
The Limbo Party

Giuliana Racco, with Tivoli Föreningen

Abstract

This piece is comprised of video stills from *The Limbo Party*, an audio-visual collaborative project cumulated through a long-term creative and dialogical process that explored representations of human mobility, archaeology, and landscape between 2017 and 2019. *The Limbo Party* features a group of “limbo experts,” Tivoli Föreningen, a self-organized association of refugees in southern Sweden. Initially, members of this group came together to learn Swedish, but then later expanded to include a wide range of practical and leisure activities. This led to the development of *The Limbo Party*, an arts-based investigation that considers how spatio-temporal concepts, such as limbo and twilight, can be metaphorically connected to the state(s) of waiting for asylum or other such permits. In so doing, the project explores the relationship between middle states, potential states, and suspended states in relation to migration.

Keywords

migration, participatory art, social practice, border aesthetics, desire, temporality



Figure 1. Video still from *The Limbo Party*. Copyright Giuliana Racco, 2020, single-channel, video, HD, colour, sound, 20', based on workshops held in July 2019, Blekinge, Sweden.

In 2016, I was invited to southern Sweden to create artwork for an exhibition on photography, landscape, and archaeology about the iron-age cult site and its findings in the region.¹ Just a year before, the area had reached the highest ratio of asylum seekers per capita in Europe, following Sweden's decision to allow Syrian refugees into the country. There, I met Tivoli Föreningen, a self-organized group of refugees from Syria, Iran, Belarus, and Georgia; together we developed a project called "The Limbo Party," and over the course of a year we held theoretical and practical workshops and discussion sessions both online and in person. We worked on interpreting and materializing the concept of "limbo," specifically investigating its limits and potentialities as a fertile, subversive, and creative space of suspension and possible freedom. We created material objects and a 25-minute video formalizing our findings. The images throughout this piece feature various stills from this video.

¹ Between 2012 and 2013, a group of archaeologists working in Västra Vång, Blekinge, unearthed a series of 2 cm tall gold figurines, "guldgubbar", dating back to the sixth century. It appears that these figurines were produced by melting down gold coins used as payment for service in the Roman Army. According to archaeologist Björn Nilsson, the socio-political significance of these findings lies in the revelation that the iron-age inhabitants of this peripheral region were in fact connected to the greater world and participated in what we would now consider "global affairs."

Phase One



Figure 2. Video still from *The Limbo Party*. Copyright Giuliana Racco, 2020, single-channel, video, HD, colour, sound, 20', based on workshops held in July 2019, Blekinge, Sweden.

The first part of the process connected the contemporary reality of refugees living in Blekinge with a nearby iron-age pagan cult site. We created banners that we then placed on the Dansbana (a typical space for dancing during social gatherings) of the local social center. This was followed by a party and twilight walks through the area of significant archaeological importance.



Figure 3. Research drawings and images from *The Limbo Party*. Copyright Giuliana Racco, 2020.



Figure 4. Video still from *The Limbo Party*. Copyright Giuliana Racco, 2020, single-channel, video, HD, colour, sound, 20', based on workshops held in July 2019, Blekinge, Sweden.



Figure 5. Video still from *The Limbo Party*. Copyright Giuliana Racco, 2020, single-channel, video, HD, colour, sound, 20', based on workshops held in July 2019, Blekinge, Sweden.



Figure 6. Video still from *The Limbo Party*. Copyright Giuliana Racco, 2020, single-channel, video, HD, colour, sound, 20', based on workshops held in July 2019, Blekinge, Sweden.



Figure 7. Video still from *The Limbo Party*. Copyright Giuliana Racco, 2020, single-channel, video, HD, colour, sound, 20', based on workshops held in July 2019, Blekinge, Sweden.



Figure 8. Video still from *The Limbo Party*. Copyright Giuliana Racco, 2020, single-channel, video, HD, colour, sound, 20', based on workshops held in July 2019, Blekinge, Sweden.



Figure 9. Video still from *The Limbo Party*. Copyright Giuliana Racco, 2020, single-channel, video, HD, colour, sound, 20', based on workshops held in July 2019, Blekinge, Sweden.



Figure 10. Video still from *The Limbo Party*. Copyright Giuliana Racco, 2020, single-channel, video, HD, colour, sound, 20', based on workshops held in July 2019, Blekinge, Sweden.

Phase Two

The second phase involved the creation of a messenger-object from limbo, and its “finding” in the local landscape along with the message/gift it was sent to communicate.



Figure 11. [To the right]. Video still from *The Limbo Party*. Copyright Giuliana Racco, 2020, single-channel, video, HD, colour, sound, 20', based on workshops held in July 2019, Blekinge, Sweden.

Figure 12. [To the left]. Video still from *The Limbo Party*. Copyright Giuliana Racco, 2020, single-channel, video, HD, colour, sound, 20', based on workshops held in July 2019, Blekinge, Sweden.



Figure 13. Video still from *The Limbo Party*. Copyright Giuliana Racco, 2020, single-channel, video, HD, colour, sound, 20', based on workshops held in July 2019, Blekinge, Sweden.

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Author Biography

Born in Tkaronto and currently based in the Mediterranean area, I, Giuliana Racco, am an artist that has worked in universities and experimental programs across Europe and the Near East. Through fieldwork, archival research, material production, and experimentation, I (co)generate art that questions the cultural definitions of boundaries, identity, in/exclusion, and desire. My videos, photography, installations, and drawings have been featured in international museums and foundations. Currently, I am a PhD candidate at York University, studying Border Aesthetics.

Author Biography

Tivoli Föreningen was founded in 2017 by asylum seekers who had previously been meeting for self-organized Swedish language study sessions. The majority of members are new arrivals, and the association is open to everyone in advance. With equality and democracy as our watchwords, Tivoli acts as a platform for carrying out innovative cultural events and activities. Our motto – “We take your identity and your crazy ideas seriously” – best summarizes our entire operation.