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## **This level of crust**

### **Abstract:**

*These pages reflect on a short, intensive collaboration that took place during the fourth Dance and Somatic Practices Conference (2017) – a methodology lab I initiated to discuss and elaborate on working among and across material constellations of various orders. Three people with diverse backgrounds spent time co-investigating material agency, earthly matters, atmospheric impacts, geoastrological time scales and emplacement: Nigel Clark (NZ/UK) – social geography/geological agency/anthropocene/fire; Simo Kellokumpu (FI) – choreographic thinking/atmosphere/scale/reading; and Paula Kramer (DE/FI) – intermateriality/movement/body/site-specificity. The lab took place in the studio and outdoors, where together and alone we tested, moved, read, talked, discussed. In the end we shared an indoor installation and outdoor performance practice. This text is written by Paula, a third of the trio, from a partial and particular perspective.*

**Keywords:** (inter)materiality, collaboration, artistic research, performance practice, material agency, daily-life gestures, firewood, scale



## Introduction:

As part of my research on intermateriality in which I ask: 'How do things, objects and materials of different orders intra-act, confederate, co-affect (and not) each other in the emergence of movement and performance practice?', I invited Nigel Clark and Simo Kellokumpu to join me at the *Dance and Somatic Practices Conference* for a methodology lab.

We met and exchanged previously distilled working practices alongside current questions, out of which a shared installation and outdoor performance practice emerged. Nigel suggested that so far much of the material turn has focused on life or life-like machines, and that we included into our frame an emergent appreciation of a wider range of materials and material processes, including the mineral, inorganic, geologic, even the astronomical. Here he interfaced with Simo's work on interplanetary choreographic thinking and aspects of my work that engages with meeting the deep time of rock in movement. One of our guiding questions as participants in this growing field of intermaterial engagements was as follows: As we grow more acquainted with co-creation across (material) differences, it remains a valid question to ask again – how do we do it, really?







*I carry a bundle of sticks around and it makes me notice all the things we carry, from here to there, from there to here. And our clothes, I notice them also and the way we walk. We don't need our bodies anymore. They have become decorations, maybe props. But not necessities anymore. We are such a bizarre species. So vulnerable, so powerful.*  
*(field notes, July 6 2017)*

*But not  
we are  
vulnerable*

The first thing I do after our first meeting, in which we primarily discuss two texts written by Nigel (Clark 2016, 2018), is to collect wood. I have little choice; this is a necessity. Walking alongside the buildings of Coventry University's inner city campus I pick up sticks, branches, twigs - firewood. As women, children (and men) have done and continue to do, over years and centuries. Here, now, this work is not needed, and still, I do it.

I pick up branch after branch; it is the key gesture that manifests now. We have spoken about fire and molten rock, about metallurgy, combustion, pyrotechnology, the relevance of crust. To integrate these far-reaching conversations I am propelled outdoors, giving form to our words through daily-life gestures. Out of place, maybe, pre-modern, maybe - but stabilizing nonetheless. Today, here, during the conference, among many far-reaching thoughts, this is what I do: I collect branches and later I begin to move with them.

Over the days my pile of wood grows, and in the end it is about my size when I kneel in front of it. My hands, arms and bones entwine themselves with these pieces of wood, large and small, as I turn and mill over the pile in the beginning of our outdoor sharing. It has its own rolling motion, crackles with each turn, sometimes it becomes water. I later embrace and gather the wood, lifting it up, losing first pieces, walking out to where the homeless sat and gathered during the days we were here. 'Are you OK?' a man had asked me during practice. 'Is this someone's bed?' a woman asks later.



Later I walk and turn with more force, an unpredicted might connecting deep time, magma, high sky and the inbetween. The branches fall. I let them, bit by bit, until only a few remain in my right hand and one in my left.







And in the end here we are again, sitting, lying, standing, talking. Between the dance mat, concrete, branches, aluminium foil, thoughts about magma and feelings beyond. Audience members join us, sharing their resonances and questions.

The days of working in the research lab confirm to me, more generally, an approach of beginning to work here and now, with things I can touch and effect, engaging with this meso-level of things, objects and materials, with daily-life matters, this level of crust. 'Earth's first and greatest binary gesture' Clark speculates, might be the 'establishment of a structural divide between molten interior and clement, sunlit crust' (Clark 2018: 15). It is here, on this crust, that I operate.

From this basis then, a wider spectrum might include itself into my movements and my sensory imagination: deep time, the unseen, the unfelt, the flows of magma, the history of fire, the astronomical, the rituals of life known and unknown.

But first I take a step, and another, I pick up a branch not knowing why. I turn a pile of wood until it speaks of fire and water. And then what happens can unfold.



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## **CONTRIBUTOR DETAILS:**

Paula Kramer is an artist-researcher living and working in Berlin and Helsinki. She has a background in political sciences (MA 2005) and completed her practice-as-research Ph.D. in dance at Coventry University in 2015. Her work focuses on site-specific movement practices and she is currently a postdoctoral researcher at the Centre for Artistic Research (CfAR), University of the Arts Helsinki. She explores outdoor dance and movement practices in the light of new materialist thought, collaborating with materials of different orders as active agents in the creation of movement, performance, daily life practices and sense making.

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