When I applied for a doctorate study at the Academy of Fine Arts in Helsinki in 1997, it was important to me that the Academy had a clear policy on visual art research. According to this policy, visual art research should be viewed as a coherent whole, the major components being the student’s artistic work (artworks, exhibitions, etc.) and an investigation of the questions prompted by that artistic work.

I did not consider it of primary importance or relevance that artistic research should fulfil scientific criteria. Instead, I was interested in how the aesthetic and conceptual knowledge characteristic of the visual artist could be further developed and externalized in works and texts, or in other forms of reflection. By the knowledge characteristic of the visual artist, I mean the authorial space made up of actions, conceptual thinking and knowledge acquisition – the space within which the works are made. The causes that have given rise to this space may be logical, or they may be absurd and haphazard, but they are all relevant.

I decided at an early stage in my studies that the “demonstration of artistic skill and scholarship” that would earn me my doctorate (the Academy of Fine Arts does not require the production of a doctoral thesis) would consist of one or two exhibitions and two texts, one of which would be conversations and the other article-like appendices. The purpose of the conversations was to investigate fairly directly the origins and development of my works, while the appendices by revealing both the works of other artists and the theoretical texts underlying my work were also intended to link my research into a broader frame of reference within contemporary art. With this formal approach I was seeking to ensure that the “analytical section” of my research would be a credible reflection of my artistic practices.

The “subject” of my demonstration of artistic skill and scholarship was gradually refined during the years 1997-2000. When it came to naming this subject, it posed a problem since I did not work exclusively on a coherent set of problems associated with a specific place or phenomenon, but produced quite disparate works difficult to list under a single common concept or heading. Conversely, I was increasingly interested, both in practice and on a theoretical level, in what happens when a photographer adopts means of representation other than photographs. This had long been a preoccupation of mine – I had been juxtaposing a variety of

**WHAT IS THE POINT OF RESEARCH AND DOCTORAL STUDIES IN ART?**

Jan Kaila
The Solarized, Video installation, three monitors with sound, 2000