying to get away from being “Ryan Adams”. On Love is Hell pt. I (2009) he channeled Radiohead on Political Scientist, inventing Coldplay in the process. On Cold Roses (2005) he outdid Jerry Garcia and Robert Hunter on the glorious Grateful Dead pastiches of the title track and Magnolia Mountain, even to the extent that GD’s original bassist spent the next year including those songs in his live set alongside actual Grateful Dead songs.

He’s equally great when he assumes another personality, like he did on his breakthrough band Whiskeytown’s debut Faithless Street (1995), where he channelled a soured Paul Westerberg doing a drunk-impression of Wilco’s Jeff Tweedy, who of course was imitating Westerberg to begin with. Confused? You will be.

Unknown Unknown: Like any great songwriter, Adams has learned his craft through a process of assimilation and imitation. This isn’t to say that he lacks unique and idiosyncratic talent, or that “his songs sound like Silver Jews or Paul Westerberg doing a drunk-impression of Wilco’s Jeff Tweedy” who of course was imitating Westerberg to begin with. Confused? You will be.

Known Known: Adams is a true artist as the extent that GD’s original bassist spent the next year including those songs in his live set alongside actual Grateful Dead songs. His tenacity and fearless abandon in following his muse set him apart from his peers. Adams is a true artist in the sense that he doesn’t fear failure, but seems to, if anything, thrive on it. His greatest peaks often follow his most crushing lows: Heartbreaker was the summation of Whiskeytown’s drying up its own label limbo dead end, in a similar way to the new album, Prisoner being a summation of his marriage to Mandy Moore shuting up in divorce (he reportedly wrote eighty songs for the project). Strange enough, the new album, Prisoner might be the follow-up to Heartbreaker people have been waiting for all these years. A break-up record following the demise of a band in which the songwriter could blend into a collective (Whiskeytown in 1999, backing band The Cardinals in 2006), it puts Adams back in the driver’s seat both stylistically and spiritually, and thus completes the process of re-emergence begun by the string of small releases on his own label Pax Am begun in 2011 and culminating in the self-titled solo record of 2017.

On Prisoner, we encounter a Ryan Adams who has changed so much that he in fact paradoxically re-mains the same, a circle being unwittingly completed by evading its original point of departure, unknown to himself, a familiar face among faces that have grown so familiar, we’ve started to question who they really are.

“There are also known unknowns. There are things we don’t know we don’t know.”

Known Known: Looking at Ryan Adams’ mercurial career, it is easy to feel inclined that he might be his generation’s equivalent of a Bob Dylan or a Neil Young, if for no other reason the sheer output he’s man-aged in just under two decades: 16 albums in 17 years! The feverish self-erasiveness and stylistic diversity of his albums point towards this reading, too. We’ve yet to experience born-again Christian rock or Vocoder experiments from him, but truth be told, it probably wouldn’t surprise anyone who’s followed his career from the start, if the were to release such outlandish stuff.

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Words: Jean Ramsay Images: Pauliina Holma

Ryan Adams at Flow 2017
WE FOUND PLACES IN HELSINKI WHERE YOU CAN JUST SHUT UP. IT'S NICE AND QUIET AND THEN IT'S NICE AND QUIET SOME MORE.

ABANDONED SILENCE: Kruunuvuori’s villa
The Kruunuvuori villa area is disappearing. The 19th and 20th century villas were previously owned by Finns, then Germans, then Soviets. They’ve been burnt and destroyed by their visitors since they were built. They’re rotting. One can still find quiet spots, even though the construction site of the new district of Kruununvuorenrinteemi reminds that this area for modern-time wannabe-archaeologists will soon be gone. If you don’t mind moody smells, dangers of shaky houses and drunken squatters, visit the only remaining villa, Hällebo.

LEAF THROUGH SILENCE: Arkadia Bookshop, Nervanderinkatu 11
In a pink house there is a second-hand bookshop on the corner, in which they promise tranquility and a space for thoughts. If you happen to not have any, you can flip through books by people who’ve managed to publish their ideas. It’s not like a normal bookshop where you can only find Stabilos and your way to the cashier, but, as tacky as it sounds, a living room. There are carpets and sofas and a piano, a shelf for first edition and coffee for 2 euros. You can sit. If you’re aiming to avoid too much literary conversation and to keep your nerdy ambitions to yourself, please check the timetable, since the store is known for its cultivated events.

STATUS SILENCE: Villa Gyllenbergs Kuusisaarenpolku 11
Aleksis Kivi is staring at you. Judgingly but acceptingly. You have entered the art house property that is called the most beautiful in Finland. The sculpture of the author’s head is massive. There’s another head behind the villa of composer Jean Sibelius, nodding the same way. The seaside home of the banker Ane Gyllenberg, built in 1938, opens up a world of Nationalist daydreams. Art-wise, it’s like the full canon. Helene Schjerfbeck, Akseli Gallen-Kallela, Albert Edelfelt and Hugo Simberg make it feel like the 100 years of Finland is a 1,000 year reign.

FOREST SILENCE: Uutela, Vuosaari

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FOREST SILENCE: Uutela, Vuosaari
CABIN SILENCE: Villa Fleamarket, Linnunlauluntie 8
If you don’t live in the quiet neighborhood of Töölö, just visit someone else’s home. Rheumatism doctor Juhani Kirpila filled his apartment with his collection of Finnish art. After his death, the entire sixth floor of the functionalistic Doctors’ House was opened as an art slash home museum. This summer there’s a 25th anniversary exhibition showing contemporary art plus the usual string quartet-concerts and queer-themed tours. So drop by on Wednesday afternoons when culture is served silent.

Seagull Silence: Sisä-hattu Island, Lauttasaari
No need for Moses here: put your Speedos on and swim across the Baltic sea to the rocky island of solitude. No need for spray cans here: carve your parietal art design onto a rock under your feet like the Swedish-speaking slackers have done for ages. No need for Spotify speakers here: the soundscape consists of motor boats by-passing, seagulls squawking and hypothermia-proof swimmers making calm ripples. Words are very unnecessary. No need for: anything else.

Art Silence: Taidekoti Kirpilä, Hesperiankatu 7
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Moist Silence: Kaisaniemi Botanic Garden, Unioninkatu 44
Here are the useful numbers of the University of Helsinki Botanical Garden. The greenhouse has over 800 different species of plants. The gardens have over 2800 species. The gardening started in 1763. The Palm House was built in 1880. Okay, be quiet now and enjoy the moisture.

Cabin Silence: Villa Fleamarket, Linnunlauluntie 8
The villa n:o 9 on the top of city oasis Töölö bay feels more like a haunted house than a fancy 19th century lace lodge. Classical music is playing Kubrick-ishly, though there is no way it could fill the massive 4-meter rooms. It says fleamarket outside – 28 rooms and 4 floors are stuffed with books, furniture, carpets, toys, anything you can think of from almost any century – but honestly it’s hard to imagine anyone buying anything here. It’s exciting enough to try to get through narrow paths without making the great walls of things collapse. The house is owned by 1960’s activist Aulis Junes, the only one who agreed to help drug addicts at the time. He won’t let anyone touch the house even though the city of Helsinki is pressuring hard for renovations. It smells old. The door is almost always open, even when Aulis himself isn’t on the top of his hill. His place is an antidote for the efficiency of the neighboring railroads and the Töölönlahti fitness hound dogs.

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Hey, Mikko Joensuu, take a break from songwriting and get wet‘n’wild in the waterpark!

always be like water

Images: Nick Tulinen
Style: Juho Pihlajaoja
Makeup: Essi Kylmänen
Location: Serena Water Park
MIKKO JOENSUU CURRICULUM VITAE

SINGER-SONGWRITER MAESTRO WITH MAJESTIC SOUND
AWARDS AND FIVE STAR REVIEWS FOR THE AMEN ALBUM TRILOGY
COTTAGE STUDIO BUILDER
SPECIALIST ON DEATH AND GOD
dance to a different beat.

Fly to 60 destinations throughout the USA with airberlin.
LISTEN. YOUNG DESIGNER OF THE YEAR, QUEEN OF FLOWERS LAURA VÄINÖLÄ WILL MAKE YOU DROP YOUR SMARTPHONE AT FLOW. PEACE, RELAXATION AND YOGA IS TO BE FOUND AT VÄINÖLÄ’S FLOWER ALTAR.
Designer Laura Viinölä is the hardest working hippie in Helsinki. She sips some green tea in her office in Punavuori and speaks with a pleasantly calm voice about being busy. The Young Designer of the Year 2016 stresses more now than ever, while creating experience that reduces stress.

She’s creating an impact already. Frame Magazine called her the Queen of Flowers in an article on cool Nordic design. In this case, Nordic coolness does not indicate white rooms and birch wood furniture but color, abundance and a feeling of holiness.

While Flow Festival is known as a celebration of sound and dance, Viinölä is making sure that festival-goers experience something brand new. She will let the party people calm down.

This mentor of quietness has planned a flower altar for Flow. You could say it is the main act of the new Backyard. In the area festival-goers can get cozy on the ground, drink tea or alcohol-free drinks, do yoga or focus on relaxing music.

Alters have fascinated Viinölä since she visited Vietnam last January. Vietnamese constructions combined the holy and the earthly – gods were offered everything from cookies to cigarettes.

Mediators between the gods and the average people are a part of Vietnam’s own religion, Caodaisim. The Flow altar will also have an interactive aspect.

“I wondered if messages could travel more person to person at festivals.”

To make the holy ideas more tangible, let’s take a look at her moodboard for the project. There are images of red roses, a glowing eye, an eight-fingered hand, a dog with tiger fur, a woman hidden under fabric and so on. A sense of holiness is evident, yes, but then again: what does it mean?

Questioning is not relevant. Viinölä’s ultimate goal is to let the visitor relax.

“It’s so hard to create an experience if the person isn’t present. A year ago, I went to the Yayoi Kusama exhibition at the Louisiana museum in Denmark, and everyone there had their phones in their hands instead of concentrating on the experience.

The conversation moves to questions of faith – Viinölä hesitates. She hasn’t been able to commit to one single faith since parting ways with the church in secondary school, even if she flirts with religion in her work.

“Spirituality is sensitivity for me; sensing things, situations and feelings. It happens through being present.”

Viinölä believes that there are things in the world that cannot be explained logically. It doesn’t necessarily mean there’s a god.

“Maybe my piece lets festival-goers connect to some higher power, but for me it’s more about the community that comes together at Flow.”

The inner hippie in Viinölä started coming to life five years ago. At the time, she walked past a flower supplier and was drawn in by the diversity and colors of the plants.

“Flowers fascinate because they cannot be completely controlled. They’re pieces of nature and must be respected as such.

For Viinölä, they provided a new way to channel her creativity – one she had been looking for. As a six-year-old she started at the Steiner school in Lahti, and creativity has been important for her ever since. She worked in reputed advertising and design agencies after her graphic design studies at the Lahti Institute of Design, but came to realize that traditional graphic design just isn’t enough. Enter: flowers.

She handles her dealings with flowers through her brand, Flora & Laura. At the same time, she works as Brand Manager for fashion organization Pre Helsinki and as Creative Director at photography and film-focused Duotone. There’s also Elsa Evenfult, the agency behind, for example, the Helsinki Festival SECRET Garden. In Viinölä’s eyes her work is a series of live-action role-playing scenes, allowing her to take on a variety of roles.

“I want to mix different spheres together.”

The flower label stuck, and that can be aggravating. Viinölä is not sure if flowers will be in her repertoire forever. She prefers to be spontaneous and intuitive about things.

“I like sensitivity and being open for things to come. Sometimes I play with the thought whether Flora & Laura will be around after I’m dead.”

Soft values – Viinölä mentions them often. This is how she deals with the ever-growing demand for being present in the midst of all the business.

1. She admits to being fixed to her phone sometimes, but flees from it with the “do not disturb” function.

2. She finds peace in surprising places. The evening before this interview, Viinölä reorganized her bookshelves. It was a small, homely task, she could focus all her thoughts on.

3. Travelling also brings peace. The best trips are ones where the final destination is left open.

4. “Living in the inner city, you just need moments when high-rises and freeway ramps don’t obstruct your view. Sometimes I just need to see the horizon.”

5. “With walks in Vuosaari and Nuuksio national park I have been on Viinölä’s itinerary recently. “Whenever I go to the forest, I notice how it helps me with creative thoughts. Even yesterday in Nuuksio I had a lot of flashbacks from my own childhood in Lahti.”

Soon these lessons in softness will spread to a broader audience than ever before. Viinölä dreams of starting her own school. For her sharing information and inspiration feels more important all the time. She has already started working as a teacher, mixing up fields of fashion, photography, graphic design with physical exercises.

In her Creativity and Experience study period at the Helsinki Design School she asked her students for their most memorable experiences. Nearly without exception, the majority recounted moments where people were present without any digital devices.

Having her own school is still far off in the future, but it feels like it could be possible with the right people. As a teacher, Viinölä wants to encourage people to broadly create and experiment and to be open to new things.

“Nothing new will come from looking for an inspiration in our immediate surroundings. I try to encourage people to do, to find and to be brave.”
ALMA, FINLAND’S BIGGEST INTERNATIONAL POP STAR SINCE, UMMM NO ONE, WENT TO LOS ANGELES AND ALL SHE GOT WAS A PAIR OF FUGLY SUNGLASSES, A HANGOVER OR TWO AND SONGS FOR HER DEBUT ALBUM SHE WROTE TOGETHER WITH THE BIGGEST NAMES IN THE BUSINESS.

SITTING IN THE CAR

"My twin sister ANNA is my backup singer and we’re always together. It’s a twin thing.

We still live at home with our Mom and Dad in an East Helsinki suburb. It’s the best thing to come home from a long trip and have your Mom make dinner for you. Though sometimes we rent an Airbnb place in the city for partying. And I’ve just recently started to look for my own place. I would have never thought it would be possible for me to buy my own apartment. My parents rent, and I don’t think anyone in the whole Miettinen family has ever bought their own place. And I’m just 21. It feels crazy."

FUGLY GLASSES

"I’m obsessed with fugly sunglasses and I’m always on the hunt for an uglier pair. I probably have over a hundred pairs of glasses. All ugly. All I need are some boots and I would have the perfect all-American look. We were in Las Vegas last November celebrating our birthday on the day TRUMP was elected.

Hanging at the strip bars and looking at all these redneck stetson dudes with cigars I realised why he was chosen."

"CHARLIE XCX told me in L.A. that don’t ever forget the people who were there at the beginning. Also, you should always hire your friends if you can. Except to be your manager. Look at Rihanna, she just travels the world with all her friends. Now that I’m leaving for a tour my bff KARHU is coming with us to sell merchandize. The last time I worked with her was in the summer of 2015 when we were cleaning the Flow Festival area. The festival organizers are probably going to kill me, but we kept our wristbands loose so we could smuggle my sister and our friend ILSA in as well. It was our plan that the next year Anna and Ilsa would take their turn in the cleaning department so that me and Karhu could get in. I guess we lucked out."
“I fucking love and hate Los Angeles. But this is the fucking place you need to be at if you want to make it in this business. I didn’t know anyone from L.A. when I first got here, but I ended up writing songs together with the same producers who have worked with Rihanna, Justin Bieber, Sia and Amy Winehouse. I had a studio session everyday from 1 in the afternoon until midnight, but all the major deals are done at parties. The best ones we threw ourselves. We stayed at this crazy three storey house with a pool in the Hollywood Hills. I had just been in the studio with CHARLI XCX and we were like ‘we need to have a party’. Since Charlie knows everyone, the place was fucking packed with producers, dj’s, actors and other artists. We hung out on the rooftop and kept jumping to the pool from there. At some point I spotted CARLY RAE JEPSEN, and being a little drunk I remembered her song and I just had to go and say to her: hey, I just met you, and this is crazy, but here’s my number, so call me maybe? Haven’t seen her since.”

“I was nine. I got this Hymytyttö award at school. It’s an honorary prize for being voted kind and fair by your classmates. The next year the bullying began. It was mostly boys. They couldn’t handle the fact that I got along with everyone and hung out with boys and played sports. I guess some boys are chauvinistic even at the age of ten. I’ve never been that good at school and learning by the books was super hard for me. I guess that and the bullying left me feeling like I couldn’t handle scholl so I dropped out of high school when I was 16. I spent a year sitting in my room watching Youtube, I always knew I could sing and that was the only thing that made sense and brought me some relief. But I never sang at school or in front of other people. Until my friends made me go to the auditions for the Idols singing competition. I got in, and all the way to the live shows and came fifth place. I was happy with myself but I don’t think I could’ve handled anymore of that show. It was so nerve-wracking and I was scared shitless every time I had to perform.

“I always thought that because I sucked at school, I couldn’t write music. But when I got a chance meeting with the German Sony executives at a song writing camp in Helsinki, I just wrote two massive songs in one day and that was it. I was invited to Germany on that instant. And things haven’t stopped since.”

“I swear just as much in English as I do in Finnish. I don’t even realise it, it’s just part of my lingo. But I have good manners. I would never swear if there were elderly people in sight, except of course my parents. I just can’t help it, my every other word is fuck. That’s also my favorite curse word. In L.A. everything is always so fucking amazing. I don’t think amazing even translates into Finnish. The one time I had to hold back a little was this spring in London when we performed live on BBC Radio. They told me that cursing on radio was totally off limits and they would cut the stream right there and then if that happened. My first single Karma has the word ‘bitch’ in it’s chorus and of course right in the very last chorus me and Anna slipped in the line that bitch don’t play. We were like ‘oh fuck’ and looked at our drummer. He just motioned for us to keep on singing. Luckily we weren’t cut out. But our manager did get yelled at. But it was an accident, honestly.”

“Biking on Venice Beach

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FRANK OCEAN HAS CARVED OUT UNIQUE TERRITORY FOR HIMSELF AS A FORCE FOR CULTURAL CHANGE. IN OCEAN’S WORLD, THERE’S A PULL BETWEEN MAGNETIC POLES: PUBLIC AND PERSONAL, CARNAL AND SPIRITUAL, NORMATIVE AND QUEER.

LOVE ONE: GOD

Great art and societal change happen when we enter territory where the lines between spiritual and carnal love become blurred. Our Abrahamic religions and sex have had a grindy ride together over the last 3,000 years. On the one hand there’s a strong tendency towards control; on the other a tendency to give birth to sex cults.

Conflicted crooner Frank Ocean walks the line between spirit and flesh. It’s sometimes hard to tell if he’s singing about his love for God or something sexual. Like in his melancholy gospel-tinged burner “Godspeed,” released on “Blond,” an album that topped countless year’s end lists in 2016.

I will always love you how I do
Let go of a prayer for ya
Just a sweet word
The table is prepared for you
Wishing you godspeed, glory
There will be mountains you won’t move

Ocean’s love is ambivalent, like the love you feel for an ex or an...

Unrequited love
To me it’s nothing but a one-man cult
And cyanide in my styrofoam cup
I can never make him love me
Never make him love me

Channel Orange (2012) is a clearly therapeutic meditation on a soul-shattering, emotional rejection—one that everyone can relate to. I’ve had a night like this and so have you. It became a centerpiece in the discussion about Ocean’s sexuality and by extension of our culture’s ability to deal with a person of more fluid sexuality in the rigid and hypersexual world of r’n’b and hip hop. But is Ocean really singing about the unrequited love for the God of a monotheistic religion?

He was raised Christian, with a Pentecostal grandmother and teenage rebellion was partially channeled into starting to attend a separate church from that of his mother. He writes on his Tumblr about how intimidated he felt by the musicians at church and how he never worked up the nerve to perform there. “Church was the ‘hood Juilliard to me. All the coldest musicians came out of there,” he says.

There has probably never been a scene or a church where Frank Ocean fully fit. And there may never be a love that Ocean doesn’t approach with a nervous cause, ready for disappointment—including God’s.

LOVE TWO: SEX

Personal is political, claims the old battle cry for second wave feminism in the 1960s. Appreciation of subjectivity was a way to make the structures of oppression apparent.

Nowadays one would shout political is personal. According to Rasmussen Reports, 40% of US voters said the 2016 election had an impact on their relationship with a friend or family member. Identity politics provides an artist like Ocean a great avenue for using overtly familiar themes to bend the listener’s mind.

In the case of Ocean, even something as de rigueur for an r’n’b and hip hop star as carnality becomes a potentially transgressive statement. “Blond” is an r’n’b album suffused with sex caught between just “getting it on” and looking for something more. In the hands of anyone else, singing about sex the way Ocean does would be a massive macho cliché.

In July 2012, around the time “Channel Orange” was released, Ocean published a post on Tumblr explaining that the songs on the album were about his first transformative love. It was unrequited and for another man. The post essentially recontextualised his debut album and makes every instance of sexual braggadocio he engages in thereafter very different. Take “Nikes,” a song off “Blond” where he sings in a pitched up voice about class, greed, materialism, but also throws off this line:

I don’t play, I don’t make time—
But if you need dick I got you
And I yam from the line

In Ocean’s world, the joy of sexual expression is about being anything other than straight. This opens up a myriad of possibilities—not just gay. Ocean refers to his sexuality as dynamic and shies away from categories. He’s talked about coming out making him feel free—empowered. As in the tropically jaunty “Comme des Garçons” from the visual album “Endless” (2016), Ocean sings about a guy he has on the side. He feels the power in his genitals but also in having the money to move your lover out of his mother’s home.

All this drillin’ got the dick feelin’ like a power tool—
Fonna move a nigga out his momma house now
That’s a power move.

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FINNISH RAPPERS ANSWER THE MOST RELEVANT QUESTION EVER.
HOW TO KEEP IT REAL?

“Maybe you should ask your homies? Nah, just kidding. For reals you just have to focus on the essentials.”

“Realness is being honest to yourself. Real recognizes real!”

“You keep it real by huzzling with the real people.”

“Eat enough mushrooms and keep checking yourself in the mirror.”

“Realness is in the eye of the beholder.”

“We have never really understood how to get rid of realness. Hopefully someone else is able to answer that. But this one we know for sure: Jos Lihaliike Reino Jokinen on sun ainoa menomesta / min kyyn maar jotain puutuu sun katu-uskottavuudesta.”

“Everybody in their own way.”

“Eat enough mushrooms and keep checking yourself in the mirror.”

“Just following your own vision and trying not to make too many compromises.”

“By listening to Lil Yachty as much as possible.”

“We, the Swedes of Kirkkonummi, basically brought rap to Finland. We’ll battle against anyone anytime – anywhere. Who rapped double rhymes before us? Nobody! In basketball we drop only three-pointers. We have elephant’s dicks and gorilla’s sacks. Mean streets of 02400 heavylifters – dominators – here to fuck y’all nerds up. Greetings to our mothers. What was the question again?”

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“We, the Swedes of Kirkkonummi, basically brought rap to Finland. We’ll battle against anyone anytime – anywhere. Who rapped double rhymes before us? Nobody! In basketball we drop only three-pointers. We have elephant’s dicks and gorilla’s sacks. Mean streets of 02400 heavylifters – dominators – here to fuck y’all nerds up. Greetings to our mothers. What was the question again?”

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The International Friend of Habitare in 2017 is Masaaki Kanai from the Japanese retailer MUJI. Not only will he choose the most exciting products and phenomena at Habitare, he will also give a keynote speech at the fair. Check out the largest event in Finland presenting interior decoration and design for every part of the home. habitare.fi
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