

© Annette Arlander 2022. The definitive, peer reviewed and edited version of this article is published in Journal of Dance & Somatic Practices, 14(2), 231–248. https://doi.org/10.1386/jdsp_00081_1

Becoming a tree with a tree

Annette Arlander
Academy of Fine Arts, University of the Arts Helsinki
E-mail: annette.arlander@uniarts.fi
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9752-8850>

Abstract

This text reflects on an artistic practice based on repeated visits to chosen trees, performing for camera with them in the context of the project 'Meetings with Remarkable and Unremarkable Trees'. The individual daily practice of becoming a tree, based on a yoga exercise, together with a variety of trees, is complemented with a collective online performance, the 'Be-coming Tree' event. The daily practice brought to the fore the tension between a heightened perceptual awareness of the bodymind while balancing and the awareness of the tree and the broader environment. Noticing the tension between an inward and an outward focus, the text proposes that sustaining this very tension is relevant for developing an ecologically informed consciousness of our co-dependency with other life forms, such as trees.

Keywords

performing with trees, two-legged tree pose, yoga, becoming a tree exercise, 'Be-coming Tree' online event, zoe, trans-corporeality, bodymind

Becoming a tree as a daily practice

The practice described in the following is related to an artistic research project exploring meetings with trees as a basis for video works; the impulse to discuss it in the context of dance and somatic practices stems from the experience of a tension between a focus on one's bodymind and an awareness of the environment during the practice. The main aim of this text is to take up that tension between a somatic awareness of one's bodymind (the integrated relationship between the body and the mind) and an awareness of the environment. Describing

that tension from an ‘outsider’s perspective’, without regard to the discussions within dance and somatic practices, will hopefully provide a fresh look at this basic problem.

The practice of becoming a tree that I will here describe is a somatic practice in a broad sense. The whole idea for this particular practice, which is part of a long-term development of performing with plants and especially trees, was inspired by a description of an exercise of the two-legged tree pose (*dvipada vrikshasana*) in a Finnish yoga magazine, *Ananda*. The pose was unfamiliar to me, and not part of the ashtanga yoga practice that I was engaged with. The pose seemed, however, like a possible solution to the problem of how to perform with trees, what to do together with them. By being simple and everyday like it was a complement to my previous actions or poses, like hanging from a branch or sitting on a stump. In preparing for a residency in Johannesburg, I decided to try the practice there, if I could find a tree in the vicinity where I lived. The practice turned out to be more ‘addictive’ and useful as a tool for artmaking than I had expected.

In the following, I will first describe the project that forms the background and context for this exercise, then trace the development of the practice and its variations together with various trees in shifting circumstances during 2020, then compare it with the collective online event called ‘Be-coming Tree’, describe the further developments in 2021 and finally return to the tension between somatic focus and awareness of the environment in the discussion, to consider the potential of this practice as an exercise in terms of fostering a respectful relationship with trees and an understanding of our dependency of other life forms.

Meetings with remarkable and unremarkable trees

How to rethink our relationship to other life forms that we share this planet with is one of the core questions for art today. In the artistic research project ‘Meetings with Remarkable and Unremarkable Trees’ (Arlander 2020d), I have encountered individual trees that are remarkable in their context or rather unremarkable and spent time with them alone or together with the public in order to create video works and video essays. The title of the project alludes to the photography book *Meetings with Remarkable Trees* by Thomas Pakenham (1996) and the project is in some sense forming a counterpoint to it, by questioning what is remarkable and worthy of attention and what is unremarkable, while focusing on individual trees. The medium in this project was not photography, however, but rather performance for video and recorded voice. The project was further developing experiences from the artistic research project ‘Performing with Plants’ (Arlander 2016), funded by *Vetenskapsrådet* (the Swedish Research Council) at Stockholm University of the Arts in 2018–19 and some previous publications discussing performing with trees (Arlander 2010, 2015, 2019, 2020c).

Although we are often accused of ‘not seeing the forest for the trees’, the project ‘Meetings with Remarkable and Unremarkable Trees’ wanted to look at the opposite danger, not seeing the trees for the forest, and focus on individual trees. This is not to deny that trees form networks and ecosystems or symbiotic relationships not only with other trees but with fungi, bacteria and all kinds of micro-organisms and are in a constant exchange with their environment, as humans are as well. Nor the fact that forests or woods or substantial areas of trees are needed for producing effective carbon sinks, cooler and fresher urban air, flood resistance and more. Emphasizing individualism is a risky strategy in our current neo-liberal capitalist society, where the importance of individualism is exaggerated anyway. It can

nevertheless be useful to focus on singular trees as an important first step towards decolonizing our relationship with ‘nature’. As late ecofeminist Val Plumwood (2003) pointed out, colonial thinking tends to emphasize a very strong difference between ‘us’ and ‘them’, and to see ‘them’ as all alike, stereotypical, non-individualized. Thus, attending to particular trees might work as a way to help us see trees as life forms that we have much in common with, despite our undeniable differences.

Rethinking our relationship to other forms of life that we share this planet with is a central task for artists today. Artistic research can contribute through its capacity to allow and to generate hybrid forms of thinking and acting. In terms of art, the project can be placed at the intersection of performance art, environmental art and video or media art, in the encounter of traditions – performance art’s emphasis on embodied presence, video art’s and media art’s valuing of repetition, transformation and critical reflection on technology as well as environmental art’s sensitivity to the possible effects and side effects an artwork can have.

Plants and vegetation are receiving increased attention in the context of the current climate crises and the rapid extinction of species. With the developments in plant science and the post-humanities artists, artist-researchers and scholars are looking at plants in new ways. The growing interest in plant studies, to some extent as a further development of the burgeoning of animal studies and post-humanist thinking, is influencing art and artistic research as well. Recent interest in vegetation within somatic practices and performance can be exemplified by initiatives such as ‘Dance for Plants’ or by artists performing with trees like Anna Rubio and Jatun Risba, to name only a few in this expanding field. Most artist-researchers within dance and movement that I have discussed with, like Paula Kramer (2012) or Ciane Fernandes (2014), are interested in the environment more broadly.

In scholarly terms, the project ‘Meetings with Remarkable and Unremarkable Trees’ could be situated within the emerging field of critical plant studies, which has been linked to art’s return to vegetal life and to looking at plants in art (Gibson and Brits 2018; Gibson 2018; Aloï 2019). Other discussions relevant for the project (see Arlander 2020e) have focused on plant rights (Hall 2011), plant philosophy or plant thinking (Marder 2013; Irigaray and Marder 2016; Coccia 2018), plant theory (Nealon 2015; Myers 2017), the language of plants (Vieira et al. 2015; Gagliano et al. 2017) and more. There is a current ‘plant turn’ in science, philosophy and environmental humanities, accompanied with an abundance of popular accounts of recent scientific research on plant sentience, intelligence, memory and communication (Pollan 2001; Mancuso and Viola 2015; Wohlleben 2016; Chamovitz 2017; Gagliano 2018; Simard 2021). For example, four issues of *Antennae* are devoted to plants, as are recent issues of *Performance Philosophy* and *Ruukku*. Some performance scholars like Nikolić and Radulovic (2018) or Brisini (2019) and others, including the author (Arlander 2020b, 2020f) have looked at plants and performance. Discussions related to ethical issues in interspecies performance, which are relevant for encounters with trees, too, have mostly been concerned with animals (Cull 2019).

The project was documented on a blog (Arlander 2020d) and in an exposition on the Research Catalogue (Arlander 2020c), an international database for artistic research. The practice of ‘becoming a tree’ was only one of the techniques explored during the project in order to enhance awareness of and to direct attention to trees. The tension discussed in this text, between a somatic awareness and a broader ecological consciousness in the moment of performing, was more like a side effect, which this practice brought to the fore.

The two-legged tree

The tree pose, the yoga pose discussed here is not part of the primary series of *ashtanga yoga*, neither in its well-known one-legged version nor as this twolegged variant (*dvipada vrikshasana*). Nor is this yoga asana part of the beginning of the intermediate series that is currently my basic practice, after fifteen years. Previously I have never considered using recognizable yoga asanas as part of my artistic practice of performing for camera with trees. My poses are usually based on everyday actions that almost anybody could do, such as sitting, standing, walking, hanging or swinging. A main attraction of the twolegged tree pose was its unrecognizability as a yoga asana and its outward simplicity.

Jussi Kontala, in his text ‘Kahden jalan puu’ (‘Tree with two legs’) in the yoga magazine *Ananda*, which features detailed descriptions of one asana or pose in each issue, introduces the pose as follows: ‘[t]his asana looks deceptively simple. Therefore, I should emphasize that with a little practice the tree pose will make anybody feel quite hellish. It can be used for reprogramming the mind’ (Kontala 2019: 15, translation added). I was not so interested in reprogramming the mind; what caught my attention was the subtitle ‘How you can become a tree’ – exactly the advice I needed. There were guidelines for executing the pose: stand with the feet hip-wide, lift your heels, raise your arms, focus your eyes in one point and stay there. Some detailed suggestions followed, like keeping the weight on the big toes rather than letting it slip outwards, keeping the core tight and so on. The main focus of the exercise is to relax, despite the intensity, to extend the length of breathing out and to maintain an inner calm (Kontala 2019: 17). The tree pose is one of the best asanas, Kontala notes, because it is almost impossible to hurt oneself doing it, and its effect on self-discipline quickly becomes evident; one can begin with a very brief practice and increase the duration slowly (Kontala 2019: 18).

The outward simplicity of the pose fascinated me; it was ideal for performing for camera in public spaces, without attracting too much attention, because it resembles an everyday action like sitting or walking or simply stretching a bit. Although I found the exercise quite challenging at first, I was not so interested in the aspect of self-discipline or willpower but tried to see how long I could maintain a moment of peace and calm, daily. At some point, when standing in the pose became easier, I decided to continue for 21 breaths at a time. Doing the practice next to a tree, together with the tree, as it were, was the main idea.

Because the exercise is a balancing practice, it necessarily brings attention to the muscles, as well as a need to focus the eyes. I soon discovered that, paradoxically, since I was usually standing next to a tree, while looking at a fixed point in the environment in front of me, the tree itself was not in the centre of my focus during the exercise. By making the practice explicitly next to and together with a tree, attention is nevertheless attuned to that connection as well. Before and after the exercise I usually made contact with the tree, often even touching it. And in the later versions of the exercise, when I placed myself in front of the tree and focused on the trunk, the tension was easier to sustain.

During the daily practice, the aspect of performing for the camera should not be underestimated, although the practice could easily take place also without the camera as a witness. Its role in documenting the practice and in producing material to later return to – in this case to edit into video works – is important. The importance of recording the practice could be understood as a part of the current selfie culture, but in this case the aspect of creating a diary, the journaling dimension, is more important, and as such even therapeutic in some sense, by making tangible and therefore more easily graspable and acceptable the passing of time.

The link to the future viewers of the video works is relevant as well. After all, the main purpose of the practice was to create images to produce material for artworks.

Practising with trees

The development of the practice can be traced by describing the meetings with individual trees, my performing partners of sorts. The images (Figures 1–10), video stills from the beginning of the video works, depict one session with each tree. It is important to note, however, that one image cannot reveal the main idea with time-lapse video, the subtle (and sometimes not so subtle) shifts between each image, each daily session. Therefore, links to the online pages with the full documentation, as well as links to the videos themselves (as small files) are included in a list (see appendix 1).

The first attempt to practise becoming a tree with a tree took place next to an old oak tree on Galway Road in Parkview, Johannesburg, South Africa, in the yard of the bed and breakfast I lived in during my stay. The idea was to choose a tree that I would live with, and it would not have been possible to choose a tree in a public park, simply because leaving the camera alone behind me was out of the question. Something with the caged position of the huge oak (see Figure 1), growing in the enclosed yard and reaching out beyond it with its branches, was somehow related to my experience as well. In the beginning I was very much focused on the action of balancing and also on catching the opportunity to stand next to the tree, because the



Figure 1: With the Oak on Galway Road, video still. © Author.

yard was used as a parking lot and was usually filled with cars. I hurried out to place my camera tripod next to the door immediately when the car left the space next to the tree open in the morning, and sometimes had to wait all day for the opportunity to perform. Another peculiarity was the gravel on the ground, which was rather hard to balance on. When my residency was interrupted due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and I had to leave Johannesburg, I edited the material recorded so far into the video work *With the Oak on Galway Road*.

When I returned to Helsinki, I decided to continue the practice in some manner. Because I had to stay in quarantine, I chose a maple in my home yard in Tehtaankatu street in Helsinki. The maple resembled the old oak on Galway Road in the sense that it was the obvious option; it was one of the two trees growing in the yard, both of them maples, and the one that was easier to pose next to. The enclosed setting, resembling the yard in Johannesburg, was actually important for the atmosphere in the image (see Figure 2) and for the action of reaching up towards the sky between the buildings, together with the tree. I continued my practice with the maple daily, in a similar manner as with the oak, during my quarantine time and beyond, until the end of May when restrictions in the city were partly lifted. With the maple tree, the approaching spring and the slowly developing greenery in the yard, the leaves of the shrubs, the lawn and the maple itself provided a hopeful narrative for the video *With the Maple Tree (Corona Diary)* and for the practice as well.

Compared with these two first experiments, where I really did not have much choice in terms of the tree, the succeeding trees show more variety. The following encounters with trees were deliberate choices rather than reactions to circumstances, as was the use of one month as a time schedule, unlike the longer and less defined period of the initial practice with the oak and its continuation with the maple. The trees I posed with for the videos *June with the Spruce of Independence* (Figure 3) and *July with a Pine* (Figure 4), although growing conveniently



Figure 2: *With the Maple Tree (Corona Diary)*, video still. © Author.

nearby, where chosen as interesting partners, as examples of remarkable and unremarkable trees. The Spruce of Independence is standing in the public Kaivopuisto Park and is a historical monument of sorts, commemorating the Finnish declaration of independence, a clearly remarkable tree. The small pine on the shore of the nearby Harakka Island is quite unremarkable by contrast. It was growing in a place that was pleasurable to visit, despite the trouble of the daily trip to the island and was chosen in order to enrich the practice with the sea breeze and some holiday spirit; I wanted to be refreshed by the practice, not only record the relationship to the tree, and this time I also wrote some notes about each visit.

After these two months, I did not choose a tree in order to continue the practice in August but decided to take up the practice again only during my two forthcoming residencies in the autumn, in September in Mustarinda House in Hyrynsalmi in north-eastern Finland, and in November in Öres residency on the island of Örö in the south-western archipelago. In Mustarinda, I chose a tall birch tree behind the house to practice with (see Figure 5) and called the resulting video work *The Daily Birch (September in Mustarinda)*. On Örö I practised next to a tall pine tree growing right in front of the porch of the residency house and called the video work *The Pine's Apprentice* (see Figure 6) to remind myself and future viewers of the video work that I really tried to learn something of the serenity and resilience of the tree. On Örö I posed with many other pine trees, but this one was the only one I returned to daily.

'Be-coming tree' online

An important experience providing some contrast to this daily (and monthly) practice was the opportunity to participate in a collective live art event on zoom called 'Be-coming Tree'. This artist-led initiative facilitated by Jatun Risba, Danielle Imara and O Pen Be, was 'a grassroots showcase platform, an open-source art project in the making and a community of artists who



Figure 3: June with the Spruce of Independence, video still. © Author.

create, document and share kin close entanglement with trees' (Be-coming Tree). In the first of these events, on 1 August 2020, I performed together with the pine on Harakka Island in 'With a Pine on Harakka Shore', the same little pine I had visited daily in July. (In the two following events, I experimented with other practices together with other trees, such as writing a letter to a pine in Kaivopuisto Park on 31 October 2020 and 'holding hands' with a pine on Öro Island on 9 January 2021.)

The first event was an important challenge, because I had to consider how I could extend the practice to last for the duration of an hour. There was no way I could balance for one hour, perhaps not even stand immobile for that time, so I decided on a rhythm of ten breaths of the pose (reaching up with my arms and balancing on my toes) alternating with ten breaths standing relaxed with arms down. A colleague, Marika Maijala, stayed next to my phone with the zoom connection in order to tell me when the performance was over and took some photos (see Figure 7). Performing the action of becoming a tree as part of a collective event was fascinating and even empowering in some sense. I have never considered myself a performer, really; I simply use myself as a bodily presence in my videos. Despite the heightened awareness induced by the 'live' moment online, and the exhilarating feeling of being in contact with other artists working with trees in different places on the planet, the experience was more focused on achievement or accomplishment, something undertaken for others, rather than a sensitizing and meditative practice done for oneself, producing material for future artworks as a side effect.

The dichotomy between performing for a live audience and for future viewers of the video work has during the pandemic increasingly softened by all the experiments of performing for a more or less live audience online. And as a side effect of these experiments induced by emergency circumstances, ordinary practices of performing for camera, such as this one, have



Figure 4: July with a Pine, video still. © Author.

gained increasing interest and also approval. Although any repetition easily becomes a comforting routine, repeated visits to a tree create an emotional bonding with the tree and the site, while highlighting all the small changes in the environment that take place daily due to shifting weather conditions and other changes in the circumstances. The contact with other



Figure 5: The Daily Birch (September in Mustarinda), video still. © Author.



Figure 6: The Pine's Apprentice, video still. © Author.

practitioners at a distance in space in the online event is in the daily practice postponed to the potential viewers of the video works, at a distance in time. Thus, each type of performance or practice has its value, on the one hand, the collective contact and empowerment of a once only online event and, on the other hand, the slow increase in somatic and environmental awareness of a daily practice.

More trees, more practice

When considering whether to continue with a new tree to begin 2021, I realized I wanted to try another practice, holding on to a tree. Remembering my earlier experience of holding on to a juniper in 2012, an experience I also described in quite some detail (Arlander 2015), and the importance of actually touching the shrub, I wanted to return to explore that practice. The focus on balancing in the practice of becoming a tree, although meaningful and meditative, keeps one's attention on the bodymind and on the accomplishment of the task, while holding on to a branch of a tree, simply being present next to the tree, augmented with physical touch, is a more relaxing and grounded action. Or so I thought. Despite the value of touch, of holding on to the pine, I quickly realized that I actually missed the balancing exercise and was taking it up again with suitable tree partners during the year.



Figure 7: With a Pine on Harakka Shore, photo by Marika Maijala.

In April 2021, I practised with an old pine in Hailuoto, in July 2021 with a maple tree and an apple tree in Eckerö and finally with a small Ginkgo tree in Stockholm for the whole autumn of 2021. In Hailuoto, I explored standing in front of the tree close to the trunk, focusing on its bark; this proved helpful for maintaining both one's balance and attention on the tree (see Figure 8). In Eckerö, the practice with the apple tree next to the wall led to a visually interesting result, a literally two-legged tree, when my head and arms disappear within the foliage (see Figure 9). With the ginkgo tree, I again placed myself in front of the tree, very near the slender trunk. This time I had the strange feeling of being helped by the tree. The feeling of assistance was rather strong and rewarding, regardless of whether the sensation of being pushed upwards was a result of the air currents next to the tree or produced by my imagination.

After practising with all these trees, I wonder what makes this practice 'addictive'? Is it the daily routine of going out and accomplishing something; the limited time period of commitment; befriending a tree by visiting it repeatedly; experiencing the psycho-physical effect of exercise albeit in miniature; gathering material for a video work in an accumulative manner without the need for constant decision-making; becoming attuned to the environment by sensing the changes in the weather, the season, the days?

Perhaps the addiction results from the feeling of participating in *zoe*, the shared life force that flows in us, both me and the tree, rather than remaining within the exclusively human *bios*, separated and elevated from other forms of life (Braidotti 2019: 10). Imagining the trans-corporeal exchanges taking place between oneself and the tree and the rest of the surroundings, following Stacy Alaimo in '[i]maging human corporeality as trans-corporeality, in which the human is always intermeshed with the more-than-human world' helps one understand 'the extent to which the human is ultimately inseparable from "the environment"' and 'makes it difficult to pose nature as mere background [...] since "nature" is always as close as one's own skin – perhaps even closer' (Alaimo 2010: 2).



Figure 8: Practising with a Pine in Hailuoto, video still. © Author.

Discussion

The interesting problem with this practice, mentioned in the beginning, is the tension – or rather the task of finding the right combination – between a focus on and an awareness of the tree vs. an awareness of and focus on the bodily experience. Although the practice itself, an exercise in psycho-physical control, turns one’s focus very much to the bodymind (the human body and mind as a single integrated unit), the choice of practising together with a tree and recording it with a video camera accentuates the awareness of the environment and the changes taking place in the surroundings, sensitizing one to them, as it were.

Combining a yoga exercise (the two-legged tree pose) with the choice of specific trees to befriend and spend time with was in this case realized as a development of a previous practice of repeated performances for camera. The main purpose was to generate material for time-lapse videos, with one pose among others. The combination of a somatic practice focused on psycho-physical concentration and control and an exercise in perceptual environmental awareness emphasizing contact with a specific tree partner developed almost as a side effect of making artworks. The practice could, however, equally well be undertaken with primarily experiential, consciousness raising or educational aims. And it could probably be used to support various ways of engaging in interspecies relations with vegetation.

By situating the exercise in space, not only on a particular site, but outdoors in a park or wood or by the nearest tree, that specific tree becomes a partner in performance. As a relationship to the tree as a living being unfolds, an increased awareness of the environment and the continuous changes in it are almost inevitably evolving as well. By situating the exercise in time, as a daily practice (often in the morning, not at a specific hour, but at a specific place in a row of activities,



Figure 9: With the Apple Tree, video still. © Author.

like after morning training, before breakfast, or something similar) and for a specific period (e.g. one month or during the stay in a particular location) and also for a specific duration (at first as long as I was able to continue, then for 21 breaths, as an example), the practice gains effect as a routine, a habit with life-changing potential.

We could say that the practice is a combination of several aspects with beneficial effects on their own. On the one hand, the yoga exercise in itself is beneficial and can be used to train one's concentration and willpower, or to increase one's physical control and skill, to improve one's balance, and especially one's sensitivity to and awareness of the state of one's psycho-physical being. On the other hand, a tree is the 'ultimate' example of a vegetal being, often a being (or collective of beings) large and old enough to generate respect and traditionally venerated in some manner in many cultures and mythologies. Visiting a tree repeatedly is in itself beneficial for developing an awareness of the environment and some sensitivity and respect towards other life forms that we share this planet with. By combining these two aspects, one would expect to reach a *summum bonum*, and that is the case, to some extent.

There is also a tension, however, as noted above, in terms of focus and emphasis, which can easily be felt after continuing with the practice for a while. Sometimes the concentration on proprioception needed to keep balance takes over one's awareness of the surroundings. In order to maintain the pose, one needs to focus one's eyes, but what one sees can be just a point, not the living world. Unlike some other practices, where sensing the surroundings, moving in response to the movements of plants or according to the peculiarities of the terrain are more prominent (including my own previous practice of sitting in a tree repeatedly for a year), this particular exercise is not mainly about attuning oneself to impulses from the environment. Exactly for that reason, however, it is an interesting practice to consider, because it reveals the limitation of a narrow focus on one's bodymind and a predominantly inward focus.



Figure 10: *Becoming Ginkgo*, video still. © Author.

Attention to one's bodymind can easily be expanded and counterbalanced, of course; already going to the tree and returning from it forces one out of one's inward focus and reminds one of the other trans-corporeal exchanges taking place, not all of them benign, for example in the traffic. Even if the main aim of such a practice is to increase one's awareness of the state of one's being as well as the state of the surrounding world, and especially to increase one's sensitivity and connection to other living beings, like trees, most trans-corporeal exchanges take place regardless of our awareness of them. Sustaining the tension between an inward and an outward focus is nevertheless a core issue when trying to combine somatic awareness and ecological consciousness and highly relevant for developing an ecologically informed consciousness of our co-dependency with other life forms, such as trees. That is also the main insight I want to share by describing these experiences.

When searching online for 'becoming a tree', I was directed to websites advertising for biodegradable urns and guided to become a tree after death, even invited to choose which tree I would like my ashes to become. That is of course one practical way of participating in *zoe*, literally becoming a tree. Meanwhile, for anybody interested in simple ways of combining a somatic practice with exercises in eco-consciousness in order to stay alive and well, for anybody seeking a balance between an awareness of the state of one's being and of the state of the surrounding world, I recommend a daily performance of trying to become a tree together with a tree

Funding

The project 'Meetings with Remarkable and Unremarkable Trees' was supported by The Finnish Cultural Foundation.

Appendix 1

Trees performed with, and examples of the resulting video works

The Oak on Galway Road, performed with daily in Johannesburg between 13 February and 16 March 2020, <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/761326/796954>. Accessed 22 November 2022.

With the Oak on Galway Road (14 minutes 47 seconds), <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/profile/show-work?work=824645>. Accessed 22 November 2022.

The Maple Tree in Tehtaankatu, performed with daily in Helsinki between 29 March and 31 May 2020, <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/761326/831532>. Accessed 22 November 2022.

With the Maple Tree (Corona Diary) (62 minutes 22 seconds) and *With the Maple Tree (Corona Diary): Brief* (16 minutes 50 seconds), <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/profile/show-work?work=925459>. Accessed 22 November 2022.

The Spruce of Independence, performed with daily in Kaivopuisto Park between 1 and 30 June 2020, <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/761326/917581>. Accessed 22 November 2022.

June with the Spruce of Independence (36 minutes 31 seconds) and *June with the Spruce of Independence: Brief* (15 minutes), <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/profile/show-work?work=944114>. Accessed 22 November 2022.

The Pine on the Shore, performed with daily on Harakka Island between 1 and 31 July 2020, <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/761326/944410>. Accessed 22 November 2022.

July with a Pine (50 minutes 46 seconds) and *July with a Pine: Brief* (16 minutes) <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/profile/showwork?work=960090>. Accessed 22 November 2022.

The Birch in Mustarinda, performed with daily behind Mustarinda house in Paljakkavaara between 2 and 30 September (except 14 September) 2020, <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/761326/978491>. Accessed 22 November 2022.

The Daily Birch (September in Mustarinda) (60 minutes 20 seconds) and *The Daily Birch (September in Mustarinda): Brief* (14 minutes 10 seconds), <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/profile/show-work?work=1005492>. Accessed 22 November 2022.

The Pine on Öro, performed with (almost) daily on Öro between 2 November and 2 December 2020, <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/761326/1034899>. Accessed 22 November 2022.

The Pine's Apprentice (53 minutes) and *The Pine's Apprentice: Brief* (13 minutes 50 seconds), <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/profile/showwork?work=1073481>. Accessed 22 November 2022.

The Pine in Hailuoto, performed with daily between 4 and 28 April 2021, <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/761326/1219495>. Accessed 22 November 2022.

Practicing with a Pine in Hailuoto: Brief (25 minutes 10 seconds), <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/761326/1219495/425/6163>. Accessed 22 November 2022.

The Maple Tree and Apple Tree in Eckerö, performed with daily between 3 and 30 July 2021, <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/761326/1305636/0/0>. Accessed 22 November 2022.

With the Maple Tree (15 minutes 10 seconds) and *With the Apple Tree* (15 minutes 10 seconds), <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/761326/1305636/0/7226>. Accessed 22 November 2022.

The Ginkgo tree in Stockholm, performed with (irregularly) between 4 August and 11 December 2021, <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/761326/1318140>. Accessed 22 November 2022.

Becoming Ginkgo: Mini (11 minutes 30 seconds), <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/761326/1318140/0/15933>. Accessed 22 November 2022.

References

- Alaimo, S. (2010), *Bodily Natures: Science, Environment, and the Material Self*, Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.
- Aloi, G. (ed.) (2011a), *Antennae: The Journal of Nature in Visual Culture*, Special Issue: 'Beyond Morphology', 18.
- Aloi, G. (ed.) (2011b), *Antennae: The Journal of Nature in Visual Culture*, Special Issue: 'Why Look at Plants?', 17.
- Aloi, G. (2019), *Why Look at Plants? The Botanical Emergence in Contemporary Art*, Leiden: Brill Rodopi.

- Aloi, G. (ed.) (2020), *Antennae: The Journal of Nature in Visual Culture*, Special Issue: 'Vegetal Entanglements', 51&52.
- Arlander, A. (2010), 'Performing with trees: Landscape and artistic research', in J. Freeman (ed.), *Blood, Sweat and Theory: Research through Practice in Performance*, London: Libri Publishing, pp. 158–76.
- Arlander, A. (2015), 'Becoming juniper: Performing landscape as artistic research', *Nivel*, 5, The Publication Series of the Theatre Academy Helsinki Nivel, <http://nivel.teak.fi/becoming-juniper/becoming-juniper-performing-landscape-as-artistic-research-annette-Arlander/>. Accessed 22 November 2022.
- Arlander, A. (2016), 'Performing with plants: Att uppträda/samarbeta med växter', artistic research project, <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/316550/316551>. Accessed 22 November 2022.
- Arlander, A. (2019), 'Resting with pines in Nida: Attempts at performing with plants', *Performance Philosophy*, 4:2, pp. 452–75.
- Arlander, A. (2020a), 'Behind the back of Linnaeus: Bakom ryggen på Linné', *RUUKKU: Studies in Artistic Research*, 14, <https://doi.org/10.22501/ruu.470496>. Accessed 22 November 2022.
- Arlander, A. (2020b), 'Diffraction, mixture and cut-ups in performing with plants', *Performance Research*, 25:5, pp. 31–38, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13528165.2020.1868835>. Accessed 22 November 2022.
- Arlander, A. (2020c), 'Meetings with remarkable and unremarkable trees', Research Catalogue, <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/761326/761327>. Accessed 22 November 2022.
- Arlander, A. (2020d), 'Meetings with remarkable and unremarkable trees', <https://meetingswithtrees.com>. Accessed 22 November 2022.
- Arlander, A. (2020e), *Meetings with Remarkable and Unremarkable Trees in Johannesburg and Environs*, Johannesburg: Arts Research Africa, The Wits School of Arts, University of Witwatersrand, <http://wiredspace.wits.ac.za/handle/10539/30395>. Accessed 22 November 2022.
- Arlander, A. (2020f), 'Performing with plants in the ob-scene anthropocene', *Nordic Theatre Studies*, 32, pp. 121–42, <https://doi.org/10.7146/nts.v32i1.120411>. Accessed 22 November 2022.
- Arlander, A., Määttä, J. and Lobell, M. (eds) (2021), *Ruukku: Studies in Artistic Research*, Special Issue: 'Working with the Vegetal', 16, <http://ruukku-journal.fi/fi/issues/16>. Accessed 22 November 2022.
- 'Become a tree after death' (2019), Ecodna.art, 16 October, <https://ecodna.art/become-a-tree-after-death/>. Accessed 22 November 2022.
- 'Be-coming Tree' (n.d.), Facebook, <https://www.facebook.com/becomingtree/>. Accessed 22 November 2022.
- Braidotti, R. (2013), *The Posthuman*, Oxford: Polity Press.
- Braidotti, R. (2019), *Posthuman Knowledge*, Oxford: Polity Press.
- Brisini, T. (2019), 'Phytomorphizing performance: Plant performance in an expanded field', *Text and Performance Quarterly*, 39:1, pp. 3–21.
- Chamovitz, D. (2017), *What a Plant Knows: A Field Guide to the Senses*, New York: Scientific American/Farrar, Straus and Giroux.
- Coccia, E. (2018), *The Life of Plants: A Metaphysics of Mixture*, Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Cull, L. (2019), 'The ethics of interspecies performance: Empathy beyond analogy in fevered sleep's sheep pig goat', *Theatre Journal*, 71:3, September, <https://www.jhuptheatre.org/theatre-journal/online-content/issue/volume-71-number-3-september-2019/ethics-interspecies>. Accessed 22 November 2022.

- ‘Dance for Plants’ research collective (2016), Facebook, <https://www.facebook.com/danceforplants/>. Accessed 22 November 2022.
- Fernandes, C. (2014), ‘Somatic-performative research: Attunement, sensitivity, integration’, *Art Research Journal: Revista de Pesquisa em Arte*, 1&2, December, pp. 72–91.
- Gagliano, M. (2018), *Thus Spoke the Plant: A Remarkable Journey of Ground-Breaking Scientific Discoveries and Personal Encounters with Plants*, Berkeley, CA: North Atlantic Books.
- Gagliano, M., Ryan, J. C. and Vieira, P. (eds) (2017), *The Language of Plants: Science, Philosophy, Literature*, Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.
- Gibson, P. (2018), *The Plant Contract: Art’s Return to Vegetal Life*, Leiden: Brill.
- Gibson, P. and Brits, B. (eds) (2018), *Covert Plants: Vegetal Consciousness and Agency in an Anthropocentric World*, Santa Barbara, CA: Brainstorm Books.
- Gibson, P. and Sandilands, C. (eds) (2021), ‘Plant performance’, *Performance Philosophy*, 6:2, pp. 1–23, <https://www.performancephilosophy.org/journal/issue/view/13>. Accessed 22 November 2022.
- Hall, M. (2011), *Plants as Persons: A Philosophical Botany*, Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Haraway, D. J. (2016), *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene*, Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press.
- Irigaray, L. and Marder, M. (2016), *Through Vegetal Being: Two Philosophical Perspectives*, New York: Columbia University Press.
- Kontala, J. (2019), ‘Kahden jalan puu’ (‘Tree with two legs’), *Ananda*, 4, Winter, pp. 15–19.
- Kramer, P. (2012), ‘Bodies, rivers, rocks and trees: Meeting agentic materiality in contemporary outdoor dance practices’, *Performance Research: A Journal of the Performing Arts*, 17:4, pp. 83–91, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13528165.2012.712316>. Accessed 22 November 2022.
- Mancuso, S. and Viola, A. (eds) (2015), *Brilliant Green: The Surprising History and Science of Plant Intelligence*, Washington, DC: Island Press.
- Marder, M. (2013), *Plant-Thinking: A Philosophy of Vegetal Life*, New York: Columbia University Press.
- Myers, Natasha (2017), ‘From the anthropocene to the planthropocene: Designing gardens for plant/people involution’, *History and Anthropology*, 28:3, pp. 297–301.
- Nealon, J. T. (2015), *Plant Theory: Biopower and Vegetable Life*, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Nikolić, M. and Radulovic, N. (2018), ‘Aesthetics of inhuman touch: Notes for a “vegetalised” performance’, *RUUKKU: Studies in Artistic Research*, 9, <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/372629/372630>. Accessed 22 November 2022.
- Pakenham, T. (1996), *Meetings with Remarkable Trees*, New York: Random House.
- Plumwood, V. (2003), ‘Decolonizing relationships with nature’, in W. M. Adams and M. Mulligan (eds), *Decolonizing Nature Strategies for Conservation in a Post-Colonial Era*, London: Earthscan Publications, pp. 51–78.
- Pollan, M. (2001), *The Botany of Desire: A Plant’s Eye View of the World*, New York: Random House.
- Risba, J. (2020), ‘Be-coming Tree’, Jatun Risba, <https://jatunrisba.com/be-coming-tree/>. Accessed 22 November 2022.
- Rubio, A. (2014–16), ‘All the trees I met’, FiR, http://www.frontiersinretreat.org/activities/anna_rubio_all_the_trees_i_met. Accessed 22 November 2022.
- Simard, S. (2021), *Finding the Mother Tree*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf.

Vieira, P., Gagliano, M. and Ryan, J. (eds) (2015), *The Green Thread: Dialogues with the Vegetal World*, Lanham, MD, Boulder, CO, New York and London: Lexington Books.

Wohlleben, P. (2016), *The Hidden Life of Trees: What They Feel, How They Communicate: Discoveries from a Secret World*, Vancouver: Greystone Books.

Contributor details

Annette Arlander, DA, is an artist, researcher and a pedagogue, one of the pioneers of Finnish performance art and a trailblazer of artistic research. In 2018–19, she was a professor in performance, art and theory at Stockholm University of the Arts with the artistic research project ‘Performing with Plants’. She was the principal investigator of the Academy of Finland-funded research project ‘How to Do Things with Performance’ (2016–20). At present, she is a visiting researcher at Academy of Fine Arts, University of the Arts Helsinki. See <https://annetearlander.com>.