

# How to Do Things with Artistic Research – Animal Years Revisited



ANNETTE ARLANDER





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with Artistic Research  
– Animal Years Revisited**

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Annette Arlander  
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# PREFACE

Despite the title, this is not a “How to” -book. For a long time, I imagined this collection to become a continuation to the book *Performing Landscape – Notes on Site-specific Work and Artistic Research. Texts 2001-2011*, which was published as Acta Scenica 28 in 2012. This would be a collection of texts 2012-2022 or something like that. Now, dear reader, this is not what you have in your hands. *How to Do Things with Artistic Research – Revisiting Animal Years* is focused very much on texts that deal with a series of video works created on Harakka Island<sup>1</sup> in Helsinki in the years 2002-2014 and on revisiting those works during the Academy of Finland funded four-year research project *How to Do Things with Performance?* in 2016-2020. When the research project was completed, I wanted to share my experiences with an interested public in the form of a collection of essays, displaying some of the things done. As always, however, compiling them took more time than expected. Other texts written during the same period, for example related to performing with plants or meetings with trees, two artistic research projects I was involved in at the time, which inevitably influenced these revisits, too, are not included here. Some texts describing works related to *Animal Years*, however, are included already in the previous collection.<sup>2</sup> Most of the texts reworked or republished here were originally published 2016 or later as articles or video essays.

The chapters follow the twelve-year series, rather than publication dates or thematic issues, in a chronology of sorts. I returned

1 Information about the island where the works were performed can be found in chapter 8.

2 Arlander 2012, especially chapters 10-13, p 273-393.

to the works in the order they were created and made some kind of video essays of each revisit, all available online<sup>3</sup>. Texts dealing with works from one of the *Animal Years* are assembled in one chapter, and the chapters can be read independently. The red thread that runs through this collection is not the video works themselves, although there is a list of them<sup>4</sup> for those interested, but the idea of revisiting the works, returning to the sites where they were performed and to texts written about them at the time. The texts revisit some theoretical concepts or concerns previously discussed in relation to the works of that year. This method that I call revisiting is described briefly in the introduction. Combining these texts, which thematically and theoretically stretch both here and there from a common starting point in landscape, site, and place, will hopefully generate some surplus value by showing how not only landscapes change over time but thinking changes, too. And perhaps entice the reader to do some island-hopping between the various ideas explored.

## Acknowledgements

I want to thank the publication committee at the Theatre Academy for enabling the production of the publication at hand. I am very grateful to the Performings Arts Research Centre Tutke for hosting the research project *How to Do Things with Performance?*, to the Academy of Finland for financially supporting the project, and my dear colleagues Hanna Järvinen, Tero Nauha and Pilvi Porkola who made the project such an inspiring experience.

I want to thank the following publishers for their generous approval to reprinting articles here in a slightly revised form:

3 See appendix 2.

4 See appendix 1.

PARSE journal for 1.1. Repeat, Revisit, Recreate—Two Times Year of the Horse, which was originally published in 2016 as “Repeat, Revisit, Recreate—Two Times Year of the Horse.” *PARSE Journal* Issue #3: 43–59.

*Icehole* for 1.2. How to Perform Landscape by Repetition, originally published in 2017 as “How to do things with repetition?” *Icehole* #6. *Journal for Embodied Research* for 2.1. The Shore Revisited, originally published 2018 as “The Shore Revisited.” *Journal of Embodied Research*, 1(1): 4 (30:34).

*Journal of Dance and Somatic Practices* for 3.1. Breathing and Growth – Performing with Plants, originally published in 2018 as “Breathing and Growth - performing with plants.” *Journal of Dance and Somatic Practices*. Volume 10. Number 2., 175-187.

*Ruukku - studies in artistic research* for 4.1. Return to the Site of the Year of the Rooster, originally published in 2019 as “Return to the Site of the Year of the Rooster”. *Ruukku - Studies in Artistic Research* #11 and 11.2. Calling for Zoe as a Utopian Gesture, originally published in 2021 as “Calling for Zoe as a Utopian Gesture”. *Ruukku - studies in artistic research* #17.

The editors of SAR conference 2018 proceedings for 5.1. Regurgitated Perspectives – Performance, originally published as part of “Regurgitated Perspectives – Performance”. In Geoff Cox, G. Drayson, H. Fatehrad, A., Gall, A., Hopes, L., Lewin, A. and Prior, A. (eds.) *Proceedings of the 9th SAR International Conference on Artistic Research, University of Plymouth, April 11th-13th, 2018*, 299-311.

Routledge for 5.3. The Shadow of a Pine Tree, originally published in 2020 as “The Shadow of a Pine Tree. Authorship, Agency and Performing beyond the Human” in Ewa Bal & Mateusz Chaberski (eds.) *Situated Knowing. Epistemic Perspectives on Performance*. London & New York: Routledge 2020, 157-170.

*Research in Arts & Education* for 6.1. The City Skyline Revisited - From Networks to Trans-corporeality originally published in 2020

as “The City Skyline Revisited – From networks to trans-corporeality.” *Research in Arts & Education* 1/2020: 37–55, and 11.1. Calling the Dragon - The Five Avant-gardes Today?, originally published in 2017 as “Calling the Dragon – The five avant-gardes today?” *Research in Arts & Education* 3/2017, 1-12.

*Global Performance Studies* for 7.1. Revisiting the Rock – Self-diffraction as a Strategy, originally published in 2020 as “Revisiting the Rock – Self-diffraction as a Strategy.” *Global Performance Studies* issue 3.2.

*PARTake* for 7.2. Returning to the Stairs – On Temporality and Self-portraiture originally published in 2022 as “Returning to the Stairs – on temporality and self-portraiture”. *PARTake: The Journal of Performance as Research* Vol.5 No.1 (2022), and 8.2. Revisiting the Rusty Ring – Ecofeminism Today?, originally published in 2020 as “Revisiting the Rusty Ring – Ecofeminism Today?” *PARTake Journal* Vol.3 No.1.

DREX-project for 8.1. Performing Time Through Place, originally published in 2012 as “Performing Time Through Place”. In Riku Roihankorpi and Teemu Paavolainen (eds.) *SPACE-EVENT-AGENCY-EXPERIENCE*. Open Access E-Publication of the DREX Project. Centre for Practice as Research in Theatre. University of Tampere.

The Finnish Society for Theatre Research for 9.1. Remembering the Year of the Tiger – Image, Memory, Site, originally published in 2020 as “Remembering the Year of the Tiger – Image, Memory, Site.” In Tua Helve, Outi Lahtinen & Marja Silde (eds.) *Näyttämö & Tutkimus 8: Muisti, Arkisto ja Esitys* [Stage & Research 8: Memory, Archive and Performance] Teatterintutkimuksen seura, 292-318.

*Artnodes* for 12.1. From interaction to intra-action in performing landscape originally published in 2014 as “From interaction to intra-action in performing landscape”. In Beatriz Revellez Benavente, Ana M. Gonzalez Ramos, Krizia Nardini (eds). “New feminist materialism: engendering an ethic-onto-epistemological methodology”. *Artnodes*. No. 14 2014, 26-34.

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Intellect for 12.2. *Process as Performance or Variations of Swinging*, originally published in 2018 as “Process as Performance or Variations of Swinging.” In Hetty Blades and Emma Meehan (eds.) *Performing Process: Sharing Dance and Choreographic Practice*. Intellect Books, 99-118.

*Screenworks* for 12.3. *Revisiting the Aspen Tree*, originally published in 2022 as “Revisiting the Aspen Tree.” *Screenworks* 13.1. December 2022.

Leuven university Press for 13.1. *Transpositions in Practice*, originally published in 2018 as “Calling the Dragon, Holding Hands with Junipers: Transpositions in Practice”. In Michael Schwab (ed.) *Transpositions – Aesthetico-Epistemic Operators in Artistic Research*. Orpheus institute series, Leuven University Press, 41-58.



# Introduction

## How to Do Things with Performance?

The Academy of Finland funded research project (2016-2021) *How to Do Things with Performance?*<sup>5</sup> (HTDTWP) at the Performing Arts Research Centre in University of the Arts Helsinki brought together four views on artistic research in performance, through the perspectives of Hanna Järvinen, Tero Nauha, Pilvi Porkola and me, Annette Arlander. By asking what can be done with performance and especially with performance as research, the project partook in recent discussions in artistic research, in performance philosophy, and performative and performance writing as well as in the emergent discussion of performance studies in Finland. According to the research plan the project asked what can be done with performance – what actualizes when a performance takes place, when it is documented, and when it is written about. Through these epistemological questions, we addressed the ontology of performance: in what ways can we understand ‘performance’ today, as a new materiality, as presence, and in the international, multilingual context where words, documents, and practices connote differently but are shared in online environments. Through performing research, artistic research defines what is the context or the world where this performance takes place. Hence, a critical attitude towards the political, social, economic, and philosophical premises of research is inherent in the process – not as given, but as produced and articulated in and

5 See project presentation of *How to Do Things with Performance?* <https://www.uniarts.fi/en/projects/how-to-do-things-with-performance/>

as the acts of research. Moreover, artistic research does not produce only postulations about the world; rather, its processes and performances actualize in the world as real and material events. Some of the events of this specific project are here documented in various forms of textual remains.

In the research plan we suggested that the project continues the previous research projects of each participant, and my part was summarised in the following way:

Annette Arlander utilises her twelve-year project “Performing Landscape” (2002-2014; Arlander 2014) and the resulting series of video works *Animal Years* as material for critical self-reflection. She asks what is the performative potential of those works when viewed as a series, and how the working method developed in this project could be understood as an intra-action with the environment, an everyday practice for non-artists that could increase our understanding of our interdependence with other forms of life and matter on the planet. Together with the research team, she explores performative writing and performative documentation as material-discursive practices, but her particular focus lies in digital archiving and online publication.<sup>6</sup>

Plans are plans and what happens in real life is often something else. Regarding these specific aims the plan was nevertheless largely realized.

6 Arlander, 2016e. See HTDTWP project archive <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/281037/281038>

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## Animal Years

The series of twelve one-year projects that form the starting point for these explorations, called *Animal Years*, was performed and video recorded on Harakka Island in Helsinki, as part of an informal artistic research project *Performing Landscape*, beginning in the year of the horse (2002) and ending in the year of the horse (2014). The series was based on the Chinese calendar and its twelve-year cycle, with each year named after a specific animal. I posed for a tripod-mounted video camera on the same site on the island approximately weekly for a year. The question I tried to explore was how to perform landscape today. The aim was to bring attention to changes in the landscape, the shifting seasons, weather, and climate, to focus on the environment and to document the changes taking place, emphasizing landscape as a process. Thus, returning to the same spot and framing the image in the same way was important. While performing a still-act or simple action in front of a video camera, the events taking place in the surroundings, in the landscape, can come to the forefront. By repeating the performance at regular intervals during relatively long periods of time and condensing the material by editing into rough time-lapse videos, the slow happenings not discernible in real time become visible. I hoped the project would produce 'souvenirs' of what the landscape looked like on the north coast of the Baltic Sea during these years at the beginning of the twenty-first century. The series was not conceived as a series to begin with, but developed from year to year and included many sidesteps; I even changed camera and video format about halfway in the process, and therefore the compilation of the video works is divided into two parts.<sup>7</sup> Usually the Chinese Calendar begins with

7 See *Animal Years I* and *Animal Years II* in AV-arkki, the Centre for Finnish Media Art <https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/animal-years-i/> and <https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/animal-years-ii/>

the year of the rat and ends with the year of the pig. My *Animal Years* began and ended with the year of the horse.

## Sitting on a Rock

In addition to a year I recorded a day and night on the same site each year, with two- or three-hour intervals and often with a tighter framing, playing with the idea of a day and night as a smaller planetary cycle compared to the year. Some of these days and nights have written or spoken journal notes added to them; like the years their compilation is in two parts.<sup>8</sup> For the first day and night I wrote a text for a separate work, *Sitting on a Rock (Rock with text)* (2003), without human presence in the images and with a voice-over narration in Finnish with English subtitles, a kind of description of how the work was made. In the following years, I did not continue with that technique. Only when revisiting the sites and compiling video essays of those revisits did I return to language and the essay form. As an example of my approach in the beginning of *Animal Years* I include the translated text here:

Sitting on a rock is different than sitting on a chair. A rock is hard and cold, though certainly stable. I sat on this rock for a year, once a week, approximately, and watched the world around me changing. During Easter I sat for a day and a night, with two- hour intervals. Only then did I realise how large a part of time it is night. While sleeping you forget that. For a rock the night is probably as real as the day. A rock knows what it means to stay in one place. For a human being it is quite difficult. For me at least. I do not wish I

8 *Animal Days and Nights I* (2003-2009) <https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/animal-days-and-nights-i-2003-2009/> and *Animal days and Nights II* (2010-2014) <https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/animal-days-and-nights-ii-2010-2014/>

were a rock, certainly not. But sometimes I wish I knew how to be still, to sit and wonder. Sitting is a strange condition for a human being. Waiting even more so. Like animals, humans roam and search, collect and gather, go where they are going or keep erring, walking, longing, and reaching. A rock waits for the ways of the world to unhinge it from its site. I sat on this rock because it lies in a beautiful spot. And on a permitted route. It is a strange rock. If you knock on it, it sounds hollow. I suppose it is granite, but I do not know for sure, and I have not asked anybody. It does not matter what it is, it is a rock.

In the game of Mah Jong (in Finnish) you say, “I am sitting on a rock”, when you have only one piece left. Thus, you warn your fellow players that the game might soon be ending, and that you have good chances to be the winner. When I sit on the rock I do not feel like a winner. I feel at one with those who wait. Around me everything is waiting, for the spring to arrive, the autumn to arrive, the sun to rise, the sun to set, for rain, for sunshine, for the wind to calm down, the storm to rise, good weather to return, for almost anything. I am always waiting for something as well, for a change or a miracle, at least. Most people fear changes and so do I, probably, at heart, but my conscious self desires change. Any kind of change. Many people speak of conserving, protecting, caring. They wish for the world to remain unaltered. Officially they only wish those things they value to stay the same, of course, but the idea easily extends to concern everything. I, too, wish the rock would remain a rock and not turn into plastic, no ugly signs to appear on the cliffs, the water around me to remain water without oil. Still, I do wait for a change, a miracle - at least for myself, within myself.<sup>9</sup>

9 *Sitting on a Rock (Rock with text)* <https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/istun-kivella-rock-with-text/>

## Revisiting as Method

During the research project I developed the method of ‘revisiting’; I returned to the sites where I had performed for camera and created the *Animal Years* on Harakka Island (2002-2014). While revisiting I recorded myself trying to repeat the same action on the same site, with the same framing of the image. While editing the material I created composite videos by inserting the old time-lapse videos from the original installations into the contemporary real-time image. Besides revisiting the site and the old video works, I also revisited old texts that I had written using those works as examples and the theoretical concepts relevant at the time. By commenting on those texts and combining the commentary with the videos I created video essays. The first one was published in the first issue of *JER (Journal of Embodied Research)* in 2018. Another example is the one published in issue #11 of *Ruukku – studies in artistic research* in 2019. I have written about the method in detail in Finnish,<sup>10</sup> and in English in an exposition currently in review<sup>11</sup>. Most of the revisits were made in chronological order but did not take the year of the revisit into consideration; most of the twelve revisits took place within three years (2018-2020). I will return to the method of revisiting in chapter 12.

A selection of video essays made for the concluding event of the HTDTWP research project contains one essay for each of the twelve *Animal Years*; some of them with text, some without, some published online, some not. You can watch them through the event website<sup>12</sup> and individually on the project archive in the Research Cat-

10 “Kertaa ja koosta” in Järvinen (ed.) *Miten tehdä esityksellä?* Vastapaino 2024, 191-224.

11 “Revisiting as Method” possibly in *Ruukku – studies in artistic research*

12 The final event website <https://www.uniarts.fi/en/events/online-event-how-to-do-things-with-performance-grande-finale/#grande-finale-exhibition-online-tour>

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alogue.<sup>13</sup> The following twelve chapters follow the order of the initial years rather than the published video essays or articles, which are here edited and sometimes partly rewritten to avoid unnecessary repetition. For the texts to be understandable independently some repetition is unavoidable. The different layers in the texts – what is already published, what is reworked or edited – are marked only if deemed relevant.

13 They are placed on the timeline in the HTDTWP project archive on the Research Catalogue <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/281037/281038>



Figure 1. *Year of the Horse (Sitting on a Rock) 1 & 2 (2003)*

# 1. Revisiting the Year of the Horse

One way of doing things with performance is through repetition, although that is perhaps not the first thing one would associate with traditional performance art. In my presentation at the kick-off seminar of the research project *How to Do Things with Performance?*, titled “How to perform landscape by repetition?”<sup>14</sup> I described recreating a version of a performance for camera, *Year of the Horse (Sitting on a Rock)* (2003), on the same site twelve years later, *Year of the Horse – Calendar 1-2* (2015)<sup>15</sup>, albeit returning to the place only once a month rather than once a week. Thus, the idea of revisiting existed already before the actual revisits began. The two video works were not shown at the seminar, though. The compilation was made later, for a publication based on the seminar.<sup>16</sup> Rather, I presented some ideas from a text called “Repeat, Revisit, Recreate —Two Times Year of the Horse” published in *PARSE Journal #3* (2016), which problematizes the idea of recreations.<sup>17</sup> The text is included here in its entirety to kick off the discussion of re-visiting, re-creating, re-doing and this re-publishing as well.

14 See program in the HTDTWP project archive <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/281037/281038/5782/201>

15 *Year of the Horse - (Sitting on a Rock)* <https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/hevosen-vuosi-istun-kivella/> and *Year of the Horse Calendar 1-2* <https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/year-of-the-horse-calendar-1-2/>

16 *How to perform landscape by repetition?* (7 min.) <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/profile/show-work?work=403267> published in *Ice-Hole* issue 6 (Arlander 2017a) [https://icehole.fi/vol-6\\_issue2\\_2017/video-by-annette-arlander/](https://icehole.fi/vol-6_issue2_2017/video-by-annette-arlander/)

17 The text (Arlander 2016a) is available online <https://www.parsejournal.com/article/repeat-revisit-recreate-two-times-year-of-the-horse/>

## 1.1. Repeat, Revisit, Recreate - Two Times Year of the Horse



Figure 2. *Year of the Horse – Calendar 1-2* (2015)

The popularity of various forms of re-makes, re-constructions and re-enactments has been much discussed in recent years, for instance in the anthology *Perform, Repeat, Record—Live Art in*

*History*.<sup>18</sup> In traditional performance art, however, repetition is mostly shunned.<sup>19</sup> The recent fascination with returning to classical performance art pieces could be understood in terms of a nostalgia for the avant-garde as a historical phenomenon, the radical gestures of which we can only rehearse with a historical interest, for want of any real innovation or critical force in the current situation. But what about revisiting one's own work? Is that not the ultimate evidence of total stagnation, even stultification of what might have remained of a critical impetus? Recreations like for example Marina Abramović's *Seven Easy Pieces*,<sup>20</sup> or the performances of her iconic works from 1970s by younger artists in her exhibition *The Artist is Present*<sup>21</sup> can be defended as attempts at transmitting experiential knowledge of important works otherwise lost to a younger generation; as a way to promote the understanding of performance art among a larger public; or dismissed as purely commercial or canonising gestures. Some feminist critics contend, however, that the practice of re-staging performance works is crucial in engaging with issues surrounding the politics of representation, since "retracing repurposes the notion of masculine genius locked into a linear structure of constant innovation, progression and advancement" and "questions what has been omitted from the dominant canon of modernist discourse".<sup>22</sup>

This text is not discussing the topic of recreation or re-performance in principle but approaches the issue from a personal and practical perspective related to a specific artistic research project.

18 Jones, Amelia, and Heathfield, Adrian (eds.). *Perform, Repeat, Record—Live Art in History*. London: Intellect. 2012.

19 Arsem, Marilyn. Manifesto - THIS Is Performance Art. Infraction, Venice 2011.

20 Marina Abramović. *Seven Easy Pieces*. 9-15 November 2005. Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum <http://pastexhibitions.guggenheim.org/abramovic/>

21 Marina Abramović. *The Artist is Present*. 14 March-31 May 31 2010. <http://www.moma.org/calendar/exhibitions/964?locale=en>

22 Lewis, Ruth-Elois. (Re)Staging in Performance Work—Marina Abramović, Gina Pane And Valie Export. *Behind the Curtain*. 8 August 2013.

The aim is to describe repetition in the context of recreating a previous work by revisiting the same site to document changes taking place in the landscape, that is, the experience of recreating the first work in the series *Animal Years* called *Year of the Horse* (2003) and performing *Year of the Horse—Calendar 1-2* (2015) as an epilogue to the series. The whole project is briefly described in another context.<sup>23</sup> By revisiting blog posts documenting the last part of the project, the text will follow the structure of a research diary, a calendar, resembling the way in which the artwork was produced. Returning to these notes I hope to shed light on the process of repetition, to demonstrate the multidirectional and dispersed character that an artistic research process can assume, and to find possible threads to follow in the future. Thus, repeating and revisiting are strategies and methods both for the work discussed and for this study. Before focusing on my example, a few words about different approaches to repetition and re-creation in performance.

### **Repetition, Recreation and Performance**

In the introduction to their anthology *Performing Archives / Archives of Performance* Gunhild Borggreen and Rune Gade note how these two seemingly contrasting concepts are increasingly blurred: “New ways of understanding archives, history, and memory emerge and address theories of enactment and intervention, while concepts of performance constantly proliferate and enable a critical focus on archival residue.”<sup>24</sup> Starting with Richard Schechners’ understanding of performances as actions, Marvin Carlson’s observation that performance as a metaphor has moved scholarly focus from the

23 Arlander, Annette. Performing Landscape for Years. *Performance Research* 19. no. 3 2014a, 27-31.

24 Borggreen, Gunhild, and Gade, Rune. Introduction: The Archive in Performance Studies. In *Performing Archives / Archives of Performance*. Gunhild Norggreen and Rune Gade (eds.). Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press. 2013, 9-10.

“what” to the “how” of culture, and Jon McKenzies’ claim that performance is today not only an analytical tool but also a disciplinary instrument (“perform, or else”), they rehearse the debate concerning the ontology of performance with regards to documentation. Since Peggy Phelan’s well-known claim in 1993 that performance’s only life is in the present, and performance’s being becomes itself through disappearance, various responses have criticized and complicated this ontology, including Philip Auslander, who deconstructs the opposition between live and mediated forms, and Rebecca Schneider, who maintains that archives disappear as well, while performances do remain and form bodily techniques of remembering.<sup>25</sup> Following Diana Taylor, who, in her influential discussion of the archive and the repertory, politicises the idea of considering performances as ephemeral, they note the need to “take seriously the repertoire of embodied practices as an important system of knowing and transmitting knowledge.”<sup>26</sup>

Another aspect they refer to is the increasing popularity of practice as a methodology: “Parts of performance studies known as PaR (Performance as Research) use creative practice as a methodological approach in its own right, and thus emphasize a mutual response between doing and knowing in the scholarly process.”<sup>27</sup> In passing they mention that “[r]evisiting a performance is also relevant for artists who may wish to reflect on their own performance in order to evaluate and sharpen key issues, or consult other artists’ works for consumption, inspiration, or collaboration”,<sup>28</sup> an observation relevant for the concerns of this text. For them “there is not only a close relationship between research and performance—since many

25 Ibid, 13-15.

26 Taylor, quoted in Borggreen and Gade, 15.

27 Borggreen and Gade, 12.

28 Ibid.

scholars are practising artists themselves, and many artists engage in critical theorising about the way in which they do or perform—but also because the distinct categories of artwork and research can no longer be upheld.”<sup>29</sup> As scholars they stress “[i]n-depth knowledge of what is conceived as the ‘original’ performance” as “a pre-requisite for re-enactments, whether in battle re-enactments as part of Living History, or in artistic re-enactments of one’s own or others’ performance artworks of the past.”<sup>30</sup> Reconstructing, or rather re-creating a historical work based on remaining sketches, descriptions and fragments can be a way to better understand the work, and to investigate one’s artistic legacy, although it will necessarily result in an interpretation, as we (the performance groups Homo \$ and Jack-Helen-Brut) realised when creating a reconstruction of the futurist opera *Victory over the Sun* in Helsinki in 1988.<sup>31</sup> In the case at hand knowledge of the “original” was of less importance, since there was no attempt at exact reconstruction, while revisiting the same site was crucial.

In music and theatre, the idea of re-enactment or recreation is perhaps of less importance since the work is supposed to live on in the script. In art forms less reliant on notation, like dance and live art, re-enactments are often legitimised with archival aims or outreach; how else to keep the works alive and share them with new generations? With canonical works questions of “fidelity” to the original can become a concern. In general, scores are open structures for interpretation, as are theatre plays or musical compositions. For instance, regarding Fluxus event scores, which anyone can perform from the notation, “[t]he artist gives birth to the piece,

29 Ibid.

30 Ibid.

31 Arlander, Annette, and Koskenniemi, Pieta. Is yesterday’s avantgarde today’s avantgarde too? Why a futurist reconstruction? *News from the Finnish Theatre*. 1989.

but the interpreter gives it its voice.”<sup>32</sup> The distinction between a musical and a painterly sensibility in understanding events can be useful in understanding recreations as well:

Performance art is signature art: the creator does it, and without the artist, the work is no longer itself. Only Beuys can have done a Beuys performance. The same is generally true of happenings: only Vostell can have done a Vostell happening. And of those Fluxus artists like Knizak or Higgins who created happenings as well as events, their event scores are open to all, but their happenings were essentially restricted to creation under their personal guidance.<sup>33</sup>

Thus, performance art is painterly rather than musical; it cannot be re-interpreted and performed in the same way as musical works or theatre plays. Many happenings, however, share the problems of transmitting a form through a script with traditional forms of choreography, as Andre Lepecki has pointed out in describing his redoing of Allan Kaprow’s *18 happenings in 6 parts*.<sup>34</sup> With performance art the question can arise as to what actually is re-enacted—the description of an event, the photograph of it, or perhaps a rumour, as in the case of Marina Abramović re-performing Valie Export’s *Genital Panic* as part of her *Seven Easy Pieces*.<sup>35</sup>

The text “Manifesto—THIS Is Performance Art” written by Marilyn Arsem in January 2011, in conjunction with Infr’Action Venezia, is an example of the critical attitude towards re-enactments among

32 Friedman, Ken. *Fluxus Workbook*. Oslo: El Djarida. 1990, 5.

33 Ibid.

34 Lepecki, André. “Not as Before, But Simply: Again.” In *Perform, Repeat, Record—Live Art in History*. Amelia Jones and Adrian Heathfield (eds.). Bristol / Chicago, IL: Intellect. 2012, 152.

35 Widrich, Mechthild. “Can Photographs Make it So? Repeated Outbreaks of VALIE EXPORT’S *Genital Panic* Since 1969”. In Jones and Heathfield, 98-100.

many “old-school” performance artists. The text is “conceived for a time when performance art’s true and intrinsic qualities are being confused by notions of live art and re-enactment and is drowning in the unclear matter of its opposite: the staged, the theatrical, the spectacle.” The main headings are strong claims: performance art is now, performance art is real, performance art requires risk, performance art is not an investment object, performance art is ephemeral. There is a clear statement concerning re-enactments: “Re-enactment of historical work is theater, not performance art.” Moreover, all archiving of past performances is questioned: “The record of performance art resides in the bodies of the artist and the witnesses.”<sup>36</sup> This manifesto is written by an artist respected by the international performance art community, which probably shares many of its views.

As a contrasting example, Anthony Howell, one of the forerunners of British Live Art, considers repetition as a key term in his theory of performance art; repetition is one of the primaries of action, together with stillness and inconsistency. Mimicry is for him one form of repetition, often related to representational theatre, while copying is another, which not only mimics, but also multiplies the original. Representation is a conscious repetition; representational theatre is a theatre of the conscious mind, while performance art is an art of the unconscious, Howell maintains, referring to Gilles Deleuze, who considers repetition to be the unconscious of representation. There is “an inverse relation between repetition and consciousness, repetition and remembering, repetition and recognition.”<sup>37</sup> Freud assumed that we repeat because we repress, and

36 Arsem 2011.

37 Howell, Anthony. *Analysis of Performance Art. A guide to its theory and practice*. OPA (Overseas publishers Association). London and New York, NY: Routledge 1999, 31.

later suggested the death instinct was connected with repetition, as a psychic equivalent to gravity.<sup>38</sup> According to Howell, repetition is associated with obsession, which is “a method for salvaging comfort in a painful situation”,<sup>39</sup> although “[r]epetition may seem to annul the progress of time by constantly returning us to the scene of some previous experience, as if one trod water in the river of life.”<sup>40</sup> Life is maintained by repetitions, like the heartbeat, the breath, sleeping, eating, walking and so on. Moreover, “repetition can confer value by maintaining that some particular act is noble enough to merit being repeated.”<sup>41</sup> This is relevant in the context of re-creations as well.

These two examples (Arsem and Howell) exemplify the variety of approaches among artists. Other proponents of Live Art would probably stress other aspects, like live interaction with audience members in participatory works. The purpose of this text is not to rehearse the ever-more sophisticated arguments for or against re-enactments or the radical potential of performance art. It is nevertheless important to remember that the relationship to repetition differs in performance art, Live Art and theatre. When speaking of repetition with regards to theatre we can distinguish between the use of repetition in the creation of work and in the distribution of it. In standard stage performances repetition is used in rehearsal to develop and “fix” the performance. And repetition is used for distribution when the performance is repeated for new audiences each night. A third dimension involves repetition as a compositional tool, like in much choreographic work and contemporary performance, and in the example case of performances for camera I will describe in what follows. With hindsight one can say they do not

38 Ibid, 37.

39 Ibid, 30.

40 Ibid, 36.

41 Ibid, 37.

meet Arsem's ideals for performance art, but they do share an appreciation of the 'real' in each repetition.

### **Two Times Year of the Horse**

In the year 2002 I decided to document changes in the environment by visiting the same place on Harakka Island, in Helsinki, performing for camera approximately once a week for an entire year, which resulted in the video *Year of the Horse* (2003). This led to the series of works called *Animal Years* (2003-2014), twelve one-year projects based on the Chinese calendar performed and videoed on the same island.<sup>42</sup> To accentuate the idea of cyclical return I decided to revisit the place where I began again in 2014, this time only once a month. Thus, I sat on the same rock, with the same scarf, albeit in front of a new camera and with new image proportions, once a month to create *Year of the Horse—Calendar 1-2* (2015). I also wrote blog notes after each session.

Even without this last revisit, *Animal Years* consists of sheer repetition if formulated as a score:

Take the same scarf and return to the same site.

Place the camera in the same spot and choose the same framing.

Perform the same action in front of the camera.

Repeat this procedure once a week for a year.

Repeat the same procedure the following year in another place on the island.

Choose another scarf, another spot for the camera, another action or gesture to repeat

The repetition seems obvious on many levels; the place, the scarf, the position, the action, the framing, all stay the same. In this case

42 I have discussed the project for instance in Arlander 2014a, 27-31.

repetition was not used in the creation process to develop and fix a performance, or to find the right version. Instead of discarding previous versions, as in a theatre or dance rehearsal, I repeated the action to record many versions of it. Every variation resembled the previous ones, and they were all used in the final work. In this case the use of repetition could be called generative, since repetition generated material, which was compiled “automatically” using all the versions in the order they had been created. The performance was not repeated for new audiences, only for the camera, and only the video work is shown to the public. Repetition is an aesthetic principle of the work, a crucial gesture, what the viewer sees. Variations were produced around the basic structure of a few initial choices, with repetition as the main compositional strategy. Roughly: one artistic choice a year was repeated again and again. With repetition as an aesthetic strategy, we can ask: what is repeated and what is changing? What stays almost the same, and what is constantly shifting? The attention of the viewer can be focused on the repeated action and the small shifts in it. Or, alternatively, on that which is changing, like the surrounding landscape. In this case variations were produced by the weather, light, wind, vegetation, birds, passers-by, or other unforeseen occurrences. The main variations, like the time of year and time of day, as well as some weather patterns, are created by planetary movements. There is variation in the repetition from year to year, and within each one-year project. Most years I have chosen two or more actions to repeat and more than one place to return to. The camera position, too, tends to shift, despite my efforts to keep it constant. *Animal Years* is all about repetition. Perhaps we could call it a refrain, even an existential refrain.<sup>43</sup> “The symptom

43 Deleuze, Gilles, and Guattari, Félix. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Trans. and foreword Brian Massumi. London and New York, NY: Continuum. 2004 [1980], 342-86 (1837: Of the Refrain).

through its own repetitiveness functions as an existential refrain.”<sup>44</sup>  
Discussing that would be another story.

### **Recreating an Image after Twelve Years**

In 2014, during the process of returning to the same place where I performed in 2002, I made blog notes after each session, once a month. In these notes I often begin by describing my experience and then refer to books read, or conferences visited, or other details that fed into the research process. Some of them proved relevant and led to further study. In the following I quote only the initial descriptions from each note. The first blog post, however, where I describe my starting point is quoted in full.

When I first took an interest in recording the changes taking place in the landscape by returning regularly to the same place and placing my video camera on a tripod in the same spot, attempting to keep the same framing and entering the image to the same position, I worked for a few weeks, sometimes twice a day. To focus on the seasonal changes rather than changes in light and weather, and thus more specifically on time, I decided to record one full year, approximately once a week. And I chose the easiest place possible, the stairs on the slope towards southwest just outside my studio on Harakka Island, off Helsinki. And to have some tension in the image, I chose two positions, one very close to the camera, hiding half of the view with my shoulder, and another further away in the landscape, sitting on a rounded boulder next to the path. This was actually an exaggeration of the two different versions in a work called *Windrail II*,<sup>45</sup>

44 Guattari, Félix. *Chaosmosis—an ethico-aesthetic paradigm*. Sydney: Power Publication. 1995, 26.

45 I have discussed the work in “Tuulikaide—Eräänlainen alku / Wind Rail—Sort of a Beginning”. *Ruukku—Studies in Artistic Research*. no. 1. 2013. (Arlander 2013a) <http://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/42484/42634/53>

where I explored the difference between guiding the viewers gaze into the landscape or posing as the central figure embedded in the landscape. In this exaggerated version the human figure is literally blocking the view in the first version, and so small as to be hardly discernible in the second.

This was more than twelve years ago, in 2002. To return to the same place after twelve years would certainly be more dramatic were I not walking on that same path almost on a weekly basis. To try to recreate a version of the first year of weekly repetitions as a monthly calendar is actually a way of softening the shock of coming to the end of this project, which has occupied me fairly regularly for twelve years. It is also a way of closing the cycle, as it were. So, one day in brilliant sunshine, I decided the moment was right for creating the February image and start the remake. I remember the first image of the Year of the Horse, with the sun sending two dazzling swords to hit the snowy ground. By the time I stood in front of the camera twelve years later the sky was cloudy with a soft pinkish hue although there were several hours to go before sunset. My camera was different, too. Originally, I used simple DV and a 4:3 image, while I now worked with HD and a 16:9 image. The dark blue scarf was the same, and so was the rock I was sitting on. The only notable difference in the landscape was the small windmill, fastened with wires to the ground, and I deliberately framed the image to include a part of it, to show some change. I remember being very unhappy about the framing of the original image later in the first year, since the rail of the wooden stairs is visible in a monitor, although the camera screen would not show it. So, this time I was careful to leave the horizon low, to be on the safe side.<sup>46</sup>

46 Posted 2014-02-07. <http://annettearlander.com/2014/02/07/recreating-an-image-after-twelve-years/>

The day I started my recreation, *Helsingin Sanomat*, the main local newspaper, used the trope of showing an old photo with a contemporary picture of the same place, to commemorate the bombing of Helsinki on 6 February in 1944. Compared to such dramatic demonstrations of time passing, my documentation of changes in the landscape is modest. Tapio Heikkilä has developed a technique for visual monitoring of cultural landscapes, which could be useful for further developing this practice. He recommends, for instance, choosing some of the vantage points in advance on a map, photographing the landscape in four directions, adding other viewpoints if needed, returning to take photos from exactly the same spots and directions in predetermined years, and using a camera at 200-250 cm level with a tilt of 5 degrees downwards,<sup>47</sup> which resembles the height I used by accident in these first and last images, due to the hill.

### **Re-creation and Repetition in March**

My attempt at re-creating *Year of the Horse* (2002) on Harakka Island in 2014, albeit once a month rather than once a week, was almost stranded before it started due to unlucky circumstances. During my first session, in the first days of February, snow covered the island and most of the sea as well. The winter was exceptionally short, and the ice soon turned unreliable to walk on or impossible to row through. In mid-March when the sea was finally open for boats, I was away travelling. In order to continue the “calendar” I finally made it to the island at the end of March. The jump between the first two images is thus almost two months rather than one month.

47 Heikkilä, Tapio. *Visuaalinen maisemaseuranta. Kulttuurimaiseman muutosten valokuvadokumentointi* [Visual Monitoring of Finnish Landscapes]. Helsinki: Kustannus Oy. Musta Taide. Taideteollisen Korkeakoulun Julkaisusarja A 76. 2007, 152-153.

There was no more snow in sight, only a few remains by the rocks on the northern shore. The first sounds of birds filled the air and the sun felt warm, like spring.<sup>48</sup>

Kirsten Pullen discusses the many re-creations of Beyoncé's *Single Ladies* on YouTube, viewed by millions, and suggests that performance studies scholars should not only use YouTube for examples in teaching, as consumers, but to participate as producers too.<sup>49</sup> Re-creation is a kind of repetition relevant for artistic research, as Mark Fleishman notes in "The Difference of Performance as Research".<sup>50</sup> For him performance-as-research

is a process of creative evolution. It is not progressivist, building towards a finality; nor is it mechanistic in the sense that it knows what it is searching for before it begins searching. It begins with energy... that is then channelled, durationally, through repetition, in variable and indeterminable directions... It expresses itself through a repeated, though flexible and open-ended, process of ontogenesis.<sup>51</sup>

Fleishman suggests that repetition is a way of slowing down to see the differences, in order to feel and live the intervals between the stable points of action. I completely agree; in creating a performance it is as if repeating things is the only way to become aware of what actually takes place. But what about revisiting old works,

48 Posted 2014-03-31. <http://annettearlander.com/2014/03/31/march/>

49 Pullen, Kirsten. "If Ya liked it Then You Shoulda Made a Video Beyoncé Knowles. YouTube and the public sphere of images." *Performance Research* 16. no. 2. 2011, 145-153. I remember reluctantly participating in her "Single Ladies" at PSi #16, and that is not the version that attracted the millions. Obviously, there are re-creations and re-creations.

50 Fleishman, Mark. "The Difference of Performance as Research." *Theatre Research International* 37. no. 1. March 2012, 28-37.

51 *Ibid.*, 34.

old places, old strategies for performing landscape? What is the difference, and is there a difference that matters? These questions haunted me at the start of the project, although I soon abandoned them as unproductive. Working with repetition can take many forms.

### **Intra-acting with Geese and Grass in April**

A short visit to a windy Harakka Island for the April session revealed a familiar landscape. The surroundings looked almost the same as at the end of March, with one audible difference; the birds had arrived. Not only were the seagulls sitting in pairs on the cliffs, screaming every now and then of the sheer joy of spring, but two geese couples were strutting on the slopes of the old fortifications, trying to find something green to eat among the dry grass of last year. When more of them have arrived and started nesting, standing on the path on the hill is like a dangerous adventure; the birds will be fiercely protecting their territories from intruders, and humans make no exceptions.<sup>52</sup>

During that time, I was struggling with Karen Barad's important book *Meeting the Universe Halfway*,<sup>53</sup> trying to understand what agential realism might mean in practice. Building further on the explorations of Foucault and Butler, Barad insists that the forces at work in the materialisation of bodies are not only social and the materialised bodies are not all human. "According to agential realism, causality is neither a matter of strict determinism nor one of free will" she writes, "intra-actions iteratively reconfigure what

52 Posted 2014-04-15. <http://annettearlander.com/2014/04/15/intra-acting-with-geese-grass-and-wind/>

53 Barad, Karen. *Meeting the Universe Halfway—Quantum physics and the entanglement of matter and meaning*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press. 2007.

is possible and what is impossible — possibilities do not sit still.”<sup>54</sup> Barad explains: “The world’s effervescence, its exuberant creativeness can never be contained or suspended. Agency never ends; it can never ‘run out’. The notion of intra-action reformulates the traditional notions of causality and agency in an ongoing reconfiguring of both the real and the possible.”<sup>55</sup> Barad emphasises that agency is a matter of intra-acting, an enactment rather than something somebody or something has. “Particular possibilities for (intra-) acting exist at every moment” and they “entail an ethical obligation to intra-act responsively in the world’s becoming, to contest and rework what matters and what is excluded from mattering.”<sup>56</sup> Her notion of intra-action, instead of interaction, which assumes that the entities interacting pre-exist the interaction, is fascinating; intra-action suggests that bodies or agents or subjects are created through intra-actions.

Later that year I wrote an article on intra-action<sup>57</sup> trying to understand the concept in relation to another work in the same series, *Year of the Snake*. The notion of intra-action changes our understanding of our relationship to the environment. Bodies are not simply situated or located in particular environments; rather, environments and bodies are intra-actively co-constituted. “Bodies (‘human’, ‘environmental’ or otherwise) are integral ‘parts’ of, or dynamic reconfigurings of, what is”.<sup>58</sup> The relationship between “bodies” and “environment” becomes obvious when working with video imagery. The idea of intra-action as constitutive is easier to

54 Ibid., 234.

55 Ibid., 235.

56 Ibid.

57 Arlander, Annette. “From interaction to intra-action in performing landscape.” In *New feminist materialism: engendering an ethic-onto-epistemological methodology*. *Artnodes*. no. 14. 2014b, 26-34. See chapter 12.1.

58 Barad 2007, 170.

understand because the elements in the image are produced by the intra-action of “measuring agencies” like the camera, the tripod, the framing of the image, and “objects” like the cliff, the sea, the tree, the stub, the swing, and the performer.

### **Exposition of Artistic Research in May**

When the sun suddenly appeared after several rainy days, I rushed out on the slope above the fortifications to record the May session of the remake of the Year of the Horse. I reacted as if the subtle green of the small birches on the cliffs would immediately turn into ordinary foliage consequent to the light. The wind from southwest was freezing cold, so no risk.<sup>59</sup>

In “Integrating the Exposition into Music-Composition Research” Hans Roels presents the idea of the open sketch as an exposition form and a research tool, which could be transposed to other art forms as well. Roels emphasises the unfinished character of the sketch, which is deliberately created to investigate a research topic and is performed and discussed by an invited critical audience. It differs from a finished complex composition by being focused on a specific problem and perhaps allowing some emotional distance as well.<sup>60</sup> I immediately associated my blog posts with open sketches as expositions. Perhaps one would expect a research exposition to be more planned, more focused, and analytical than monthly blog notes, which seem like field notes, observations, material to be analysed later. If we understand the word exposition literally, however, I was

59 Posted 2014-05-11. <http://annettearlander.com/2014/05/11/exposition-of-artistic-research-in-may/>

60 Roels, Hans. “Integrating the Exposition into Music-Composition Research.” In Schwab, Michael and Borgdorff, Henk (eds.) *The Exposition of Artistic Research: Publishing Art in Academia*. Leiden: Leiden University Press. 2014, 153-164.

indeed exposing my artistic practice and research in the making; the investigation of the effects of a time-lapse of twelve years was presented as open sketches made public.

## Practicing Embodied Cognition in June

Standing on the hill in front of the camera and walking down to sit on the rock below the slope, during the session in June, made me aware of the small windmill again. It is the only feature in the environment that has visibly changed since I sat on the same rock once a week for a year twelve years ago. At that time, I was interested in recording the seasonal changes in the environment during one year. Now my focus is on changes that have taken place during these years in between.<sup>61</sup>

The environment could be understood as an example of the excluded middle, as discussed by Jondi Keane in “Æffect: Initiating Heuristic Life”.<sup>62</sup> According to Keane a new materialism must be built on the subtle difference initiated by embodied reality sensitive to affects and prompted by atmospheric intricateness. His notion Æffect is “a relational/corelational tool devised to help one learn how to negotiate the material processes of self-organisation.”<sup>63</sup> Practising embodied cognition, or distributing the mind throughout the body and into the environment, means “first, the recognition of the role of the environment in the co-selection of the organism-person-surround”, that is, “cognition as perception and action”, and “second

61 Posted 2014-06-21 <https://annettearlander.com/2014/06/21/practicing-embodied-cognition-in-june/>

62 Keane, Jondi. Æffect: Initiating Heuristic Life. In *Carnal Knowledge—Towards a “New materialism” through the Arts*. Estelle Barrett and Barbara Bolt (eds.). New York, NY: I.B. Tauris. 2013, 41-62.

63 Ibid., 61.

the role of abstract relationships in the coordination of the organism-person-surround”, that is, “cognition as attention, emphasis, and the production of value-based distinctions”.<sup>64</sup> The role of the environment, the organism-person-surround, was evident while sitting on the rock among small birches bending in the wind and geese walking around followed by their young when I was performing for camera in 2014. Rather than observing and reflecting I was engaging in actions to perceive, focusing my attention on some parts of the environment, putting more emphasis and value on some aspects, intent on noticing changes since my last visit. The camera, however, does not make the same distinctions but registers the familiar and the surprising with the same intensity. By using its automatic functions for choice of light balance and focus an impersonal approach and some constancy is maintained. Moreover, the agency of the technology and the environmental conditions it reacts to are acknowledged.

### **Returning to the Rock in July**

Revisiting the same rock on Harakka Island as a kind of re-enactment, felt like a relaxed return home after a trip to Shanghai in China. /--/ Sitting on the same rock on the island again, knowing that the second half of the year is still in front of me, feels both strange and familiar at the same time, like engaging with the remains of some ancient practice that does not really belong to me or my concerns at the moment anymore. On the other hand, I have not invented any significantly different approaches to performing landscape, not yet.<sup>65</sup>

64 Ibid., 60.

65 Posted 2014-07-14. <http://annettearlander.com/2014/07/14/returning-to-the-rock-in-july/>

During the conference Performance Studies International #20 at the Shanghai Theatre Academy I showed images of the first part of these re-visits together with the original video in a performance-presentation called “Revisiting the Year of the Horse” as part of the “Porous Studio Avant-Gardening” organised by the Artistic Research Working Group.<sup>66</sup> Besides the original video *Year of the Horse*<sup>67</sup> from 2003 I showed *Sitting on a Rock (Rock with Text)*,<sup>68</sup> made the following spring in the same place, and a new work performed in Koivumäki (Birch Hill) during a day and night at midsummer 2014, *Sitting on a Rock in Rain*.<sup>69</sup> I tried to write a new version of the text “Sitting on a Rock” from 2002, without much success, although the attempt at using an existing text as a template, re-creating it and filling in with new observations according to circumstances was useful as a tool and would merit a separate discussion.

### Watching the Birches Suffer in August

After a long period of warm, dry weather the birches on the cliffs on Harakka Island... have been completely yellow, like in autumn, since there is very little soil on the cliffs and no water without rain. But today, after the rainfall last night I expected them to look invigorated. Because of the brisk wind, however, most of the dry leaves

66 See blog PSI Artistic Research Working Group.

<http://psi-artistic-research-working-group.blogspot.fi>

67 See *Year of the Horse* <https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/hevosen-vuosi-istun-kivella/>

68 See *Sitting on a Rock (Rock with Text)* <https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/istun-kivella-rock-with-text/>

69 *Sitting on a Rock in Rain* <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/profile/show-work?work=290731> The blog post with notes from each session, (every second hour from 6 am to midnight) “Istun kivellä sateessa” [Sitting on a rock in rain] is written in Finnish <http://annettearlander.com/2014/06/23/istun-kivella-sateessa/>

had fallen, so the landscape looked even more autumnal, despite some fresh greenery here and there.<sup>70</sup>

Since my last visit I had participated in the World Congress of the IFTR (International Federation for Theatre Research) at Warwick University in the UK, with the theme “Theatre and Stratification”.<sup>71</sup> At the meeting of the Performance as Research Working Group, originally started by Baz Kershaw and Jacqueline Martin in 2006, I focused on a work from the previous year of the snake (2013) and Michael Marder’s ideas on plant thinking.<sup>72</sup> In a paper called “Performing with Plants—Challenges to Traditional Hierarchies?”<sup>73</sup>, I discussed how we normally take the plants that support our activities for granted. And the rocks, like the rock I was repeatedly sitting on during 2002 and 2014, and which I did not grant any agency before reading Jane Bennett and her idea of thing-power.<sup>74</sup> Without the big, rounded rock on the path on Harakka Island I would probably have chosen another place to sit on and another spot to place my camera tripod on. In the timescale of the rock the twelve years that have passed since I performed with it the last time are merely an instant.

70 Posted 2014-08-12. <http://annettearlander.com/2014/08/12/watching-the-birches-suffer-in-august/>

71 See IFTR past conferences, Warwick 2014 <https://iftr.org/conference/past-conferences/2010s>

72 Marder, Michael. *Plant-Thinking. A Philosophy of Vegetal Life*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press. 2013.

73 In a workshop organised together with Stefanie Bauerochse and Juan Manuel Aldape Munoz based on our papers we invited people to swing from an old oak (me), to climb that oak and read some lines of Shakespeare (Stefanie) and walk into the art centre and watch a small performance with one of the volunteers (Juan).

74 Bennett, Jane. *Vibrant Matter. A Political Ecology of Things*. Durham, NC, and London: Duke University Press. 2010.

## Indian Summer and Immaterial Land in September

Beautiful warm summer days in the middle of September are rare in Finland, and what we call “Indian summer” always feels like extreme luxury. Very, very soon the dark, damp, stormy autumn is upon us. I went to revisit the slope and the rock I used to visit weekly in the year of the horse in 2002, and now visit once a month this year, and was surprised by the view. After a few days of rain, the moss was light green on the cliffs, and all the yellow leaves of the birches were gone, so the few remaining green ones almost reminded me of spring. And it was warm!<sup>75</sup>

“Immaterial land” by Brian Martin<sup>76</sup> is written from the point of view of the indigenous population in Australia and their view of art in contrast to western notions. The central notion is “country” or land, which makes the text harder to comprehend. A more sensitive relationship to the earth, the soil and the environment is necessary, but talk about land and belonging inevitably associates to “Blut und Boden” ideology in European ears. The idea of an artwork as a map, a ritual aid and the materialisation of memory is fascinating, however, as is refusing the binary between the material and the immaterial or spiritual. The aboriginal works I have seen were huge shimmering colour fields, while the works Martin describes are ornamental images of fish. The concept is beautiful, though: you catch a fish, respect it, eat it, and then paint a representation of it and bring it back to life that way—a perfect form of ritualised repetition. My repeated visits to the rock are also turned into

75 Posted 2014-0-17. <http://annettearlander.com/2014/09/17/indian-summer-and-immaterial-land-in-august/>

76 Martin, Brian. “Immaterial Land.” In *Carnal Knowledge—Towards a “New materialism” through the Arts*. Estelle Barrett and Barbara Bolt (eds.). New York: I.B. Tauris 2013, 185-204.

representations, albeit without such ritual significance. Perhaps recreating *Year of the Horse* was a ritual exercise to keep up the practice, while looking for another place, another landscape, a different environment.

## **Appropriation and Invocation in October**

Revisiting the rock on the western shore of Harakka Island once again made me think of the materiality of this kind of reworking, remaking, returning, and replaying of what was before. Although the rock, the wooden stairs, my scarf are the same as twelve years ago, I have a hard time making the connection. I do not remember what I experienced in October 2002, rather, I have only some vague images in my mind of the video thus created, *Year of the Horse—Sitting on a Rock*,<sup>77</sup> which I saw recently. Probably the same goes for many memories, we do not remember the events but only our retelling of them.<sup>78</sup>

In “Apropos Appropriation: Why steeling images today feels different”,<sup>79</sup> referred to by Barbara Bolt at the conference “New Materialist Methodologies—Gender, Politics and the Digital” in Barcelona, Jan Verwoert discusses appropriation and invocation comparing postmodern practices of appropriation in the 1980s with appropriation today. Referring to Derrida he contends that invoking images involves dealing with ghosts, as well as the ceremonies of invoking them. He describes the move away from interest in the arbitrariness

77 See *Year of the Horse* <https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/hevosen-vuosi-istun-kivella/>

78 Posted 2014-10-11. <http://annettearlander.com/2014/10/11/appropriation-and-invocation-in-october/>

79 Verwoert, Jan. “Apropos Appropriation: Why steeling images today feels different.” *Art and Research* 1. no. 2. summer 2007. <http://www.artandresearch.org.uk/v1n2/verwoert.html>

of the sign to the performativity of language, how things are done with words, how language through injunction and interpellation enforces meaning, like a spell cast upon a person. When you call up a spectre it will not be content with being analysed, it will have to be negotiated.<sup>80</sup> Invoking the spectre of German romantic painting, as in re-creating *Der Mönch am Meer*<sup>81</sup> by Caspar David Friedrich on various shores, resulted in *Year of the Goat—Harakka Shore 1-3*<sup>82</sup> and *Three Shores*<sup>83</sup> and evoked a whole legacy of ghosts, interpretations and recreations to negotiate. But *Year of the Horse* had no conscious model or precursor. In recreating it I did not appropriate my previous work, but perhaps I invoked it. We could ask, why call up exactly these ghosts? Why sit on the rock again? Perhaps I should have considered what ghosts would be worth calling forth, what spectres could be summoned for help? Acknowledging the performativity of all artistic practices, we could ask: what spells should we use right now? What should we really repeat? These questions must remain rhetorical; I have not yet discovered an answer. One of the beauties of using repetition as a tool, however, is that it can carry you through moments of doubt.

## Production of Space in November

On returning to a damp and chilly Helsinki from the rainy but considerably warmer city of Porto I inevitably thought about the influence landscape and the environment in general has on our moods.

80 Ibid.

81 *Der Mönch am Meer* or The Monk by the Sea <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?search=C+D+Friedrich+Monk+by+the+sea&title=Special:MediaSearch&go=Go&type=image>

82 See *Year of the Goat – Harakka Shore 1-3* <https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/vuohen-vuosi-harakan-ranta-1-3/>

83 See *Three Shores* <https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/three-shores/>

After discussing various approaches to artistic research during a small well-organised and fairly informal event called “Conversations on Artistic Research” at the department of fine arts of the University of Porto, where I gave one of the keynotes with the title *On Doing Research*, it seemed almost an anti-climax to resume my modest project on Harakka Island.<sup>84</sup>

The classic work by Henri Lefevre, *The Production of Space*<sup>85</sup>, from the 1970s is on the reading list of most people interested in space, and his tripartite division of space into lived, conceived, and perceived space, or his distinctions “spatial practice”, “representation of space”, and “representational space” are still relevant. His witty criticism of the proponents of the linguistic turn of the time and his ironical comments directed at orthodox Marxists are entertaining today, but most of his ideas on the production of space still make sense: how has the particular space of Harakka Island been produced, and how is it continually reproduced by the social practices of various user groups, including my practice of performing landscape?<sup>86</sup> The lived space on the island is transformed into the conceived and perceived space of a video work, a representational space, which is based on, and to some extent influences, the prevalent cultural conceptions of space. The notion of production, rather than the levels of representation, seems related to the performativity of space.

84 Posted 2014-11-09. <http://annettearlander.com/2014/11/09/production-of-space-in-november/>

85 Lefebvre, Henri. *The Production of Space*. Trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers Inc. 1991 [1974].

86 For a discussion of what I mean by the term, see Arlander 2012a, 7-21.

## Between Storms in December

Last night some of the rainfall came down as wet snow, but nothing of it remained in the afternoon when I went down to the shore to empty my boat from water. The ground was as dark and gloomy as before, only more wet. To my surprise the wind was blowing from west-northwest in such an angle that there were no big waves between the mainland and the island. Thus, I quickly decided to return and bring my things and to row across to record the December session of the Year of the Horse now, and thus to have it done well before Christmas. /--/ I was energized by my dread for the strong wind, though. On the way to the island, it was pushing me, but on the way back I really had to work hard against it. And nothing keeps you awake better than a kick of adrenaline.<sup>87</sup>

Many performance artists work with risk, experimenting with pain or hinting at terror. Some, like Marilyn Arsem, say that without risk there is no performance art. My performances for camera do not involve any real risk, or even imagined dread, although they repeat the same actions as if forced by an obsession or trauma. Their forte is not in duration, like for instance the work of Linda Montano,<sup>88</sup> but in repetition. *Autoimmunity: real and symbolic suicides, a dialogue with Jacques Derrida*<sup>89</sup> recommended by Rustom Bharucha, during his lecture on his book *Terror and Performance*,<sup>90</sup> reminds us that

87 Posted 201-12-13. <http://annettearlander.com/2014/12/13/between-storms-in-december/>

88 Linda Montano repeated her *Seven Years of Living Art* for another seven years. <http://www.lindamontano.com/14-years-of-living-art/>

89 Borradori, Giovanna. *Autoimmunity: real and symbolic suicides, a dialogue with Jacques Derrida*. In *Philosophy in a Time of Terror. Dialogues with Jürgen Habermas and Jacques Derrida*. Chicago, IL, and London: The University of Chicago Press. 2003, 85-136.

90 Bharucha, Rustom. *Terror and Performance*. London & New York: Routledge 2014.

even a peaceful activity like revisiting a site could become risky, if there are disagreements concerning who is entitled to use the land. “Terra”, territory and terror go together.

### Through the Thick Skin of the Sea in January

The sea was open when I came over to the island, but since there was no wind, it felt like it could be freezing any moment. There was no thin layer of ice on the surface yet, but near the shores there was a sort of porous jelly that could turn into ice floes any minute. For a good ice to form it was not cold enough, though. I got a ride across to the island and went to perform, to stand and sit in front of the camera with my dark blue scarf on the hill towards the west for the last time. This remake of my weekly performance during the year of the horse 2002, done once a month in 2014, ends here. /--/ When I look at the small DV tape cover on my table, I can read the dates I have visited the hill and the rock below it: 6 February, 30 March, 12 April, 11 May, 2 June, 14 July, 12 August, 17 September, 11 October, 9 November and 14 December 2014. And now, today, on 19 January 2015.<sup>91</sup>

*The Skin of the Film* by Laura U. Marks,<sup>92</sup> the only work related to video or film, besides *Ecocinema, Theory & Practice*,<sup>93</sup> I read during the year, introduces the notion of haptic visuality, relevant to these works. Marks discusses intercultural cinema in a postcolonial context, and focuses on films describing diasporic experiences,

91 Posted 2015-01-19. <http://annettearlander.com/2015/01/19/through-the-thick-skin-of-the-sea-in-january/>

92 Marks, Laura U. *The Skin of the Film—Intercultural Cinema, embodiment, and the senses*. Durham, NC, and London: Duke University Press. 2000.

93 Rust, Stephen, Cubitt, Sean, and Monani, Salma (eds.). *Ecocinema Theory and Practice*. London: Routledge. 2013

including specific audiences touched by the actual “skin of the film”. Many of the filmmakers she introduces work with the blurring of vision to evade objectifying visuality and to evoke other senses in an effort to articulate what cannot be remembered. Despite the discrepancy in the context, this resonates with my idea of repetition; returning to the same place, showing the same thing over and over, trying to grasp what exactly is happening in the landscape. Perhaps that is something to focus on even more in the future: to look closer, to forget the view and to direct attention to the details, the more or less living things that together comprise the landscape.

### **Returning to the Beginning**

The purpose of returning to the same site was not only to recreate the first version twelve years later, but also to be able to juxtapose the two works, *Year of the Horse*<sup>94</sup> (2003) and *Year of the Horse—Calendar 1-2*<sup>95</sup> (2015). Looking at the two versions provided a surprise; the same actions on the same site performed for a camera placed in the same spot produced two rather different works. This was due to several changes: 1) from DV quality to HDV quality, 2) from 4:3 video format to 16:9 film format, 3) from approximately one image per week (64 images) into an image once a month (12 images). The environment had changed surprisingly little, while developments in video technology have been remarkable. The main difference between the two works is the rhythm. The second version, a two-channel installation (11 min. 10 sec.), was edited to almost the same length as the first, a single channel video with two parts (12 min. 28 sec.) In the first work from 2003 the year is repeated twice, and the image

94 See *Year of the Horse (Sitting on a Rock)* <https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/hevosen-vuosi-istun-kivella/>

95 See *Year of the Horse—Calendar 1-2* <http://www.av-arkki.fi/en/works/year-of-the-horse-calendar-1-2/>

duration is 6 seconds. In the second work from 2015 the image duration is more than 60 seconds, which changes the character of the work completely. Moreover, one image per month rather than one per week accentuates seasonal changes rather than shifts in weather and light conditions. Additionally, in the second version the scarf often covers more than half the image, so the camera automatically focuses on the textile, leaving the landscape blurry.

Slowness and static images of long duration—which characterise the second version—are considered the hallmarks of an ecological approach to film. Scott MacDonald, for instance, defines certain films as eco-cinema primarily because they provide within the film an experience of nature that functions as a model for patience and mindfulness, characteristics of awareness that are decisive for an appreciation of and a commitment to the natural environment; they offer an alternative to conventional modes of watching media, thus helping to foster a more sensitive relationship to the environment.<sup>96</sup> Paradoxically the second version could thus be considered more “radical” than the first version, at least in terms of the values of eco-cinema.

Perhaps it is misleading to think of the second version as a re-creation, and the first version as an “original” to be recreated. The repetition is more like a return to the beginning to create an ending to the cyclical process. *Year of the Horse—Calendar 1-2* performed in 2014 was not only a re-creation of the *Year of the Horse* from 2002, but the result of repeating the same task to end *Animal Years*. The second version points to the cyclical structure of the series and indicates a third level of repetition. As the year begins and ends in January, this series, following the twelve-year cycle of

96 MacDonald, Scott. “The Ecocinema Experience.” In *Ecocinema Theory and Practice*. Rust, Stephen, Cubitt, Sean and Monani, Salma (eds.). New York, NY, and London: Routledge. 2013 [2004], 19-20.

the Chinese calendar (which traditionally begins with the year of the rat), begins and ends with the year of the horse.

On a more general level, revisiting these notes and works did serve as a reminder that the task for artistic research is not necessarily to find out something that already exists out there, waiting to be discovered, but to construct or cut out a space for the divergent agents to intra-actively create the matter at hand, or simply, to focus attention on that which matters, in this case the landscape.

## 1.2. How to Perform Landscape by Repetition

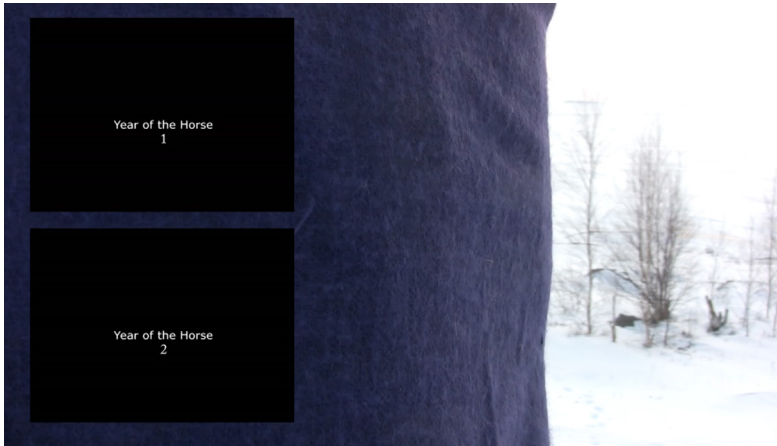


Figure 3. *How to perform landscape by repetition?* (2016)

For the kick-off seminar of the research project HTDTWP (How To Do Things With Performance?) on 4 October 2016 we invited our distinguished advisory board, professor Heike Roms, doctor Katve-Kaisa Kontturi, professor Ed Scheer and professor Simon O’Sullivan to share their views on performativity and performance. We also invited some Finnish artists and scholars with experience of working within the broad field of performance to show us or tell us their views on how to do things with performance. And many did that in illuminating and provocative ways. The artists who shared their views were Henna-Riikka Halonen, Saara Hannula, Esa Kirkkopelto, Karolina Kucia, Tuomas Laitinen, Kimmo Modig and Kira O’Reilly. As is usual with live events, and despite our efforts to document all contributions, the texts and videos included in issue 6 of *Ice-Hole* were further developments, condensed extracts, or scripts for some of the performances and presentations in the seminar. And so is my presentation as well, a small video compilation called “How

to perform landscape by repetition”.<sup>97</sup> For that video I inserted both parts of the first version of the work *Year of the Horse (Sitting on a Rock)* (2003) into the beginning of the first part of the second version of the work *Year of the Horse* (2015) and included the text from my PowerPoint presentation as a very slow text scroll. Thus, in this small contribution I already utilized the idea of inserting the old TV-format DV-videos into a larger movie format HD video recorded on the same site, although here both versions already existed as separate works. Later, I used this idea as a model for recording new footage to be used as a basis for the compilation. The transcript of the text in this video compilation, based on the presentation at the kick-off seminar, is presented here as a script of sorts:

Performing landscape?

The landscape is performing?

I am performing (in or with) the landscape?

The seasons and the weather are performing the landscape?

The landscape is being performed by repeated recording?

Repetition

One way of doing things with and through performance is by repetition.

Repetition is making things visible (what is changing, what remains similar?)

Repetition is producing habits or life patterns, learning by repetition.

Working with Repetition

97 “How to perform landscape by repetition” (Arlander 2017a) [https://icehole.fi/vol-6\\_issue2\\_2017/video-by-annette-arlander/](https://icehole.fi/vol-6_issue2_2017/video-by-annette-arlander/)

The beginning and end of *Animal Years*, a twelve-year series of performances for camera on Harakka Island, named after the Chinese Calendar

Recording a visit to the same place once a week in 2002

*Year of the Horse (Sitting on a Rock) 2003*

Recording a revisit to the same place once a month in 2014

*Year of the Horse - Calendar 1-2 2015*

*Year of the Horse (Sitting on a Rock) 2003*

Part 1. I am standing with a blue scarf on my shoulders close to the camera, blocking part of the view from the cliff, on Harakka Island, 64 times, approximately once a week from January 2002 to January 2003.

Part 2. I am sitting with a blue scarf on my shoulders on a rock in the landscape below the cliff, 64 times, on the same occasions.

12 min. 46 sec. Single channel video in two parts. DV 4:3

*Year of the Horse - Calendar 1-2 (2015)*

During the year of the horse 2014 I revisited once a month the site on Harakka Island, which I visited once a week during the year of the horse 2002, wearing the same dark blue scarf.

Part 1: I stand on the hill in front of the camera, covering most of the view.

Part 2: I sit on a rock on the slope.

11 min. 10 sec. Two-channel installation. HD 16:9.

Changes

From DV to HD quality

From image proportions of 4:3 to 16:9

From once a week (64 images) to once a month (12 images)

From image (clip) duration of 6 sec. to more than 60 sec.

These notes summarize in shorthand the technique I was going to use during the whole project and for all the twelve years in the series *Animal Years*. The combination of these video works recorded on the same site with twelve years in between, had already been shown in 2017 in an exhibition called *Toistamiseen – Once Again*, in Muu Gallery in Helsinki together with new works created in Kilpisjärvi in the north of Finland.<sup>98</sup> The exhibition was presented by the gallery as follows:

This exhibition consists of two bodies of work that both share the artist's interest in landscape and its changes, the same technique (performing repeatedly for a camera on tripod), and the same blue scarf. In the first one, Arlander documents the unnoticed changes taking place in her everyday environment. In the second, she observes the endangered arctic landscape, fascinating in its strangeness, with the eyes of visitor.

The first part consists of two performances for camera recorded on Harakka Island outside Helsinki in 2002 and 2014: *Year of the Horse* (2003) and *Year of the Horse – Calendar* (2015). The work comprises the first part of *Animal Years*, a series of video works named after the Chinese calendar, and its epilogue recorded in the same location. The first work is recorded approximately once a week, the second is recorded once a month in the same spot twelve years later.

The second part consists of performances for camera recorded during an Ars Bioarctica residency in Kilpisjärvi in northern Finland next to Malla fell in April 2014 and in June 2014. The works were recorded at two hours' intervals during a day or a day and night. In April they were recorded on the ice of Lake Kilpis, in June on the shore, observing the melting ice.

98 *Once Again* – video works from Harakka Island and Lake Kilpis. Muu Gallery, Helsinki 7.10-12.11.2017.

This exhibition in some sense summarized the whole twelve-year project and applied the techniques used in it in a new context, albeit only the day and night cycle. Combining the old works made on Harakka Island with more recent work made in Kilpisjärvi shifted the focus to other issues, which would lead us astray for now. Let us therefore return to the revisits and the sites of *Animal Years*.



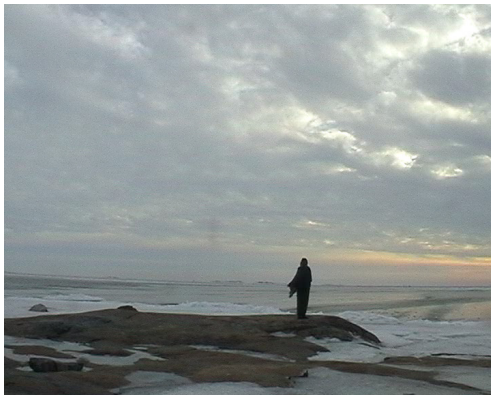


Figure 4. *Year of the Goat – Harakka Shore 1-3* (2004)

## 2. Revisiting the Year of the Goat

The year of the goat (2003-2004) was the second year that I recorded, and the real start of the series *Animal Years*. The first year was focused on the year; the decision to make another year was decisive for considering the whole series. This was also an important year because I was invited to participate in an exhibition called *Vision and Mind* in the Kiasma museum of contemporary art in Helsinki. Thus, I was performing and recording *Year of the Goat*<sup>99</sup> on Harakka Island with that exhibition in mind. I have written about the process quite extensively for example in a previous collection of texts.<sup>100</sup> The revisit to the site of the year of the goat in 2017 was a starting point in some sense, too. This was the first time I deliberately returned to the same spot to record an image of the landscape “now” to be able to insert the old videos into that new image. I made the video compilation<sup>101</sup> for a presentation by the HTDTWP research group at the New Performance festival in Turku in October 2017.<sup>102</sup> Based on that experiment I created a video essay for the first issue

99 *Year of the Goat – Harakka Shore 1-3* <https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/vuohen-vuosi-harakan-ranta-1-3/>  
*Year of the Goat – Harakka Shore (installation)* <https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/vuohen-vuosi-harakan-ranta-installaatio/>

100 Chapter 11. “How landscape moves me”. Arlander 2012a, 321-355.

101 *The Shore Revisited* (31 min.) <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/profile/show-work?work=403262>

102 See documentation of the event in the HTDTWP archive <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/281037/281038/5782/201>

of *JER, Journal for Embodied Research*<sup>103</sup>. The text is here slightly modified to work without the video.

The essay is based on a recorded return on 2 August 2017 to the site of a performance for camera repeated weekly on Harakka Island in Helsinki during the year of the goat (2003-2004) as well as for a day and night during Easter that year. The video installations made fourteen years earlier are inserted in miniature format within the recent recording, complemented by journal entries from the day and night. The voice-over text discusses concerns relevant at the time of recording the performances and displaying the installations for the first time, such as the question what is repeated, what stays the same. The text uses these works to exemplify one possible understanding of Karen Barad's notion agential cut. The following text is based on the voice-over narration on the video. The texts inserted into the image are here added as footnotes except for the diary notes from *Day and Night of the Monkey*, which are included in the main text.

103 "The Shore Revisited", video article (Arlander 2018a) <https://jer.openlibhums.org/article/id/7646/>

## 2.1. The Shore Revisited



Figure 5. *The Shore Revisited* (2017)

One sunny day in August 2017, while spending time on Harakka Island as a gallery guard, I went down to the southwestern shore with my camera to see whether I could find the spot where I had recorded *Year of the Goat* fourteen years earlier, in 2003 and beginning of 2004, and whether I would remember what I did. And of course, I remembered. The small cliff I stood on was easy to find. The spot for the camera tripod was more difficult because the terrain had changed. The boulder was still there, but vegetation behind it had grown so there was no easy way of passing behind the camera. The rock I had used as a mark for framing the image, was not there or anywhere near, but there were other rocks. My camera was not the same, nor my tripod. At that time, I used a simple digital video camera and a television format [4:3], rather than the film format [16:9] mostly used today, and un-manipulated stereo sound, without wind protection.

I decided there and then to record a repetition of the same action I had repeated so many times during that year: walking past the

camera following the shoreline and the horizon from left to right in the image, then returning behind the camera and walking passed it again a little further away, then standing on the cliff looking out to sea for a while, and finally letting the camera record the view without the human figure. This time I did not repeat the walk twice, though, nor did I have my dark blue scarf with me. This was a simple exercise of reminiscence, not a recreation. When I looked at the recording later, I realized I had made the same mistake that I made back then, placing the horizon too high, compared to the painting that had served as my inspiration, *Der Mönch am Meer* (1808-1810) by Caspar David Friedrich.<sup>104</sup> So, I went back and recorded the view one more time, for the image that is used as the backdrop for the installation material.

This exercise was related to the four-year research project funded by the Academy of Finland *How to Do Things with Performance?* At the kick-off seminar of the project in October 2016 I used the first part of the series, *Year of the Horse* from 2003 and the epilogue created in the same place twelve years later, *Year of the Horse Calendar* from 2015 as examples to discuss repetition as one of the ways of doing things with performance.<sup>105</sup> To continue on this track, I decided to use the following year in the series, the *Year of the Goat* from 2004, as a starting point and a site to return to.<sup>106</sup>

104 Caspar David Friedrich: *Der Mönch am Meer*, The Monk by the Sea (1810).

105 *Year of the Horse (Sitting on a Rock)* 2003 (12 min. 28 sec.) DV 4:3 <https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/hevosen-vuosi-istun-kivella/> and *Year of the Horse - Calendar 1-2 2015* two-channel video installation HD 16:9 (11 min. 10 sec.) <http://www.av-arkki.fi/en/works/year-of-the-horse-calendar-1-2/>

Discussed in: "How to do things with repetition?" video with text, *Icehole #6* 2017, The Live Art Journal. [http://www.icehole.fi/vol-6\\_issue2\\_2017/video-by-annette-arlander/](http://www.icehole.fi/vol-6_issue2_2017/video-by-annette-arlander/)

106 *Year of the Goat* (2004) video 4 x 13 min. 40 sec. performed and recorded approximately once a week between March 2003 and March 2004 on the southwestern shore of Harakka Island off Helsinki.

## Year of the Goat

*Year of the Goat* was the second year in a series of repeated performances for camera on Harakka Island in Helsinki, named after the Chinese Calendar, later to be called *Animal Years*. A synopsis for *Year of the Goat – Harakka Shore (installation)* in the catalogue of the Distribution Centre for Finnish Media Art (AV-arkki) is brief:

First part, left: I walk with a blue scarf on my shoulders on the shore on Harakka Island, from South to North past the camera, left to right in the image, 54 times, about once a week from March 2003 to March 2004.

Second part, centre left: I walk on the shore a little further away from the camera, on the same occasions.

Third part, centre right: I stand at the shore looking out to sea with the camera behind me, on the same occasions.

Fourth part, right: The shore without the human figure, recorded at the same occasions.<sup>107</sup>

A single channel version *Year of the Goat – Harakka Shore 1-3* [41 min.]<sup>108</sup> consists of the three first parts combined one after the other. *Year of the Goat* is one of the very few commissioned works I have made, commissioned in the sense that I was invited to participate in an exhibition when I had started the work, and decided to base my contribution on that, together with some other works created to complement it. Thus, *Year of the Goat* was first shown as a three-channel version as part of “The Shore” comprising three video installations composed of performance documentations made

107 *Year of the Goat – Harakka Shore (installation)* <https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/vuohen-vuosi-harakan-ranta-installaatio/>

108 *Year of the Goat – Harakka Shore 1-3* <https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/vuohen-vuosi-harakan-ranta-1-3/>

with the same method in the exhibition called *Vision and Mind* at Kiasma Museum of Contemporary Art in Helsinki during the summer 2004.<sup>109</sup>

In this context method means creating rough time-lapse videos by returning to the same site repeatedly, placing the camera tripod in the same spot, framing the image as similar as possible each time, and performing the same action or pose wearing the same scarf. By repeating the same action and the same image, the changes in the landscape can come to the fore, for instance the seasonal changes during a year, as in *Year of the Goat* or the changing light conditions during a day and night, as in *Day and Night of the Monkey*,<sup>110</sup> recorded on the same site the following year.

### Finding your landscape

I used this work as a starting point for “Finding your Landscape”, a presentation and workshop in PARIP, Practice as Research in Performance, an international conference at University of Bristol in June-July 2005.<sup>111</sup> For the publication I wrote a short presentation, which describes my concerns at the time: “I am interested in various ways of performing landscape. Sometimes I use myself as a ‘conduit’ in video or sound works, documenting performances repeated in a particular place. Sometimes I try to ‘give voice’ to elements in the landscape”.<sup>112</sup> I further explain that my background is

109 First shown in *Vision and Mind*, Kiasma Museum of Contemporary Art, Helsinki 29.5.-19.9. 2004.

110 *Day and Night of the Monkey* <https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/apinan-vuorokausi/>

111 “Finding your Landscape”, presentation and workshop at PARIP (Practice as Research in Performance) conference at University of Bristol 29.6.-3.7. 2005. See <https://www.bristol.ac.uk/parip/introduction.htm> and <https://www.bristol.ac.uk/parip/2005.htm>

112 “Performing landscape” in Ludivine Allegue, Simon Jones, Baz Kershaw, Angela Piccini (eds.) *Practice-as-research in performance and screen*. (catalogue and DVD) Palgrave Macmillan 2009, 191.

in theatre and in radio plays, give a short summary of my doctoral work and note that “since the year 2000, I have moved outdoors, turned to contemporary art and started the ... project ‘performing landscape’”.<sup>113</sup> The aims of the practice I described in a condensed form, as follows:

The research practice explored by “The Shore” combines performance and documentation into a method of production with the purpose to support the creative process. It could also be used to explore one’s relationship to the landscape, to take up issues within a community by focusing on special areas, to understand changes in the environment within a time-period, etc. that is, to produce knowledge related to the three ecologies by Félix Guattari – roughly the subjectivity, the socius and the (global) environment.<sup>114</sup> It raises questions about the relevance of a devotional practice for the performer, the political use of the self as a focusing tool when addressing environmental issues and the ethical challenge in creating action models to be repeated in everyday life.<sup>115</sup>

### **How landscape moves me**

Later, in a chapter of the book *Performing Landscape – Notes on sites-specific work and artistic research* in 2012, called “How landscape moves me”, based on an earlier article in Finnish, I pondered how landscape moves me and how to perform landscape by letting oneself be moved by it.<sup>116</sup>

113 Ibid.

114 Guattari, Félix. 2000. *The Three Ecologies*. London: The Athlone Press.

115 Arlander in Allegue et al. 2009, 191.

116 Chapter 11. How landscape moves me, in *Performing Landscape – Notes on Site-specific Work and Artistic Research. Texts 2001-2011*. Acta Scenica 28. Theatre Academy Helsinki 2012a. 321-355. <https://taju.uniarts.fi/handle/10024/6057>

Did the shoreline invite me to walk along it? Perhaps it did so by affording me a direction, although, by moving, I wanted rather to demonstrate time passing. The landscape moved me through changes in the weather. I quickly learned to know the uneven surface of the cliff, its holes and bumps. Sometimes, however, they turned into pools that froze or disappeared under the snow. A small hollow in the cliff was a sign for where to stand and look out to sea. A boulder where the grass began marked the spot for the camera. With the snow, only the largest signs in the surroundings were of any help. The various elements of the landscape shaped my movements. When a family of geese landed in the pools on my route, I had to wait for them to pass slowly before repeating my performance, and I remembered again what I wanted to show with the video: The landscape is not uniform, singular, or static, but always different. It is constantly changing and full of events, even when the site is only a bare cliff without any vegetation. I was interested in the corporeality of site-specific performance and noticed how – although the environment is often experienced most strongly by moving through it, rather than looking at it, as already Arnold Berleant pointed out<sup>117</sup> – in order to experience a corporeal connection to a site it is useful to remain repeatedly still in it for a while.

In that text, I looked at “The Shore” through the idea of still-act, adopted from anthropologist Nadia Seremitakis<sup>118</sup> by dance scholar André Lepecki in 2006<sup>119</sup>, and through the primaries of action devel-

117 Berleant, Arnold. 1997. *Living in the Landscape. Toward an Aesthetics of Environment*. Lawrence Kansas: University Press of Kansas.

118 Seremitakis, Nadia C. 1994. The Memory of the Senses, Part II: Still Acts. In Nadia C. Seremitakis (ed.) *The Senses still – Perception and Memory as Material Culture in Modernity*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 23–43.

119 Lepecki, André. 2006. *Exhausting Dance – Performance and the politics of movement*. New York: Routledge.

oped by the British Live Artist Anthony Howell in 1999.<sup>120</sup> His idea of stillness, repetition and inconsistency being the three basic elements of performance, prompted me to look at the variations in “The Shore” by asking what is changing, what stays the same? And to explore how the elements of action – stillness, repetition, and inconsistency – understood more broadly as principles of action, could be used to analyse choices made in video recording, editing and display. The basic method used in these works involved stillness and cycles of repetition in various ways. The editing principles and the techniques of combining the videos in the installations were regarded through those notions as well. The question “what is changing, what stays the same?” was applied on all levels. Here I will compare only two of the works included in “The Shore”, and performed on the same site on the island, the year and the day and night.

In using a static camera on a tripod, I strived to repeat the same framing of the image. The same walk along the shore and the same pose with my back to the camera looking at the horizon were repeated. The scale of the repetition varied: In *Year of the Goat* the performance was repeated once a week, mostly during the weekends, for one year. In *Day and Night of the Monkey* the performance was repeated every two-hours for a single day and night during Easter. Stillness and repetition were consciously used as tools, while changes and chance occurrences in the environment provided the variation, the surprises, the catastrophes, or inconsistencies in Howell’s terms. Inexactness in the framing and unintentional shifts in movement or position seem like inconsistencies as well. While creating *Year of the Goat* the video tape or the camera battery sometimes finished unexpectedly and thus some part of the performance remained unrecorded. While editing, I filled these gaps

120 Howell, Anthony. 1999. *The Analysis of Performance Art – A Guide to its Theory and Practice*. Amsterdam: Harwood academic publishers.

with the image of the view, which serves as an interruption in the otherwise orderly repetition.

While editing I retained the original order and the chronology of the images. The weekly performance consisted of several actions in a row – walking past the camera twice and then going to stand at the shore – which I divided into parts to present the variations simultaneously. Each performance is divided into four parts: first walk, second walk, standing at the shore and the shore without a human figure. In the videos where I am standing still, I cut out my entering and exiting the image, to create an illusion of immobility, an artificial stillness, a fiction of sorts. Small cross fades between the images were added to soften the sound changes and to make the synchronisation easier. In *Year of the Goat* the duration of the images followed the slowest walk and varied from image to image, keeping the rhythm as tight as possible. In *Day and Night of the Monkey*, which involved only standing at the shore, the images were shortened to have the total duration of the video equal that of the *Year of the Goat*, approximately 13 minutes 40 seconds.

When displayed, the videos in *Year of the Goat* were placed next to each other in separate monitors with the image changes synchronised. This formed another type of a repetition; the same landscape was repeated horizontally, emphasizing and extending the horizon in the images. As the aim was to produce an experience of continuity all videos were running nonstop without a marked beginning, end, or rhythmical development. In the video essay, as a miniature installation with all four channels cramped onto one screen, the work seems like an example of repetition as aesthetic strategy. Repetition not as in rehearsal or practicing mastering a skill, nor to find the perfect solution, nor repetition as a technique of the numinous, as suggested by Silvia Battista<sup>121</sup>, but rather repetition as a tool for

121 Battista, Silvia. 2016. "Repetition as a Technology of the Numinous in

amplification, for accumulating material, for producing variation, and for demonstrating, even materialising difference.

### Agential cut

Looking at the work today, the notion agential cut, or agential separability, developed by physicist and queer theorist Karen Barad<sup>122</sup>, might be a more interesting concept than stillness and repetition in discussing the decisions involved. According to Barad, the boundaries and properties of a phenomenon become determinate through agential intra-actions. A specific intra-action, which involves a specific material configuration of the ‘apparatus’, enacts an agential cut, effecting a separation between ‘subject’ and ‘object’. The agential cut resolves the ontological and semantic indeterminacy.<sup>123</sup> This means, to put it simply, that differences are made, not found, and dichotomies derive from specific cuts.<sup>124</sup>

The boundaries and properties of the parts of a phenomenon become determinate only in the enactment of an agential cut that delineates the ‘measured object’ from the ‘measuring agent’. A measurement is the intra-active marking of one part of a phenomenon by another; nothing in a measurement makes it irreducibly human-centred.<sup>125</sup> For Barad ‘observer’ and ‘observed’ are merely two physical systems intra-acting in the marking of the ‘effect’ by the ‘cause’. Humans may emerge as part of such practices, but they are not necessary. The agential cut delineates object and instrument,

Performance: *The Artist is Present* by Marina Abramović.” In Eirini Kartsaki (ed.) *On Repetition. Writing, Performance & Art*. Bristol, UK: Intellect Books, 63-80.

122 Barad, Karen. 2007. *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning*. Durham: Duke University Press.

123 Barad 2007, 333-334.

124 Barad, Karen. 2012. Intra-actions. *Mousse*, 34, 76–81. (Interview of Karen Barad by Adam Kleinmann), 77.

125 Barad 2007, 338.

but the role played by any part of the experimental arrangement varies depending on the details of the intra-action, due to the mutual exclusivity of the conditions for definability.<sup>126</sup> For example, a device that can be used to define and measure ‘momentum’ cannot be used to define and measure ‘position’. If a measurement is the intra-active marking of one part of a phenomenon by another, the question “what is changing, what remains the same” could be rephrased as what is the ‘measured object’ and what is the ‘measuring agency’ in this case. What matters and what is excluded from mattering?

Suggested by the editor, Ben Spatz, I looked for my notes for *Year of the Goat*, recorded approximately once a week, or 54 times, from March 2003 to March 2004, in order to add the dates to the images. They were nowhere to be found, of course.

### **Day and Night of the Monkey**

What I did find, were notes for the *Day and Night of the Monkey*,<sup>127</sup> performed every two hours, from 10 April to 11 April, written immediately after each recording session, in Finnish, on separate sheets as if to be included in an exhibition. Here they are translated into English and inserted in between the main text. In the video essay they are displayed only as visual texts, not in the voice-over narration.

Saturday 10 April 2004 7 pm. Cold wind from the west, the remains of ice floes on the shore. The seagulls are shrieking. Grey clouds rise in northwest. Only a moment ago the sun gave spring light. The night might become cold. Is this clever? What strange Easter

126 Barad 2007, 326.

127 *Day and Night of the Monkey* (2004) video 2 x 13 min. 40 sec. performed and recorded with two-hour intervals between April 10 at 7 pm and April 11 at 5 pm on the southwestern shore of Harakka Island, off Helsinki.

passion forces me to this sports endeavour? The mind rests when the eyes rest, but if the body and its bones are shivering and clattering of the cold that is far from rest. No meditation but exorcism! Now old devils, the evil spirits of last year will be banished once and for all...

*Day and Night of the Monkey* was recorded during Easter in 2004 for a day and night with two-hour intervals in the same place as *Year of the Goat*. The tripod was placed closer to the shore, and I did not walk past the camera, but stood still looking at the sea, waiting for daybreak.

Saturday 10 April 2004 9 pm. Only a moment ago the sky was filled with pinkish lint balls. Now it is almost empty, spacious, open. The wind has calmed down a little, maybe. A lonely swan is swimming towards the open sea. A few weeks ago, they were two diving between the shreds of ice. I think I would be happy to have a swan as my companion in the water by the shore. Vain, romantic! It keeps swimming determined, however, further away, hardly visible any longer. So be it. Soon, very soon it will be blue and then dark.

A text which was shown next to *Day and Night of the Monkey* at the exhibition, and which was later added as subtitles to the night shots of that video, could serve as a script or score for both works:

Take a scarf, go to the shore, stand at the shore.

Look at the horizon, look at the water's surface, breathe.

Until your eyes rest, until your mind rests, until you are cold, tired, having enough.

Take the same scarf, go to the same shore, stand at the shore.

Look at the horizon, look at the water's surface, breathe.

And so on.

The night goes on:

Saturday 10 April 2004 11 pm. Starry night – and the sea is filled with flickering lights. The orange lamps of the western harbour and Hernesaari (The Pea Island) are shining in northwest, even the ice floes reflect the gleam. The night is not dark, but it is cold. Stumbling on the rocks feels strange at night, the proportions shift, memory distorts them, but the eyes adjust to darkness quite soon. Strange how the wind does not quiet...

Sunday 11 April 2004 1 am. The same stars, the same wind. A moment ago, an illuminated ship was gliding by. The chugging of a motorboat is heard from somewhere, but no lights are visible. The traffic of the city sounds very near, nearer than in daytime. The night is full of lights. The wind is cold, the sky clear and high. I do not know the stars, but there they are, all of them. Some could be satellites or even an airplane. The moon is not visible. It should be a crescent, waning. Five hours until daybreak. I am already waiting for the pale shimmer, a promise of warmth.

Sunday 11 April 2004 3 am. There is a faint mist in the air, a hint, or perhaps I imagine. The stars are as bright as before. In the south, there is a strange pale gleam, could it be Tallinn? The traffic of the city is even stronger now. Is somebody still driving a motorcycle. And church bells, sounding hollow, like some iron rolls. What else could it be? Am I hearing hallucinations, dreaming while awake. It feels like winter coming towards me, not spring. Cold. The surface of the snow patches is hard with ice.

### **Agential cuts in practice**

Perhaps we can understand the idea of an agential cut, albeit in a somewhat simplified manner, with the help of these performances

for camera. Firstly, the framing of an image enacts an agential cut of sorts. The camera produces an image by creating a split between what is within and what is outside the frame, between what is part of the image and what is not. Nothing of this division pre-exists in the landscape; the framing emerges through the action of video recording. The cut is determined by material-discursive practices linked to the entanglement of equipment and environment, like the properties of the lens of the camera, or my preconceptions of what constitutes a good view, or the weather conditions that day, and so on. In *Day and Night of the Monkey* my new camera did not work with infrared light reacting to the temperature, recording the human figure as a grey shadow, as I expected, so the night images showed nothing but darkness and the flickering lights of distant buoys.

Another kind of agential cut is enacted by the choice of time schedule or temporal framing. A literal cut takes place when I return to the shore and repeat the action once a week, thus picking “slices of time” of the landscape. Everything between the recorded moments is excluded from the video. The schedule produces a series of cuts in the time continuum. Another schedule, another cycle of time and a different “temporal framing” – such as returning to the same place every second hour for a day and night, as in *Day and Night of the Monkey* – enacts another set of agential cuts and creates another view of the changes in the landscape.

Sunday 11 April 2004 5 am. It is already rosy in the east, a clear rose colour, and the sky is blue, no longer black. The border between the sea and the sky is visible anyway, without the flickering lights. The light increases each moment. The wind has calmed down, slightly, although it does not feel like it, but the sound of the waves is milder. It is still clear, but the stars are turning pale. And cold. Now one can see that the surface of the water puddles is frozen. And the moon!

A huge orange sail is rising in the south. Almost in time with the sun, but a little bit before...

A third type of agential cut is activated through the editing process. By dividing a continuous action into several videos – all images where I walk close to the camera combined to form one video, all images where I walk further away combined into another video, all images where I stand at the shore combined into a third and images of the view into a fourth – and synchronising their duration, they can be juxtaposed as variations and shown simultaneously as in *Year of the Goat*. Or all images with the human figure juxtaposed with the same images without a human presence, as in the two-channel installation version of *Day and Night of the Monkey*.<sup>128</sup> A continuous stillness is artificially created by removing the images where I enter or exit the image when I stand at the shore in *Day and Night of the Monkey*. An illusion of continuity is produced through these cuts.

Sunday 11 April 2004 7 am. The sun is already high, in the west the horizon is rosy, as a reflection. The birds have awoken to shriek. Two crows are pecking the frozen surface of a puddle. There is frost on the ground, most clearly visible on the mosses. The wet tussocks are now glazed with white powder. – The sun hits the western harbour and Pihlajasaari (The Rowan Island). They seem to be so very close. Despite it being early everything looks otherwise “normal”, familiar. This is how I have seen it before, or rather, this is what this shore is like “in reality”.

128 *Day and Night of the Monkey (installation)* Part 1. I am standing with a blue scarf on my shoulders on a cliff on Harakka Island and looking out to sea, for a day and a night during Easter, 12 times, with two-hour intervals, from April 10 at 19:00 to April 11 at 17:00 in 2004.

Part 2. The same shore filmed 12 times, on the same occasions. <https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/apinan-vuorokausi-installaatio/>

A fourth level of agential cuts take place in combining the videos. When shown for the first time three of the videos in *Year of the Goat* were presented simultaneously, in parallel, to accentuate the horizon and the movement from left to right. The fourth video, without a human figure, was not included, probably to connect with the other triptych, or perhaps for some practical reason already forgotten. These kinds of inclusions and exclusions can also be understood as agential cuts of a kind.

Sunday 11 April 2004 9 am. The sun is already warming a little. A strangely formed concave ice floe has drifted onto the shore, in fact, a shred. The seagulls are shrieking incessantly. There is probably some other species in the group, too, some type of tern, or the like, because the shrieks are of two kinds – maybe even more. The frost has almost disappeared from the ground, but the frozen surface of the puddles is melting more slowly. The slow battle of spring: melting in the warmth of the day, freezing again in the cold at night, melting again – and melting always a little more. - They say a human being is 90% water. [60% is more correct] Perhaps I am like a puddle, too, which finally evaporates totally.

As Barad points out, agential cuts should not be confused with human decision-making, only; agential cuts are not enacted by wilful individuals but by the larger material arrangement of which they are a part. In this case, for example, technology had a great deal to say because I used the automatic functions of the video camera. The light meter and white-balance calculator, automatic focus, and other devices included in the functions of the camera constantly reacted and readjusted to changes in the environment and the actions of the performer. The “pumping” of the automatic focus trying to decide what to follow when the performer enters the frame is clearly visible in some of the images. The editing process as well,

is an entanglement of human choice, recorded environmental circumstances, and the affordances of technology. They all have their agency in the agential cuts enacted.

Sunday 11 April 2004 11 am. Some haze or soft clouds have appeared in the sky. It is not covering the sun but dims it like a light curtain. The wind has brought some ice floes on the horizon. From the hill once can see they are small and rather close. Close to the shore people are casting or checking fish nets, or perhaps traps for catching eel. The waves or combers bring in some thick foam on the shore. Not of the kind Aphrodite was born of but oily, bad looking. The sun is warming, but the wind bites almost harder than at night, pinches, hurts the face. – The spring is only nascent.

Each of these cuts clearly makes a difference in the resulting videos by defining what is included and what is excluded on each level. As Barad explains: “different agential cuts materialize different phenomena – different marks on bodies” and “contribute to the differential mattering of the world”.<sup>129</sup> She insists that we are responsible for the cuts that we help to enact, not because we choose or are being chosen but because we are an agential part of the material becoming of the universe. This also means, that “‘others’ are never very far from ‘us’; ‘they’ and ‘we’ are co-constituted and entangled through the very cuts ‘we’ help to enact”, she writes.<sup>130</sup> Although I chose the apparatus and the moments, in this case, the combined environmental circumstances that the camera reacted to produced the images.

129 Barad 2007, 178.

130 Barad 2007, 179.

Sunday 11 April 2004 1 pm. The wind has turned further towards southwest, southwards, but is no warmer for that. A huge Viking Line ferry glides past on the left. Only the cabin of the cargo vessel is visible. The zone of ice floes floating on the horizon a while ago is now crushed ice or sludge in front of the cliffs. The waves move it against the rocks like crushed ice in a cocktail. In the distance, some sails. Crazy people defying the cutting wind, longing for the spring, like me.

Barad further specifies the nature of agential cuts as follows: “Intra-actions enact agential cuts, which are a cutting together-apart (that is, entangling-differentiating), as one move (not sequential acts)”.<sup>131</sup> Moreover, “the world can never characterize itself in its entirety; it is only through different enactments of agential cuts, different differences, that it can come to know different aspects of ‘itself’”.<sup>132</sup> We cannot study or look at everything at once: “Only part of the world can be made intelligible to itself at a time, because the other part of the world has to be the part that it makes a difference to”.<sup>133</sup> What is part of the apparatus and what is part of the body being marked or measured can change from case to case and within a specific case from time to time.

Sunday 11 April 2004 3 pm. The cloud curtain is getting thicker, but the sun is nevertheless shining through, white light. The wind is rising, now the waves rolling in on the shore have white capes. One sail is fighting the wind; birds are flying by. A moment ago, a swan couple was moving in the water by the shore, now they, too, have moved to seek shelter from the wind. There are darker clouds on

131 Barad 2007, 80.

132 Barad 2007, 432, footnote 42.

133 Ibid.

the horizon, while there are large patches of blue sky in the northwest. How can wind from southwest be so cold?

What matters for Barad is the accountability to marks on bodies – that is, an accounting of the apparatuses that enact determinate causal structures, boundaries, properties, and meanings.<sup>134</sup> She stresses the importance of “the proper accounting of agential cuts within the specific phenomenon in question”.<sup>135</sup> Although there are no determinate, pre-existing entities with determinate properties, there are determinate marks on bodies produced through specific intra-actions, and these marks need to be accounted for. As Barad suggests, “[a]ll bodies, including but not limited to human bodies, come to matter through the world’s iterative intra-activity, its performativity. Boundaries, properties, and meanings are differentially enacted through the intra-activity of mattering”.<sup>136</sup> She adds, however, that differentiating is not about radical exteriorities, not about ‘othering’ or separating: “the very nature of materiality itself is an entanglement. Hence, what is on the other side of the agential cut is never separate from us”.<sup>137</sup>

Sunday 11 April 2004 5 pm. The day turns towards evening before warming up properly. The sunlight on the waves is cold and white. The bluish clouds on the horizon promise rain; hopefully rain rather than hail or snow. – The seagulls are still shrieking, although they have no reason yet. There are no nests or offspring yet, but soon there will be. Then one would hardly dare walk on the rocks. Did the wind banish away the evil spirits of last winter? I don’t know. It

134 Barad 2007, 340.

135 Barad 2007, 345.

136 Barad 2012, 69.

137 Ibid.

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did stiffen me, inured, too, I guess. I leave content to seek shelter from the wind on the mainland and wait patiently for the warming spring. Exhausted more than renewed: at home the spring cleaning remains to be done.

Thinking of Barad's demand to account for agential cuts, it is relatively easy to understand in terms of art, and it is also one aspect of how things are done with performance: attending to the details of what matters and what is excluded from mattering. How to remember, acknowledge and account for the cuts of inclusion and exclusion we make, the apparatuses we use and are used by, as well as the marks on bodies generated by them in daily life, however, could be more of a challenge.

### **Afterthoughts**

Now, a few years later I am tempted to add that accounting for agential cuts in terms of art and in terms of art making is not that easy, especially if preferences and practices have become internalized or habitual to the point of being self-evident or unconscious. It is tempting to excuse or justify unethical or unsustainable actions in the name of art; it can even be hard to notice that some practices are exclusionary or problematic. In this case I don't think any harm was done, but in other cases accounting might be harder.



Figure 6. *Year of the Monkey* – Tomtebo (2005)

### 3. Revisiting the Year of the Monkey

The *Year of the Monkey*<sup>138</sup> was the third year in the series *Animal Years*, which I performed in 2004-2005, beginning at the Spring equinox. This time I chose a crevice on the northwestern cliffs of Harakka Island as my site and deliberately wanted to include some vegetation in the image, to emphasize the changing seasons. To replace the dark blue shawl that I used during the first two years I found a similar red shawl to wear as my costume. The revisit to the site took place on 15 October 2017. *The Cliff Revisited*, a video essay based on the recorded revisit was presented at the Research Day organized by the How to Do Things with Performance? project on 8 November 2017.<sup>139</sup> The video essay has not been published, but it is available on the RC in two versions<sup>140</sup> and the text was later reworked to become an article called “Breathing and Growth – Performing with Plants” for *Journal of Dance and Somatic Practices*,<sup>141</sup> without the video material. Topic-wise the text is more tightly connected to my personal

- 138 *Year of the Monkey 1-2* <https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/apinan-vuosi-1-2/>  
*Year of the Monkey (installation)* <https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/apinan-vuosi-installatio/>  
*Year of the Monkey – Tomtebo* <https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/apinan-vuosi-tomtebo/>
- 139 See documentation of the Research Day <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/281037/281038/7014/56>
- 140 *The Cliff Revisited* (15 min.) and *The Cliff Revisited* (25 min. 40 sec.) <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/profile/show-work?work=403242>
- 141 Arlander, Annette. 2018b. “Breathing and Growth – performing with plants”, *Journal of Dance and Somatic Practices* Volume 10. Number 2.2018, 175-187.

project, *Performing with Plants*<sup>142</sup> rather than the project *How to Do Things with Performance?* – or perhaps it demonstrates their entwinement. In the context of *Animal Years* it serves to highlight the difference between the experience of the performer repeating the actions and the experience of the viewer watching the edited video works. The text is here slightly revised.

142 *Performing with Plants*, see project presentation <https://www.uniarts.fi/en/projects/performing-with-plants/> and project archive <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/316550/316551>

### 3.1. Breathing and Growth - Performing with Plants



Figure 7. *The Cliff Revisited* (2017)

In this text breathing as a practice and vegetal growth as a form of movement are discussed by first returning to some repeated performances for camera made in Helsinki in 2004-2005, and a text written in 2008 describing them in relation to Luce Irigaray's ideas on breathing.<sup>143</sup> These are then looked at from a current perspective and related to Michael Marder's ideas on the place of plants, of growth as one of the Aristotelian forms of movement and Marder's challenge to the arts to consider the vegetal.<sup>144</sup> Based on Irigaray's and Marder's joint suggestion to learn from plants in "Thinking anew"<sup>145</sup>, this article proposes that one way to begin considering per-

143 Irigaray, Luce. 2004. *Key Writings*, London & New York: Continuum.

144 Marder, Michael. 2015. "The Place of Plants: Spatiality, Movement, Growth", *Performance Philosophy* Vol 1 (2015), 185-194.

145 Irigaray, Luce. & Marder, Michael. 2015. "Thinking anew". *The Philosopher's Magazine*, 68, April 2015, 27-29.

forming with plants as a somatic practice could be, simply, breathing with plants.

As part of the research project *How to Do Things with Performance?*<sup>146</sup> I was looking at the twelve-year project “Performing Landscape”<sup>147</sup> and the series of resulting video works, *Animal Years* (2003-2014), as material for critical self-reflection, and asking what is the performative potential of those works when viewed as a series? And further, how could the working method developed in that project be understood as an intra-action<sup>148</sup> with the environment and developed into an everyday practice that could increase our understanding of our interdependence with other forms of life and matter on the planet. The first part of the series *Animal Years*, that is, *Year of the Horse* (2003) and the epilogue created in the same place twelve years later, *Year of the Horse Calendar* (2015) were used as examples to discuss repetition as one of the ways of doing things with performance.<sup>149</sup> The second part, *Year of the Goat* (2004) was examined in the video essay “The Shore Revisited” in relation to Karen Barad’s notion of agential cut.<sup>150</sup> To continue on this track, I decided to look at the following year in the series, the *Year of the Monkey* (2005) and begin by revisiting the site. This visit resulted in the video presentation “The Cliff Revisited”.<sup>151</sup> To remember my concerns at the time

146 The Academy of Finland funded four-year research project *How to Do Things with Performance?* (2016–2020) See <https://www.uniarts.fi/en/projects/how-to-do-things-with-performance/>

147 See Arlander, Annette. 2014a. “Performing Landscape for Years”. In *Performance Research On Time*. 19-3. 2014, 27-31.

148 Barad 2007, 184.

149 Arlander 2016a.

150 Arlander 2018a.

151 The presentation was shown at the Research Day organised by the *How to Do Things with Performance?* Project at University of the Arts Helsinki, Theatre Academy, 8.11.2017 and is available on the Research Catalogue <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/profile/show-work?work=403242>

I also looked at some texts where I used *Year of the Monkey* as an example, like "Finding your way through the woods – experiences in artistic research".<sup>152</sup> In that text, I explored philosopher Luce Irigaray's ideas on breathing and asked how to combine critical environmental awareness with a personal devotional practice. In this text I am using experiences from those previous projects to look at the actual movement practice, or perhaps better stillness-practice, in relationship to breathing and to growth as a form of movement, to see how they could illuminate my current concerns in the project *Performing with Plants*.

In the following I will first discuss Luce Irigaray's ideas on breathing by describing the two projects *Year of the Monkey* and *Day and Night of the Monkey* and my experience of the practices involved. Then, I will turn to Michael Marder's ideas of plant growth as a form of movement, exemplified in *Year of the Monkey*, and conclude with a text written by Irigaray and Marder together, which suggests that we learn from plants to recover our breath. Finally, I ask what kind of somatic practice plants could inspire and suggest that we could begin by trying to combine stillness and growth, that is, by breathing with plants.

## Breathing

In her text, *The Age of Breath*<sup>153</sup> the controversial French philosopher Luce Irigaray examines female spirituality and a third age of the Spirit in the European Catholic tradition. She emphasizes the cultivation of breathing to secure autonomy as well as interiority as crucial dimensions of subjectivity for women. Irigaray's dichotomized understanding of sexual difference has evoked much critique.

152 Arlander, Annette. 2008. "Finding your way through the woods – experience in artistic research". *Nordic Theatre Studies* Vo.20., 28-41.

153 Published in English, Irigaray 2004, 165-170.

For example, Magdalena Górska notes in her dissertation *Breathing Matters*<sup>154</sup> how “Irigaray’s work ... is often criticized for its essentialism, heteronormativity and orientalism”. She mentions attempts, like the volume *Breathing with Luce Irigaray*,<sup>155</sup> which “notes these important pitfalls of Irigaray’s work while embracing her philosophy of air, breath and breathing” and tries to “develop feminist scholarship on breathing by offering an analysis of breath in relation to (human) embodiment as well as relations of nature, culture, spirituality, sexual difference and interculturality”.<sup>156</sup> Górska herself focuses on an intersectional politics of vulnerability and “on the relationalities enacted through human breathing, understood broadly and in a posthumanist sense”; these relationalities, “markedly more-than-human than one might think”, allow her “to inquire into the complexities of how particular enactments of breathing can be productive of feminist politics.”<sup>157</sup>

The project *Performing Landscape* was not primarily focused on breathing but rather on demonstrating atmospheric and seasonal changes in the environment and used repeated performing for a video camera in the same place as a strategy for drawing attention to the surroundings. Reading *The Age of Breath* and *Fulfilling Our Humanity* by Irigaray<sup>158</sup> led me to re-examine those performance documentations or video works as well as the choices behind them. The practice producing those works had no explicit spiritual aims and no conscious feminist agenda – the main attempt was to create artworks that would focus the spectator’s attention on the environment rather than the performer. In retrospect, however, considering my experience while performing rather than the purpose of the practice,

154 Górska 2016, 25.

155 Škof and Holmes 2013.

156 Górska 2016, 25.

157 Górska 2016, 26.

158 Irigaray 2004, 186-194.

I realized, that the repeated performances could also be understood as attempts at creating a personal practice of breathing in Irigaray's sense. Thus, I argued in 2008, that a performance practice for, or witnessed by, a video camera could be developed as an exercise in breathing with a value for the performer, besides producing the desired result, the video depicting changes in the environment. And more generally, that Irigaray's thoughts on how to enhance women's spirituality through breathing, returning to the self, active receptivity, even praying or in-gathering of the self as a daily ritual, could be valuable in developing creative performance practices. As an example of gathering the self in oneself and bonding with the environment, I described and compared two works, *Year of the Monkey – Tomtebo* (2005) and *Day and Night of the Rooster – Midsummer* (2005). In these works, breathing was the focus of attention while performing, not a theme or motive, but a working method. To focus on one's breath is an easy way of enhancing one's awareness of the now, of bringing one's mind in tune with the body, the surroundings, and the passing moment.<sup>159</sup> Here these works can serve as examples of my approach in *Animal Years* more generally.

### **Year of the Monkey**

For the *Year of the Monkey*, performed in 2004 and 2005, edited and presented in 2005, I found a red scarf and chose a crevice on the North-western shore of Harakka Island as the place to return to repeatedly to perform for a camera on tripod. My action was simple – going to the cliff wearing the scarf and placing the video camera on a tripod on the same spot; standing in front of the camera turning my back to it, looking out to sea; then walking to the crevice and sitting there breathing, looking; and finally returning to the camera and waiting for a while to record the view, that was all. This sequence

159 Arlander 2008, 36.

of actions I repeated approximately once a week for a year, usually on Saturday or Sunday. I began at the Spring Equinox rather than at the time of the Chinese New Year and continued until the spring the following year. In fact, there were only 43 repetitions and not 52, as in the weeks of a year. At times the ice was too fragile to walk on and too strong to row through, so I could not get to the island. To accentuate the seasonal changes, I chose a spot with some vegetation unlike the bare cliffs of the previous year. I could not anticipate that my wish to show the growth and decay of vegetation would come true beyond my wildest dreams. During summer, the plants grew so vigorously that they almost hid the performer from sight. The thistles grew that year to be exceptionally tall and covered the human figure like grass that covers the ruins of old buildings but revealed her again in the autumn when withering away. While editing I removed the action of entering and exiting the image to create rough time-lapse videos, focusing on the stillness of the performer in contrast to movement in the environment, especially the growth of the plants.

For the exhibition “Tomtebo – Year of the Monkey”, from 20 to 31 July 2005, in the Telegraph Gallery on Harakka Island, I edited two versions of the video material. A longer version for one projector, *Year of the Monkey – Tomtebo* (22 min.) consists of images of 30 seconds duration, while two shorter versions, *Year of the Monkey 1-2* (2 x 3 min. 53 sec.) and *Year of the Monkey – Installation* (3 x 3 min. 53 sec.) consist of images of 5 seconds, with image changes synchronised. The subtitle “Tomtebo” (Gnome’s home) was inspired by Elsa Beskow’s picture book *Tomtebo barnen* [Children of the Forest] (1910), which by describing the life of a family of tiny gnomes with red caps living in the forest for one year, depicts the seasonal changes of the forest as well as the conventional ideals of family life of the time. The name “Tomtebo” often occurs in various Nordic folklore contexts and caused perplexity in some viewers.

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The synopsis for *Year of the Monkey* 1 and 2 in the catalogue of AV-arkki, the Centre for Finnish Media Art<sup>160</sup>, reads as follows:

Part 1. I am sitting with a red scarf on my shoulders on a ledge on the north-western shore of Harakka Island, 43 times, approximately once a week from April 11, 2004, to March 20, 2005.

Part 2. I am standing with a red scarf on my shoulders on a cliff on the north-western shore of Harakka Island and looking out to sea, 43 times, on the same occasions.

The three-channel installation includes an image of the “empty” view as well. For the compilations of *Animal Years*, which include one work from each year, made after completing the series, I chose the longer video, *Year of the Monkey – Tomtebo*, based on the same material as part 1, where the growth of the vegetation comes to the fore. This longer version provides an example of growth as movement and foregrounds the performance of the plants, as a kind of precursor to the project *Performing with Plants*.

### **Day and Night of the Rooster**

Besides a yearly cycle, I wanted to record a smaller cycle, a day and night, in the same spot. I chose midsummer, the time with the most daylight, in the following year, the year of the rooster, and sat every two-hours for a single day and night from 24 June to 25 June in the same crevice. This time I used two cameras simultaneously, and placed them on two sides, closer to the crevice on the ledge, to

160 *Year of the Monkey – Tomtebo* <https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/apinan-vuosi-tomtebo/>  
*Year of the Monkey 1 and 2* <https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/apinan-vuosi-1-2/>  
*Year of the Monkey (Installation)* <https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/apinan-vuosi-installaatio/>

record the view from two slightly different perspectives. The duration for each session was open; I sat for as long as I felt like. Two versions of the work exist, *Day and Night of the Rooster 1-2* (12 min. 27 sec.), and a shorter four-channel version *Day and Night of the Rooster (Installation)* (4 x 1 min. 14 sec.) In two of the images, I am sitting with a red scarf on my shoulders in the crevice on the cliff, in one image the camera is further to the right, in the other further to the left. The other two images show the same views without a human figure. The longer version of the work consists of the images with the human figure, only. *Day and Night of the Rooster* was on display for the first time in the same exhibition as the year, from 20 to 31 July 2005, in the Telegraph Gallery on Harakka Island.

The synopsis for *Day and Night of the Rooster 1-2* in the catalogue of AV-arkki, the Centre for Finnish Media Art<sup>161</sup>, reads as follows:

Part 1. I am sitting with a red scarf on my shoulders on a ledge on the north-western shore of Harakka Island, during Midsummer, for a day and a night, with two-hour intervals, from June 24 at 2:30 pm to June 25 at 12:30 pm in 2005.

Part 2. The same situation filmed with another camera from a different position, on the same occasions.

*Day and Night of the Rooster* does not foreground the movement of the plants in the manner of the year but provides a contrasting example in terms of the practice.

161 *Day and Night of the Rooster 1 and 2* <https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/kukon-vuorokausi-1-2/>  
*Day and Night of the Rooster (Installation)* <https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/kukon-vuorokausi-installaatio/>

### **Performing experience**

The viewing experience produced by the videos differs from the performer's experience. The viewer experiences a kind of stillness, while the performer is engaged in a series of repetitions with a difference involving stillness as only one part of the action. Moreover, in terms of the performing experience the two variations, one year weekly and one day and night every two-hours, were almost opposite. The weekly visit to the ledge was a breathing experience, a returning to oneself and to nature, relaxing and meditative, an active in-gathering, to use Irigaray's term. The day and night provided more of a challenge, a kind of endurance test, with the task of keeping exact intervals and staying awake through the night, exhausting and thus self-validating in some way. In terms of artistic aims I focused on the landscape and the possibility of showing the changing seasons, the shifting light, and the alternations in the environment. Chance, or providence, helped me by growing the weeds on the ledge so high that they accentuated the impression of the environment performing the "leading role", with the human figure disappearing into the background. In terms of performing experience or practice, however, the work really evolved into a breathing routine, where focusing on breathing turned into my main method of being there. In order to keep track of the time while sitting in the crevice I was counting my breaths with the help of some sentences used in meditation. This evolved into a personal devotional practice of sorts and as such it could be understood in Irigaray's terms, as a way of "gathering of the self in oneself and as a bond with the universe and the other"<sup>162</sup>, as a practice of breathing, discussed in the next session. Besides functioning as an ordinary performance documentation that resulted in an artwork, to be enjoyed and interpreted by spectators, the repetition thus produced a form of somatic stillness

162 Irigaray 2004, 192.

practice, a method of breathing with the site as a side effect. For the performer the practice of repeatedly returning to the same site and focusing on the breath meant a chance to rest in oneself and to be receptive to the environment. It turned into a restoring, healing, and even spiritual experience, and thus into a kind of devotional practice. And as such it could, perhaps, be developed and used by others for similar purposes.

### **Breathing as practice**

Irigaray suggests that we must return to an awareness and cultivation of the breath before and beyond any representation or discourse, to understanding the breath as divine presence, in ourselves and between us.<sup>163</sup> *The Age of Breath* begins with the assertion that the divine appropriate to women is related to breath.<sup>164</sup> Breathing corresponds to the first autonomous gesture of a human being and it is not possible to be divine without being autonomous with respect to the mother and the father, the lover, the child, or others in general, she writes.<sup>165</sup> She emphasizes “a continuous passage from nature to grace, a passage that everyone must realize by oneself, alone.”<sup>166</sup>

The necessity of realizing a process by oneself is evident to anybody involved in a training process or health regime – nobody can go on a diet for me – though sometimes hard to grasp for those with a background in performing arts. To do something for yourself, on your own, can seem like a betrayal of the collective ethos of much performance practice, which also tends to be extremely audience oriented.<sup>167</sup> To work with a camera on tripod, as I do, rather than

163 Irigaray 2004, 169.

164 Irigaray 2004, 165.

165 Ibid.

166 Ibid.

167 This rather general observation is based on my experience in teaching performing arts like dance and theatre as well as performance artists with a background in

with a film crew, further accentuates a seemingly “unprofessional” DIY approach. This type of solitary practice, however, is more easily combined with an experimental or exercising attitude, because no detailed planning, negotiations with other artists, time schedules, fundraising or economical risk-taking is required. Irigaray’s ideals of autonomy and interiority can take the form of centring oneself, which is regularly combined with breathing in body-mind regimes from dance to yoga, from performer training methods to relaxation and meditation techniques. In another sense a call for autonomy seems like a paradox in a time propagating the dangerous illusion of an autonomous, self-sufficient, and self-mobilizing individual. Irigaray’s call, however, is directed to women, who often are the ones maintaining that illusion for others. She further explains:

To safeguard life requires, for example, cultivating perceptions without claiming to reduce the spiritual to the mental. Listening to music – beginning with that of the voice of humans or with the song of birds – contemplating nature or a work of art, tasting flavourful foods, breathing in certain perfumes... [all these] can be spiritual gestures. They lead to concentration, to communication with the world, to gratitude and beatitude.<sup>168</sup>

Regardless of the semi-religious rhetoric, Irigaray’s focus on mediations that allow becoming between activity and passivity are important. It is necessary to learn to be actively receptive, she insists, active in a way that does not prevent receptiveness to grace, to a qualitatively unpredictable gift.<sup>169</sup> Cultivating perceptions is crucial for a receptive attitude and in concordance with the demands

fine arts.

168 Irigaray 2004, 187.

169 Irigaray 2004, 187-88.

of a performance practice centred on stillness. The practice of performing landscape in my examples, although very simple, involves a form of active receptivity, which is demanding effort, discipline, and a focus on perceptions. It has an active dimension (creative concentrated performing) and a receptive one (sensing, waiting, listening, and looking). Repeating the task involves an effort, while witnessing the changes in the environment requires receptivity. And the chance occurrences can indeed feel like gifts. In these examples I was returning to the self, as a somewhat paradoxical side-effect, since registering and showing changes in the environment were my conscious focus. Returning to the self is aided by returning to the same place. Repetition produces an experience of safety and familiarity, and each visit reinforces the restoring effect of the following ones. To accomplish a task in a dedicated manner is already an act of in-gathering; and returning to a specific place can function “as a gathering of the self in oneself and as a bond with the universe and the other.”<sup>170</sup> Almost any activity, accomplished with dedication, and thus performing or art making as well, can function as meditation, healing or as a devotional practice.

Breathing as a practice was the focus of my interest while writing about this work in 2008. From today’s perspective, remembering the insights of posthumanism<sup>171</sup> it is the performance of the plants that seems most interesting and most relevant for my current concerns. Sitting in the crevice hidden by vegetation, was not a planned performance together with the thistles. It was nevertheless intentional in the sense that I was careful not to disturb the plants while going to the crevice and deliberately let them hide me from the view of the camera, following their growth with anticipation and interest. Only later, however, did I ask myself how to really perform together

170 Irigaray 2004, 192.

171 Braidotti 2013.

“with” plants or participate in their performing of growth. Returning to these works and the text describing them helped me realize that breathing and growing are activities that we share with the plants.

### **Growth as movement**

In the text “The Place of Plants: Spatiality, Movement, Growth” (2015) philosopher Michael Marder notes how to our senses plants seem not to move. But locomotion or change of place is only one of four types of movement, according to Aristotle, “the other three being growth, decay and change of state or metamorphosis”.<sup>172</sup> For Marder plants, animals and humans are all “growing beings” although “[t]he rhythms of growth, within and outside of us, diverge from those of human consciousness.”<sup>173</sup> Growth is thus one common denominator for plants and humans, something we share. There is, however, an “asynchrony between our attentive gaze and the movement of plants (as well as the physiology of our bodies)” and “this ontological time-lag... renders vegetal life so foreign to the vitality of animals and humans, whilst leaving us with the impression that plants are immobile,”<sup>174</sup> Marder writes. The growth, decay and change of state of plants is rather palpable in *Year of the Monkey*, probably because there is not much else in terms of movement, besides the changes in the sea and the sky; sometimes the wind catches the red scarf. Perhaps we could say the thistles are not only (involuntarily) posing for the camera, but actively performing their growth.

Marder writes: “If to perform is necessarily to bestow a form, then performing growth is tantamount to performing the

172 Marder 2015, 186.

173 Marder 2015, 187.

174 Ibid.

un-performable.”<sup>175</sup> This impossibility or difficulty is linked to our different relationship to movement and time compared to plants. It is nevertheless possible to diminish the time-lag between human and plant movements, Marder notes: “Time-lapse photography can speed up the vegetal movement of growth” while “[t]he inverse process of our slowing down”, he adds, “will inevitably meet inflexible limits” because “we cannot slow down enough to come anywhere close to the speed of vegetal growth.”<sup>176</sup> It is indeed hard to imagine how one could perform growth as a human being, although documenting the growth of hair can be a way of demonstrating time passing.<sup>177</sup> In the rough time-lapse videos discussed here, some form of speeding up of time does occur, although not in the accustomed sense of, for instance, showing the sprouting of a seed or the opening of a flower through a speeded-up video. And certainly, some form of slowing down of human time takes place, at least for the performer engaged in the stillness-practice, sitting in the crevice.

Speeding up plant time is not a real solution to the problem how to perform together with plants. As Marder explains: “If ... the meaning of being is time, then denying the plant its own time amounts to robbing it of its being.”<sup>178</sup> Trying to render the movements of plants visible to human senses means treating plants as resources for human enjoyment, not as inter-species collaborators or as performing, moving, growing beings in their own right. “So, how can art follow the movement of growth with the least possible

175 Ibid.

176 Marder 2015, 187-88.

177 One example is the famous *One Year Performance 1980-1981 (Time Clock Piece)* by Tehching Hsieh, where he punched a time clock and took a photo of himself every hour for a year, which combined into a 6-minute film shows his hair growing as evidence of time passing.

178 Marder 2015, 188.

interference...?”<sup>179</sup>, Marder asks. One obvious way to begin performing with plants respecting their time seems to be simply to spend time together with them. Elsewhere I have discussed for instance “holding hands with Junipers” and the possibilities and limitations of a fictional mode of relating to plants, emphasizing actual touching as a useful tool when trying to focus on the here and now.<sup>180</sup>

Marder compares the absolute “here” of the plant with the difficulty for humans “to linger patiently in the ‘here’, without ... fantasizing about something that lies ‘over there’ where we are not.”<sup>181</sup> For humans it is an effort to be still; to still the body can help to still the mind. Marder suggests that we need to analyse human interaction with lived space and compare it with how plants engage with the places they inhabit.<sup>182</sup> We can have “a rough idea of what the place of plants (which is also a place *for them*, interpreted *by them*) looks like”, but “we cannot put ourselves in this place, much less perform whatever happens in it”,<sup>183</sup> Marder notes. Perhaps we do not have to put ourselves in the place of plants to perform together with them? In *Year of the Monkey – Tomtebo* the plants grew on their own, without direct contact with the human performer. Perhaps we could simply share space and time with plants regardless of the impossibility of a truly shared understanding of that space and time?

The idea of growth as movement is one of the possibilities of plants performing, which becomes evident in *Year of the Monkey – Tomtebo*. Growth is visible only over time; it is the year rather than the day and night of these examples that shows the growth of the plants as movement. And no other year of the twelve *Animal Years* or none of the sites chosen display plant growth in a similar manner.

179 Ibid.

180 Arlander 2015a 141-157, Arlander 2015b n.p.n.

181 Marder 2015, 189.

182 Marder 2015, 190.

183 Marder 2015, 191.

The growth and withering of the thistles, following the seasons, provides the main action in *Year of the Monkey*, while the human being moves very little in comparison. It is nevertheless through the relative stillness of the human figure that the movement of the thistles can come to the fore. We could say that momentary stillness is one way of beginning to explore performing with plants or at least sharing time and space with the vegetation at hand.

When sitting with shrubs or trees the performer adopts the position of a sessile being, albeit for an instant, but is not attempting to share the somatic experience of the time and space of the plants. When posing for camera together with plants, I am nevertheless allowing them to express their mode of movement as freely as possible. I must accept that I cannot know what the plants sense or feel, although we are made of the same stuff and process energy in very similar ways, despite our many differences. In any case we are performing, or perhaps non-performing, in the same image space, much as we are living in the same city; we are appearing or occurring there together.

As Marder suggests, we could “attempt a certain performative approximation to the phenomenology of the plants themselves”.<sup>184</sup> What exactly this could be, remains open. Marder expects the arts to “lead the way” and explicitly states: “isn’t attempting the impossible and imagining other worlds the highest vocation of art? So”, he writes, “I put this forth as a challenge to those artists and performers who would dare at the very least to include the spatiality, movement, and perspective of the vegetal in their work.”<sup>185</sup>

This challenge I encountered only after completing *Animal Years*, and the works described above. My current project, however, titled *Performing with Plants*, is certainly trying to respond to that call in

184 Ibid.

185 Marder 2015, 191-192.

some manner. Rather than trying to imagine what or how vegetal beings experience their surroundings, the project explores how we could experience and appreciate the support, strength and energy generously provided by plants. And to do that we need to become still with them for a moment. “The inclusion of the vegetal does not imply a mere representation of plants”, Marder writes. “As an alternative, we can tease out, aesthetically, the vegetal heritage in us, ... the fleeting sense of our plant-hood.”<sup>186</sup> The question remains: How to engage with the vegetal, or more specifically, how to perform with plants?

This question is the main concern of the artistic research project *Performing with Plants*<sup>187</sup> – how to perform and co-operate with plants and especially trees today – and it is directly related to topics such as the non-human turn and inter-species performance, especially discussions on working with the vegetal in performance and dance.<sup>188</sup> The project develops and specifies the question How to perform landscape today, a question I have engaged with in *Animal Years*, by focusing on performing with trees. Our relationship to the environment has dramatically changed due to global warming and other more or less manmade disasters and demands new approaches. A post-humanist and new materialist perspective<sup>189</sup>

186 Marder 2015, 192.

187 The English abstract of the research plan summarises the questions as follows: “The most important inquiries to be explored are: 1) How to collaborate with nonhuman entities like plants? 2) How to further develop experiences from previous attempts at performing landscape? 3) How to create actions with plants, in which humans can be invited to participate? An overarching research topic is: How to perform landscape today by collaborating with trees and other plants, with an awareness of the insights generated by post-humanist and new-materialist research?” (Arlander 2017b, 2.)

188 See for example Battista 2012; Kramer 2012; Arlander 2014c and 2015c; Nicolic and Radulovic 2018.

189 Barad 2007; Braidotti 2013.

prompts us to consider how the surrounding world consists of creatures, life forms and material phenomena with varying degrees of volition, needs and agency, which we depend on and constantly interact with. What forms of action, of performing, could be relevant in this situation? One possibility is to approach individual elements in a landscape, such as specific plants, and explore what can be done together with them, for instance how to perform for camera together, and what this “performing with” might mean.

### **Breathing with plants?**

One of the basic biological processes we share with plants, besides growth, is – breathing. From today’s perspective, the idea of breathing as a shared practice among most life-forms on the planet, is probably the most relevant dimension of breathing, something that can help us realize our interconnectedness. In their joint publication *Through Vegetal Being* (2016), Luce Irigaray and Michael Marder narrate in separate but parallel texts, resembling letters, their personal philosophical experiences with vegetation. Irigaray asks, in a manner relevant for this context, how to speak of the vegetal: “Is not one of its teachings to show without saying, or to say without words?”<sup>190</sup> She also explains her reason for the title “through” rather than “with” vegetal being, since through for her “means that we live thanks to vegetal being, which procures pure air for us; that vegetal being somehow corresponds to a stage of our becoming”<sup>191</sup>, and adds, true to her insistence on the importance of sexual difference, “toward a world that takes into account our identity and subjectivity as they are, that is, as sexuated.”<sup>192</sup>

190 Irigaray in Irigaray & Marder 2016, 6.

191 Irigaray in Irigaray & Marder 2016, 100.

192 Ibid.

In a short texts authored by Irigaray and Marder together, “Thinking anew” (2015), discussing the possibility of a human re-birth, they criticise scientists and philosophers who conflate thinking and calculative reason, and “concede that non-human living beings can also think” but make the mistake of assuming it to be computational, for example, “that plants, too, are capable of cognition by calculating differences in the time of daylight, so as to come up with decisions regarding the best time for blossoming”.<sup>193</sup> Regretting that human beings “have become ensnared in mechanical thought – which is nothing other than computation and, therefore, not a thought” they suggest we “try to recover a minimum of breathing and of natural energy in order not to remain totally dependent on the general economy holding us prisoners”.<sup>194</sup> For them our situation is inverse from that of Socrates, who claimed in Phaedrus that “trees won’t teach me anything”, since “computational thinking no longer has anything to teach us, while the life and the way of surviving of trees do.”<sup>195</sup> For instance their open-ended growth “reveals that plants are neither machines nor organisms, subordinated to the demands of the whole external to them or to a pre-existing plan”<sup>196</sup> and this could be a model for human growth as well, they write. Thus, they propose we turn to plants for help: “Asking for assistance from vegetal environment ... to recover our breath... to perceive what being alive means” and, moreover, “to keep silent and to cultivate silence... as a place where we can ... gather ourselves together anew.”<sup>197</sup>

Understanding that we are breathing the same air with all the living beings around us, the same oxygen or carbon dioxide and the same molecules of various poisons, might help us remember that we

193 Irigaray & Marder 2015, 27.

194 Irigaray & Marder 2015, 28.

195 Irigaray & Marder 2015, 29.

196 Ibid.

197 Irigaray & Marder 2015, 28.

really depend on plants. We need plants not only for our nutrition, but for the oxygen they produce, the air we breathe. Thus, at least in that sense, and whether we like it or not, we are performing with plants, acting together with them, all the time. In a more specific manner, one way to begin to consider performing with plants as a somatic practice – a way that I rediscovered by returning to these old works – could be, simply, breathing with plants. Visiting specific plants in the place where they grow, returning to them repeatedly, becoming still with them for a moment, spending time together with them, breathing and growing with them, could be a way to practice an awareness of breathing not only through but together with plants.

As mentioned in the introduction, the video essay was not included with the above text, not even as an appendix, nor has it been published elsewhere. It is the only one of the revisits that has not been completed as a video essay, but is nevertheless publicly available on the RC in two versions, a shorter and a longer one.<sup>198</sup>

198 *The Cliff Revisited* (15 min.) and *The Cliff Revisited* (25 min. 40 sec.) 2017 <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/profile/show-work?work=403242>





Figure 8. *Year of the Rooster (installation)* (2006)

## 4. Revisiting the Year of the Rooster

The fourth year of performances for camera in what now had become a series, *Year of the Rooster*, was made during the calendar year 2005 rather than the Chinese year, on the cliff on the western shore of Harakka Island. I used the same red shawl as during the previous year, and combined the actions of walking past the camera, standing and looking as well as sitting on the cliff. The work was edited into a three-channel installation with five channels alternating<sup>199</sup>, and a single-channel work with all five parts in succession<sup>200</sup>. The day and night -version was made in midwinter, during Christmas and edited into an installation<sup>201</sup> and a single channel work<sup>202</sup>. When returning to the site on 6 December 2017 to make a video compilation<sup>203</sup> for the Research Day on 2 March 2018<sup>204</sup>, I immediately recognized the birches, which had not grown much. Later I reworked the material into a video essay called “Return to the Site of the Year of the Rooster”<sup>205</sup> for issue #11 of *Ruukku Journal*, on how to do things

199 *Year of the Rooster (installation)* <https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/kukon-vuosi-installaatio/>

200 *Year of the Rooster* <https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/kukon-vuosi/>

201 *Christmas of the Rooster (installation)* <https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/kukon-joulu-1-3-installaatio/>

202 *Christmas of the Rooster - Tomten* <https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/kukon-joulu-kotitonttu/>

203 *The Shore with Birches Revisited* (16 min. 28 sec.) <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/profile/show-work?work=499621>

204 See documentation of the Research Day in HTDTWP archive <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/281037/281038/1439/1609>

205 “Return to the Site of the Year of the Rooster” Arlander 2019a. <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/470471/470472>

with performance.<sup>206</sup> Beside the site I returned to the notion autotopography explored in a previous article, “Performing Landscape as Autotopographical Exercise”<sup>207</sup>, where I used material created elsewhere during that same year as examples<sup>208</sup>. The exposition in *Ruukku* was very much based on video material; in the following only the textual part is presented, slightly revised.

206 How to Do Things with Performance? *Ruukku* #11 <http://ruukku-journal.fi/fi/issues/11>

207 Arlander 2012b, *Contemporary Theatre Review* 22:2, 2012, 251-258.

208 Two works performed in Koivumäki, in southern Häme in 2005: *Sitting on a Birch* (2006) <https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/istun-koivulla/> and *Secret garden 1-2* (2006) <https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/salainen-puutarha-1-2/>

## 4.1. Return to the Site of the Year of the Rooster



Figure 9. *The Shore with Birches Revisited* (2017)

This text continues the explorations of *Animal Years* (2003-2014) and the possibility of their re-assembly into video essays, like “Revisiting the Shore”<sup>209</sup>, or perhaps into digital forms of autotopography<sup>210</sup>, a notion I encountered at the time of creating these works. Returning to the site of the performance of *Year of the Rooster* (2006) and *Christmas of the Rooster - Tomten* (2006)<sup>211</sup> twelve years later served as a starting point for reflections on the materiality of the site. Could the small birches in the images, still growing there, be regarded as co-performers or artists, or be understood as partners in performance? Is such an attempt to rethink the performer-environment relationship as “performing with” living beings in the landscape relevant?

209 Arlander 2018a.

210 Gonzalez 1995; Bal 2002; Heddon 2008.

211 *Christmas of the Rooster - Tomten* <https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/kukon-joulu-kotitonnttu/>  
*Christmas of the Rooster 1-3 (installation)* <https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/kukon-joulu-1-3-installaatio/>

The exposition was formed as a triptych in three parts. Here the parts are presented in succession: First, a short introduction with a presentation of the video materials used as a starting point. Second, a transcript of the voice-over text of the video essay augmented with some extended notes. And third, a brief discussion that places the essay in the context of the question how to do things with performance. One way of reading this text is to watch the video essay *The Shore with Birches Revisited* (16 min. 28 sec.)<sup>212</sup> first and explore the rest of the material and the discussion only after that. The text of the video essay is nevertheless transcribed here in full:

### On Autotopography

This essay<sup>213</sup> continues the explorations of *Animal Years*, the series of video works or performances for camera on Harakka Island, by focusing on *Year of the Rooster* from 2006 and *Christmas of the Rooster - Tomten* also from 2006, and the possibility of their re-assembly, perhaps into a digital form of autotopography, a notion originally coined by Jennifer Gonzalez in 1995 and later used by Dee Heddon in 2002 and 2008. Returning to the site of the performance twelve years later, on 6 December 2017, serves as a starting point for reflections on the materiality of the site. Could the small birches in the images, still growing there, be regarded as co-performers or artists, following a suggestion by Michael Marder<sup>214</sup>, or be understood as

212 The video essay is available as part of the article <https://doi.org/10.22501/ruu.470471> and also archived separately <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/profile/show-work?work=499621>

213 The essay is based on the presentation “Return to the site of the Year of the Rooster” on 2 March 2018 at Research Day II organized by the How to Do Things with Performance? research project. See <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/281037/281038/1446/1616>

214 “To assert that plants are the artists of sensuous appearances, offering untold aesthetic riches to whomever they attract, is to claim in the same breath that they are the artists of being. In effect, plants create and recreate themselves all

partners in a sympoiesis of sorts, to use the term of Donna Haraway? Does such an attempt to rethink the performer-environment relationship as “performing with” living beings in the landscape really matter?

In “Autotopographies” in 1995 Jennifer Gonzalez explains how trophies, photographs, travel souvenirs, heirlooms, religious icons, and gifts can take the form of autotopographical objects, physical extensions of the psyche. These personal objects can form a spatial representation of identity, which she calls an autotopography or even “museums of the self”.<sup>215</sup>

Existing along the continuum of monument and microcosm, this collection, arrangement or storage of symbolically significant objects represents a personal identity in relation to a larger social network of meaning and functions to anchor the self-reflective image of the subject within a local earthly cosmos. In the creation of an autotopography [. . .] the material world is called upon to present a physical map of memory, history and belief.<sup>216</sup>

According to Gonzalez the creation of an autotopography is a form of self-representation. Like a written autobiography (a series

the time, growing new limbs, shedding leaves, putting out new sexual organs (i.e., the flowers). They are performative creatures *par excellence*, the artists of themselves. Vegetal self-creation and self-recreation takes its cues from the conditions outside—cold for shedding leaves; warmth and longer hours of daylight for flowering; sun exposure for growing new branches—without a rigidly predetermined organismic plan. The artistry of plants that make themselves is, therefore, of one piece with the world.” (Michael Marder: “A portrait of plants as artists”, blog post in *The Philosopher’s Plant* January 2018, no longer online)

215 Gonzalez, Jennifer. 1995. “Autotopographies”. In Gabriel Brahm, Jr and Mark Driscoll (eds.) *Prosthetic Territories: Politics and Hypertechnologies*. San Francisco: West View Press, 133–50.

216 Gonzalez 1995, 134.

of narrated events, fantasies, and identifications), an autotopography forms a spatial representation of emotional ties and past events.<sup>217</sup> Autotopographies are created to reflect memories and desires, to protect a threatened identity,<sup>218</sup> to reflect utopian identification and mythic history, or to map a future vision.<sup>219</sup> An autotopography is a combination of ‘fictional’ memory and ‘factual’ history embedded in material objects. It is “a powerful tool of ‘evidence’ – linking time, space, and event in a material manifestation of ‘self’”.<sup>220</sup>

In *Autobiography and Performance* in 2008 Dee Heddon acknowledges that Gonzalez uses the term autotopography to refer to personal objects arranged by a subject as physical signs that spatially represent that subject’s identity, whereas in her own application the term is understood more literally as the writing of place. She explains:

In thinking about performances that fold or unfold autobiography and place, particularly outside places, I have conceptualized them as autotopographic, a neologism used for more than its fleeting allusion to autobiographic. Topos comes from the Greek word for place, while graphein means to scratch, to draw, to write; topography, then, signifies the writing of place.<sup>221</sup>

For Heddon “autotopography is writing place through self (and simultaneously writing self through place), [. . .] autotopography, like autobiography, is a creative act of seeing, interpretation and invention, all of which depend on where you are standing, when and

217 Ibid.

218 Gonzalez 1995, 140.

219 Gonzalez 1995, 145.

220 Gonzalez 1995, 147.

221 Heddon, Deirdre. 2008. *Autobiography and Performance*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 90.

for what purpose”.<sup>222</sup> The performances she describes as autotopographic utilize storytelling for audiences present at the site, intertwining personal and local remembrances and narratives. For her “an autotopographic practice brings into view the ‘self’ that plots place and that plots self in place, admitting (and indeed actively embracing) the subjectivity and inevitable partiality or bias of that process”.<sup>223</sup>

In an earlier text, Heddon uses the term, “to signal more specifically the location of a particular individual in actual space, a locatedness that has implications for both subject and place”.<sup>224</sup> She interprets “graffiti as an instance of autotopography, a writing which marks and remarks landscape whilst simultaneously marking and remarking subjectivity”.<sup>225</sup>

If we understand autotopography like Heddon – as writing place through self and writing self through place, or as writing which marks and remarks landscape whilst marking and remarking subjectivity – the concept seems best suited for narration or textual practices. It needs some revision to be of use in my examples. In these video works I am of course depicting myself in and through a specific site and characterizing that site through myself. Time passing is visible on me as well as on the landscape and so on. In 2012, however, I used

222 Heddon 2008, 91.

223 Heddon 2008, 92.

224 Heddon, Deirdre. 2002. “Autotopography: Graffiti, Landscapes & Selves”, *Reconstruction: Studies in Contemporary Culture*, 2.3 Summer 2002.

225 Ibid.

the term autotopographical exercise<sup>226</sup>, to describe some works<sup>227</sup> created the same year as the *Year of the Rooster*, to focus on the action rather than the result. Today I suggest that a video compilation of a recording of a year and a day and night can be understood as an autotopography of sorts, a digital collage of personal souvenirs.

Regarding the materiality of the site, some insights from the process might be worth noting in passing. The red scarf served as a costume, but the shifting outfits during the weekly performances for a camera on tripod turned out to be rather dominating. In future years I used a more careful dress code. Using the red scarf on my head to allude to the Gnome or “Tomten” during the day and night at Christmas time, and carrying a small lantern with a candle, turned the same action of walking, standing, and sitting into a form

226 Some quotes exemplifying my previous approach to autotopography: “Attempts at using autotopography (a spatial representation of self) and topobiography (the places of one’s life) in the analysis of my experiences leads me to propose a modified notion - autotopographical exercise - to describe practices related to topobiographically meaningful places.” (Arlander 2012b, 251)

“...an autotopography could be understood as a topography of and by the self (as the study of the earth’s surface shapes by oneself, the depiction of the surface shapes of oneself or the surface shapes of one’s place). The projects I have described can be analysed as autotopographical exercises in all the senses outlined above.” (Arlander 2012b, 257)

“Some performance practices concern mainly the performer. When these practices are related to topobiographically meaningful places, we could call them autotopographical exercises.” (Arlander 2012b, 258)

227 *Secret Garden 1-2* (2006) and *Sitting on a Birch* (2006) were performed weekly in Koivumäki, Kalvola on Sundays between 22 May 2005 and 14 May 2006 and shown for the first time in the same exhibition as *Year of the Rooster (2006)* on Harakka Island 19 July to 6 August 2006. See <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/profile/show-work?work=497827> and <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/profile/show-work?work=497828>

of representational acting, as if impersonating a gnome. The need to bring in light during the day and night, to provide a focal point in the darkness, was an insight from the previous year. During that night, however, the sky was cloudy reflecting the lights of the city, so there was no real darkness. The text, a childhood souvenir, an old well-known poem by Victor Rydberg, was recorded afterwards, while editing. It was included only in the first installation version and has not been publicly shown after that. In this context, I could not see any reason, except vanity, to censor it.<sup>228</sup>

From today's perspective the small birches in the image, one half dead at the time, but growing fine now twelve years later, prompted me to think of the concept sympoiesis<sup>229</sup>, used by Donna Haraway, and the possibility of a performance 'with' the birches<sup>230</sup>. For previ-

228 At the time my focus was on performing landscape, documenting changes in the environment, and I did not realize the importance of other materials like the scarf for the overall effect. Thus, including the poem in the public work seemed irrelevant as well, especially since the pathetic tone was embarrassing. In the context of discussing autotopography and memory, however, avoiding embarrassment because of personal vanity would be limiting, since the pathetic tone carries some of the affects involved.

229 Sympoiesis is a term used by Donna J. Haraway to emphasize various forms of relationality in action: "Sympoiesis is a simple word; it means 'making with'. Nothing makes itself; nothing is really autopoietic or selforganizing. ... earthlings are *never alone*. That is the radical implication of sympoiesis. Sympoiesis is a word proper to complex, dynamic, responsive, situated, historical systems. It is a word for worlding-with, in company." (Haraway 2016, 58)

230 Michael Marder stresses the importance of understanding vegetal life for understanding what it means to "live with" other beings, because "the dispersed life of plants is a mode of being in relation to all the others, being *qua* being-with." (Marder 2013, 51.) In his opinion "all creatures share something of the vegetal soul and are alive in the most basic sense insofar as they neither coincide with themselves nor remain self-contained". (Ibid.) For him the "shared divisibility of all living beings, first honed in the acts of the vegetal soul, pertains to the workings of the soul in general", and for "the psyche to live it must receive guidance from the vegetal principle of divisibility, constantly becoming other to itself". (Ibid.)

ous generations the gnomes or other fairy tale figures thought to be living in the surroundings of human habitation perhaps served as similarly strange albeit indispensable collaborators, to be considered in some manner. Haraway writes:

Staying with the trouble requires making oddkin; that is, we require each other in unexpected collaborations and combinations, in hot compost piles. We become-with each other or not at all. That kind of material semiotics is always situated, someplace and not noplac, entangled and worldly.<sup>231</sup>

### **“Tomten” by Victor Rydberg**

In the video the poem is spoken in the original Swedish, with translations in English and Finnish as subtitles.

231 Haraway, Donna J. 2016. *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 4.

Tomten by Victor Rydberg <sup>232</sup>	The Gnome (translated by Judith Moffet) <sup>233</sup>	Kotitonttu (translated by Yrjö Jylhä) <sup>234</sup>
Midvinternattens köld är hård, stjärnorna gnistra och glimma. Alla sova i enslig gård djupt under midnattstimma. Månen vandrar sin tysta ban, snön lyser vit på fur och gran, snön lyser vit på taken. Endast tomten är vaken.	Midwinter nights the frost is deep, The stars are glistening and sparkling. All on the lonely farm are asleep. Moveless through midnight darkling. Silent the road where the moon glides bright, Snow on the boughs is gleaming white, White on the rooftops gleaming. All but the gnome are dreaming.	Tuima talven on pakkanen, tähdet kiiluvat yöhön, kansa kartanon hiljaisen nukkuu aamuun ja työhön. Verkkaan laskee jo kiekko kuun, lunta täynnä on oksat puun, kattojen päällä on lunta. Tonttu ei vaan saa unta.
Står där så grå vid ladgårdsdörr, grå mot den vita driva, tittar, som många vintrar, förr, upp emot månens skiva, tittar mot skogen, där gran och fur drar kring gården sin dunkla mur, grubblar, fast ej det lär båta över en underlig gåta.	Stands there so gray at the barnyard door, Watches the drifts blow flatter, Stares as so many winters before, Up at the moon's bright platter, Notes where the spruce trees, shaggy and tall, Draw round the farm their shadowy wall, And – though it profit him little – Ponders a curious riddle.	Ometan ukselle vaiti jää harmaana hankea vasten, kuuta taivaalla tirkistää tuttuna vanhain ja lasten. Katsoo muuria hongiston takana nukkuvan kartanon, pohtien iäti uutta ongelman salaisuutta.

232 Rydberg, Victor 1881. "Tomten", in Romell 1960, 15-19.

233 Rydberg, Victor 2001. "The Gnome". Translated into English by Judith Moffet, 105-109.

234 Rydberg, Victor. 1981. "Kotitonttu". Translated into Finnish by Yrjö Jylhä.

För sin hand genom skägg och  
hår,  
skakar huvud och hätta --  
"nej, den gåtan är alltför svår,  
nej, jag gissar ej detta" --  
slår, som han plägar, inom kort  
slika spörjande tankar bort,  
går att ordna och pyssla,  
går att sköta sin syssla.

Combs his fingers through  
beard and hair,  
Shakes his head with the hood  
on:  
"Tis too much for me, I declare,  
That'un I'm just no good on."  
Then, as ever when questions  
irk,  
Shrugging it off he sets to work:  
Bustles in all directions,  
Makes his rounds and  
inspections.

Kouransa partaan ja tukkaan  
vie,  
Puistaa päätä ja hilkkaa --  
"ei, tämä pulmista vaikein lie,  
ei, tämä järkeä pilkkaa" --  
heittää, niinkuin jo kiire ois,  
moiset pulmat ja mietteet pois,  
lähtee toimeen ja työhön,  
lähtee puuhiinsa yöhön.

Går till visthus och  
redskapshus,  
känner på alla låsen --  
korna drömma vid månens ljus  
sommardrömmar i båsen;  
glömsk av sele och pisk och töm  
Pälle i stallet har och en dröm:  
krubban han lutar över  
fylls av doftande klöver; --

Goes to the toolshed and dark  
storehouse,  
Tries all the locks and latches.  
Huge by their stanchions  
dream the cows,  
Moonlight gliding their patches;  
Whip and harness forgotten  
quite  
Dobbin dreams in his stall all  
night:  
The manger he's drooping over  
Seems heaped with sweet-  
scented clover.

Aitat tutkii hän peljäten  
lukkojen auki jäävän --  
lehmät lehdosta uneksen  
torkkuvat oljilla läävän.  
Ruuna myös unen heinää syö,  
suitset ja siimat ei selkään lyö:  
seimeensä saa se tuohon  
tuoreen ja tuoksuvan ruohon.

Går till stängslet för lamm och  
får,  
ser, hur de sova där inne;  
går till hönsen, där tuppen står  
stolt på sin högsta pinne;  
Karo i hundbots halm mår gott,  
vaknar och viftar svansen  
smått,  
Karo sin tomté känner,  
de äro gode vänner.

Goes to the fold where lamb  
and sheep  
Drowse in their fleece together.  
Proud on his perch the cock is  
asleep  
In the hen house, out of the  
weather:  
Fido, bedded in straw, feels fine,  
Thumps his tail with a friendly  
whine.  
Needless to bark *Who is it?* --  
This is a nightly visit.

Lampaat ja vuohet karsinaan  
makuulle jättää ukko.  
Kanatkin nukkuvat orsillaan,  
ylinnä ylpeä kukko.  
Koppiinsa Vahti vainun saa,  
nousee ja häntää heiluttaa,  
tonttu harmajanuttu,  
Vahdille kyllä on tuttu.

<p>Tomten smyger sig sist att se  husbondfolket det kära,  länge och väl han märkt, att de  hålla hans flit i ära;  barnens kammar han sen på tå  nalkas att se de söta små,  ingen må det förtycka:  det är hans största lycka.</p>	<p>Lastly the gnome steals in to  see  All is well with his neighbours,  Certain of old this family  Honors his faithful labors.  To the nursery then on tiptoe  creeps,  Sees how sound each little one  sleeps.  Let nobody misconstrue this:  His greatest joy is to do this.</p>	<p>Pirttiin puikkii hän nähdäkseen  isäntäväkensä oivan,  tietäen heidän siunanneen  tonttunsa työn ja hoivan;  sitten hiipii hän lasten luo  nähdäkseen vesat hennot nuo;  ken sitä kummeksis juuri:  hälle se omni on suuri.</p>
<p>Så har han sett dem, far och  son,  ren genom många leder  slumra som barn; men  vartifrån  komma de väl hit neder?  Släkte följde på släkte snart,  blomstrade, åldrades, gick —  men vart?  Gåtan, som icke låter  gissa sig, kom så åter!</p>	<p>Farther and son he has seen  them there  Year upon year unending  Slumber as children – come  from where?  Generations descending  On generations and swiftly so  Bloom, age, vanish – where do  they go?  Riddle that brooks no guesses  Presses again and presses.</p>	<p>Halki sukujen vaihtuvain  seuras hän ihmeellistä  näkyä pienten nukkuja in –  mistä he saapuivat, mistä?  Polvi varttui ja ahkeroi,  vanheni, lähti – mut minne, oi?  Ongelma eessä on jälleen,  selvittämättä tälle.</p>
<p>Tomten vandrar till ladans loft:  där har han bo och fäste  högt på skullen i höets doft,  nära vid svalans näste;  nu är väl svalans boning tom,  men till våren med blad och  blom  kommer hon nog tillbaka,  följd av sin näpna maka.</p>	<p>Back to his hayloft stumps the  gnome.  High in its fragrance vested  There is his stronghold, there  his home,  Near where the swallow nested.  Now her nest is empty and cold,  But when the flowers and white  and gold  Spring will restore the swallow,  Calling her mate to follow.</p>	<p>Viimein jää ladon parveen hän,  siellä hän vartoo kesää  tuoksussa heinän lämpimän  lähellä pääskysen pesää:  vaikka pääsky nyt poissa on,  kukkiin noustessa nurmikön  saapuu se tänne varmaan  seurassa puolison armaan.</p>

Då har hon alltid att kvittra om  
månget ett färdeminne,  
intet likväl om gåtan, som  
rör sig i tomtens sinne.  
Genom en springa i ladans vägg  
lyser månen på gubbens skägg,  
strimman på skägget blänker,  
tomten grubblar och tänker.

Then she is always eager to  
chat,  
Twitter of all her travels,  
But not of the riddle nagging  
him – that,  
Nothing she says unravels.  
The brilliant moon through the  
chink in the wall  
Shines on the old chap, beard  
an all.  
Moonbeam on gray beard  
glistens.  
Pondering still, he listens.

Silloin se laulaa ja tirsкуuttaa  
matkamuistoja tieltä,  
mutta ei tunne ongelmaa,  
näin joka vaivaa mieltä.  
Seinän raosta paistaa kuu  
vanhuksen rintaan heijastuu,  
kuunsäde kimaltaa partaan  
tontun mieltivän, hartaan.

Tyst är skogen och nejden all,  
livet där ute är fruset,  
blott från fjärran av forsens fall  
höres helt sakta bruset.  
Tomten lyssnar och, halvt i  
dröm,  
tycker sig höra tidens ström,  
undrar, varthän den skall fara,  
undrar, var källan må vara.

Hushed lie farm and forest  
and all,  
Frozen the whole of existence.  
Only the voice of the waterfall,  
Muffled, speaks in the distance.  
The old gnome listens and, half  
in dream,  
Thinks he hears Time flow by  
like a stream,  
Wonders whatever its course is,  
Wonders wherever the source  
is.

Vaiti metsä on lintuineen,  
luonnon mahlat on jäässä,  
koski vain ihan hiljalleen  
pauhaa matkojen päässä.  
Tonttu lumoissa kuutamon  
kuulevinaan ajan virtaa on,  
mieltii, minne se vienee,  
missä sen lähde lienee.

Midvinternattens köld är hård,  
stjärnorna gnistra och glimma.  
Alla sova i enslig gård  
gott intill morgontimma.  
Månen sänker sin tysta ban,  
snön lyser vit på fur och gran,  
snön lyser vit på taken.  
Endast tomten är vaken.

Midwinter nights the frost is  
deep,  
The stars are glistening and  
sparkling.  
All on the lonely farm are  
asleep,  
Sound through the small hours  
darkling.  
Silent the road where the moon  
sinks bright,  
Snow on the boughs is  
gleaming white,  
White on the rooftops gleaming.  
All but the gnome are dreaming.

Tuima talven on pakkanen,  
tähdet kiiluvat yöhön,  
kansa kartanon hiljaisen  
nukkuu aamuun ja työhön.  
Verkkaan laskee jo kiekko kuun,  
lunta täynnä on oksat puun,  
kattojen päällä on lunta.  
Tonttu ei vaan saa unta.

## Discussion

Looking at the brief video essay from the perspective of performance, there seems to be a constant flux between performance and representation going on. The repeated performances of walking, standing, and sitting on the shore are recorded and edited into video works, audio-visual representations of those actions and of the site, including the birches. One such performance is repeated once more, twelve years later, to produce another representation of the same landscape and the same performers, the human being, the birches, the cliff as well as other features and creatures of the site. This revisit is left unedited to serve as the introduction and backdrop for the compilation of the older representations. To begin with the main strategy seems to be repetition, repetition of the actions during a year, (for *Year of the Rooster*), during a day and night with two-hour intervals (for *Day and Night of the Rooster – Tomten*) and once more after twelve years (for *The Shore with Birches Revisited*). Another level of repetition is added with the videos repeated next to each other within one image frame in the compilation to form miniature installations supported by brief texts with some basic information. A voice-over text reflecting on the work (spoken live to accompany the video compilation when presented the first time) and on a previous article related to it, produces a new type of performance, a lecture performance or performance-lecture of sorts, here presented as a representation again, a video essay.

With *Day and Night of the Rooster - Tomten* and the added visual elements (wearing the red scarf on the head associating to the red cap of a gnome and holding a lantern with a candle), a dimension of representation, even representational acting, is introduced on the level of the first performance. This is further reinforced in the compilation by the reading of the poem “Tomten” written by Victor Rydberg as a voice-over text, which brings an aspect of fiction and narration into play. The reading of the poem is of course a

performance, too, and combining the two recorded performances – the visual and the auditory – begins to resemble an illustrated narrative. By combining video images of the same material in various sizes, including versions with the English and Finnish translations as subtitles, this assemblage of representations around “Tomten”, the gnome, becomes another kind of performance, inserted into the video essay.

In the voice-over text I refer to an earlier article from 2012, where I suggest that some works created the same year could be understood as autotopographical exercises. There I combine the notion of autotopography<sup>235</sup> used for instance by Mieke Bal in discussing *The Spider* by Louis Bourgeois, suggesting that it “refers to a spatial, local, and situational ‘writing’ of the self’s life in visual art”<sup>236</sup> with the notion topobiography proposed by geographer Tapani Karjalainen, which refers to biographical place experiences, and emphasizes time lived and remembered in places.<sup>237</sup> Instead of focusing on the result, the autotopography, I wanted to emphasize the action, the practice, the performance, and spoke of autotopographical exercises. In geographical contexts there has been an increasing interest in memory, both collective and individual, and in the entanglement of past spatial relations with the experience of current places.<sup>238</sup> This is a possible direction of developing the discussion in relation to both topobiography and autotopography.

235 Gonzales 1995; Heddon 2002; Heddon 2008.

236 Bal, Mieke. 2002. “Autotopography – Louis Bourgeois as Builder”. In Julia Watson and Sidonie Smith (eds.) *Interfaces – Women / Autobiography/ Image / Performance*. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 163-185.

237 Karjalainen, Pauli Tapani. 2006. “Topobiografinen paikan tulkinta” [Topobiographical Interpretation of Place]. In Seppo Knuuttila, Pekka Laaksonen and Virpi Kaukio (eds.) *Paikka: eletty, kuviteltu, kerrottu* [Place: Lived, Imagined, Told] Helsinki: SKS, 83-92.

238 Jones, Owain. 2011. “Geography, Memory and Non-representational Theory”, *Geography Compass*, Social Geography Section, 5/12, 875-885.

In the video essay, presented during the research day, I chose, rather than to develop the notion of autotopography further, to focus on the birches, the silent witnesses to my performance still present at the site. Or rather co-performers, who are contributing with their presence to the videos then and now and showing by their growth the time that had passed between the visits in 2005-2006 and in 2017. At the time of making the videos I did not think of the birches as co-performers but saw them as parts of the environment. Although I wanted to focus on the changes in the landscape, the birches served in their customary role of setting for human action, a backdrop to the human performer.

With hindsight it is nevertheless possible to think of our performing together as a sympoiesis of sorts, as a “making with”, like “making an image by standing together with the birches” or “performing for the camera together with the birches” or even joining the birches as they were performing on the shore and in the image space. We were meeting repeatedly and “becoming with” each other through the seasons. Donna Haraway’s ideas on the notion of sympoiesis seem useful not only in linking the human figure and the birches, but also in connecting the very present and living birches growing at the site and the invisible or culturally imagined figure of the gnome that I carried with me since my childhood and brought with me to the site. Both are strange creatures, or “oddkin”, to use the term of Haraway, to befriend and to perform with. Both, however, can from another cultural perspective be regarded as living beings effecting and affecting the human world. But does such a rethinking of the relationship between the performer and the environment really matter? Would the videos have been made differently, if consciously considering the birches co-performers, focusing on visiting them in their place? Probably yes. In the images where the performer walks past the camera, the relationship is different than in the images where she stands or sits next to the birches, as if sharing their mode of performing.

Within the limited time of the video essay, I barely hinted at the possibility of looking at the compilation of digital souvenirs as an autotopography of sorts. The whole video essay can nevertheless be understood as a digital autotopography, a collection and arrangement of personally important images or digital objects. If an autotopography, according to Gonzales, can exist along the “continuum of monument and microcosm”, and form a “collection, arrangement or storage of symbolically significant objects” which “functions to anchor the self-reflective image of the subject within a local earthly cosmos”<sup>239</sup> such autotopographies increasingly have a digital form today. In collections where “the material world is called upon to present a physical map of memory, history and belief”<sup>240</sup> this often takes place with the help of digital images and sounds. An autotopography resembles a written autobiography, forming a spatial rather than textual representation of past events, where ‘fictional’ memory and ‘factual’ history are embedded in material objects, “linking time, space, and event in a material manifestation of ‘self’”<sup>241</sup>. Such a material manifestation could very well take a visual or audio-visual form, which today usually means digital. Although material objects and relics from the past can have a specific performative power, digital images, too, can serve as mementos on a personal as well as on a social level, in the same way as tourist images can serve as souvenirs of other places and times for others, beyond their personal use. In the video works I tried to produce “collective ‘souvenirs’ of what the landscape looked like on the north coast of the Baltic Sea during these years at the beginning of the twentieth century”<sup>242</sup>.

239 Gonzalez 1995, 134.

240 Ibid.

241 Gonzalez, 1995, 147.

242 Arlander 2014a, 28.

The video essay or film essay as a format and the “digital epistemology” of documenting practices related to performance in “dense video”<sup>243</sup> as research documents would be worthy of a discussion of its own. This video essay in *Ruukku Journal* hoped to contribute one example to the ongoing experiments in other journals like *JAR*, *VIS*, *JER* or *Screenworks*. In this case the video essay can also be looked at as a form of digital autotopography, a collection and arrangement of digital objects, which exists “along the continuum of monument and microcosm”, performing a “physical map of memory, history and belief”<sup>244</sup>. The same could probably be said of the published exposition, although its main purpose is providing an example of how the act of revisiting previous work and combining them into multi-layered performances and representations can generate knowledge and understanding. Thus, not only engaging in autotopographical exercises, as I suggested in 2012, but also assembling digital autotopographies, could be a powerful way of doing things with performance.

243 Spatz, Ben. 2017. “What do we document? Dense Video and the epistemology of practice.” In Toni Sant (ed.) *Documenting performance - The Context and Processes of Digital Curation and Archiving*. London: Bloomsbury, 241-151.

244 Gonzalez 1995, 134.



Figure 10. *Year of the Dog - Sitting in a Tree* (2007)

## 5. Revisiting the Year of the Dog

The year of the dog (2006-2007) meant a new approach in my relationship to the landscape on Harakka Island, because this time I chose to perform with two pine trees. I was sitting in an old pine in the southern part of the island for *Year of the Dog – Sitting in a Tree*<sup>245</sup> and in October for a day and night<sup>246</sup> and then lying on the cliff as the shadow of a pine tree on the western shore<sup>247</sup>. One reason for focusing on pine trees was probably my experience of sitting on the outgrowth of a birch in Koivumäki the previous year for *Sitting on a Birch*<sup>248</sup> and the wish to explore what elements make a landscape more deeply. In fact, I visited a pine tree in Koivumäki once a month during the following year of the dog.<sup>249</sup> On a cold winter day on 28 February 2018 I revisited the old pine on Harakka. The video compilation<sup>250</sup> with the year and the day and night inserted in that recording was shown as part of a performance by the HTDTWP (How to Do Things with Performance?) research project at the SAR

245 *Year of the Dog – Sitting in a Tree* (2007) <https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/koiran-vuosi-istun-puussa/>

246 *Day and night of the Dog* (2007) <https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/koiran-vuorokausi/>

247 *Shadow of a Pine I, II, III and IV* (2007) <https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/mannyn-varjo-i-ii-iii-iv/> and *Shadow of a Pine I and II* (2007) <https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/mannyn-varjo-i-mannyn-varjo-ii/>

248 *Sitting on a Birch* (2006) <https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/istun-koivulla/>

249 *Year of the Dog in Kalvola – Calendar* (2007) <https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/koiran-vuosi-kalvolassa-kalenteri/> and *Year of the Dog in Kalvola – Calendar 1+2* <https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/koiran-vuosi-kalvolassa-kalenteri-1-2/>

250 *The Pine Revisited* (16 min. 36 sec.) <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/profile/show-work?work=452458>

conference in Plymouth in April 2018<sup>251</sup>. I attempted to revisit the pine on the shore on 19 March 2018, but could not get to the island because of thaw season and recorded the pine from the opposite shore. The compilation based on this revisit<sup>252</sup> was presented in a conference in Krakow<sup>253</sup> and served as an illustration (as still-images) in an article based on that text.<sup>254</sup> Neither of these visual compilations was published as a video essay. They demonstrate two very different ways of utilising one's artistic work in a scholarly context, as part of a satirical performance and as an illustration in a theoretical text.

251 See documentation from the SAR (Society for Artistic Research) conference <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/281037/281038/3434/1170>

252 *The Pine on the Shore Revisited* (17 min.) <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/profile/show-work?work=512220>

253 *Cultural Mobility of Performance and Performativity Studies* in Krakow. See documentation in the HTDTWP archive <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/281037/281038/4713/1256>

254 Arlander 2020a. "The Shadow of a Pine Tree. Authorship, Agency and Performing Beyond the Human." In Ewa Bal & Mateusz Chaberski (eds.) *Situated Knowing. Epistemic Perspectives on Performance*. London & New York: Routledge, 157-170.

## 5.1. Regurgitated Perspectives - Performance



Figure 11. *The Pine Revisited* (2018)

The performance “Regurgitated Perspectives” prepared for the SAR (Society for Artistic Research) conference 2018 by the HT-DTWP (How to Do Things With Performance?) research group<sup>255</sup> is published as a script in the conference proceedings<sup>256</sup> and also available as an extract on the RC.<sup>257</sup> Here I will include only my own contribution, the sermon, which is related to the pine tree. It is preceded by an extract from the abstract, which was the same as the proposal, the introductory note, and the prologue to give some idea of the context.

255 For documentation of the performance, see HTDTWP project archive <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/281037/281038/3484/1147>

256 See pp. 299-311 in the proceedings (Arlander, Järvinen, Nauha, Porkola 2018) <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/512748/512749>

257 See pdf file in the HTDTWP archive <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/281037/281038/4159/2263>

## **Introduction to the performance script**

The performance in four parts is based on different aspects dealing with the question of anthropophagy, necropolitics, sympoiesis, and utopian knowledge, where we create a space to think and play with critical approaches to artistic research. The parts are called: 1. Regurgitated voices, images (Video & Theremin); 2. The Wake: Speeches; 3. A body and Concepts; 4. A Hymn. In my contribution I focus on sympoiesis and regurgitation: If honeybees produce honey by a process of regurgitation, could chewing one's cud as an artist produce something equally valuable? Reflexivity and repetition in artistic research are explored by revisiting *Day and Night of the Dog* and *Year of the Dog*, from the video series *Animal Years*, based on repeated visits to the same site. Excerpts are remixed to be part of the performance. That was the proposal.

The performance "Regurgitated Perspectives" was presented on the House Stage on Thursday 12 April 2018 at 2 pm. In the performance handout, it was structured in four parts: A Sermon, A Wake, A Communion, and A Hymn. In this script, the performers are called A CANTOR (Tero Nauha), A PREACHER (Annette Arlander), A WIDOW (Pilvi Porkola) and A SOPRANO (Hanna Järvinen). The setup was the following: centre stage a table covered with white tablecloth, an urn on the table and four chairs around it, a small action camera on the table, two microphones, some tableware covered by a cloth. Stage left a podium, some roses and toy birds on the floor; stage right a sound system with theremin and synthesizer, on the back wall of the stage a large projection screen.

### **PROLOGUE**

(THE WIDOW and THE SOPRANO distribute hand programs to the audience upon arrival. THE CANTOR sprays "holy scent" on the first rows.)

### **THE PREACHER:**

Welcome to this wake of our beloved and respected one. We are very

happy to see so many of you here, joining in our deep sorrow. We hope that with the help of artistic research we can share this moment of loss and say our final goodbyes with due ceremony. Unfortunately, we are in a slight disagreement concerning who the deceased actually is or was. You have all received the program; we will now start with a sermon and then continue with a wake, a communion, and end with a hymn to honour our dearly departed.

### **A Sermon**<sup>258</sup>

(The video *The Pine Revisited*, 16 min. 36 sec., is projected on the screen, accompanied by THE CANTOR on the theremin.)

THE PREACHER (standing at the podium):

Let us now congregate around the scriptures.

Eating others or making honey? Cannibalism increases the risk of prion diseases, like the mad cow disease. Thus, we might find it safer to eat others. But this is not as easy as it sounds, because others are not separate from us.

Physicist and queer theorist Karen Barad suggests that “bodies, including but not limited to human bodies, come to matter through the world’s iterative intra-activity, its performativity” and acquire “boundaries, properties, and meanings ... through the intra-activity of mattering”.<sup>259</sup> “Intra-actions include the larger material arrangement”, she writes, “that effects an *agential cut* between ‘subject’ and ‘object’ (in contrast to the more familiar Cartesian cut which takes this distinction for granted)...”.<sup>260</sup> Differentiating is not about radical exteriorities, she adds: “what is on the other side of the agential cut is never separate from us.”<sup>261</sup> This goes for artistic research as well,

258 The sermon is also published in *Performing and Thinking with Trees* (Arlander 2023, 155-162).

259 Barad 2012, 69.

260 Barad 2007, 139-140.

261 Barad 2012, 69.

for cuts between artistic research and other forms of research, or other kinds of artistic practice, between the artist as subject and the artist as object, the one who eats and the one to be eaten and so on. Is this becoming too complicated? We could rather try to think in terms of sympoiesis, in the words of Donna Haraway:

Perhaps as sensual molecular curiosity and definitely as insatiable hunger, irresistible attraction toward enfolding each other is the vital motor of living and dying on earth. Critters interpenetrate each other, loop around and through one another, eat each other, get indigestion, and partially digest and partly assimilate one another, and thereby establish sympoietic arrangements that are otherwise known as cells, organisms, and ecological assemblages.<sup>262</sup>

Cows and other ruminants regurgitate half-digested food in order to chew it a second time. This is what artistic researchers generally are asked to do, to chew their cud. The recommended mode of rumination is usually reflexivity, or critical self-reflection, to avoid narcissistic self-promotion. The Skylla to that Charybdis is drowning in a vortex of reflexivity. Indeed, following Haraway and Barad, we might choose diffraction rather than reflection as a safer tool.

Diffraction as a concept owes as much to feminist theorizing about difference as to physics,<sup>263</sup> where in its classical form it is understood as the result of the superposition or interference of waves.<sup>264</sup> In quantum physics diffraction experiments are “at the heart of the ‘wave versus particle’ debates about the nature of

262 Haraway 2016, 58.

263 Barad 2014, 168.

264 Barad 2007, 78-79.

light and matter”<sup>265</sup> and have shown how “wave and particle are not inherent attributes of objects but”, interestingly, “the atoms perform wave or particle in their intra-action with the apparatus.”<sup>266</sup> As a methodology diffraction was used by Donna Haraway as a counterpoint to reflection. For Karen Barad it is, among other things, “a tool for thinking about social/natural practices in a performative rather than representationalist mode”.<sup>267</sup> Thinking diffractively can thus imply a self-accountable, critical, and responsible engagement with the world, while reading diffractively can mean reading texts “through one another” to produce unexpected outcomes, as suggested by Geerts and van der Tuin. Rather than “a boundary-crossing, trans/disciplinary methodology”<sup>268</sup>, which is “blurring the boundaries between different disciplines and theories to provoke new thoughts”<sup>269</sup> we could perhaps understand diffractive reading in the tradition of artistic cut-ups<sup>270</sup>, as various forms, combinations or collages of texts, images, video clips, memories and experiences.

If honeybees produce honey by a process of regurgitation, could we hope that chewing one’s cud as an artist could produce something equally valuable? The video you see here explores reflexivity and repetition in artistic research by recording a revisit to the site of *Year of the Dog*, on Harakka Island in Helsinki on 28 February 2018. *Year of the Dog* was performed and recorded approximately once a week from 7 January 2006 to 11 February 2007 and it is one of the works in the series *Animal Years* (2003-2014), based on repeated weekly visits to a site on that island each year. *Day and Night of the Dog* was performed in the same pine tree for a day and

265 Barad 2007, 72-73.

266 Barad 2014, 180.

267 Barad 2007, 88.

268 Geerts and van der Tuin 2016.

269 Ibid.

270 Burroughs and Gysin 1978.

night with two-hour intervals from noon to noon on October 20 to 21 in 2006, that same year. These old video works are inserted, first the year, then the day and night, in the recently recorded real-time sequence.

While sitting in the pine, the branches of which had grown so vigorously during twelve years, that sitting proved rather uncomfortable, I tried to remember my previous experiences, without much success. What I did remember, where some thoughts I recently read, by Anna Tsing, in her ground-breaking study *The Mushroom at The End of the World – On the possibility of life in capitalist ruins* (2015), where pine trees are key figures together with matsutake mushrooms. She describes how “pines, matsutake and humans all cultivate each other unintentionally. They make each other’s world-making projects possible.”<sup>271</sup> For her “landscapes more generally are products of unintentional design”, they are “overlapping world-making activities of many agents, human and not human.” Although the “design is clear in the landscape’s ecosystem... none of the agents have planned this effect.”<sup>272</sup> According to Tsing “humans join others in making landscapes of unintentional design.”<sup>273</sup> She writes:

As sites for more-than-human dramas, landscapes are radical tools for decentring human hubris. Landscapes are not backdrops for historical action: they are themselves active. Watching landscapes in formation shows humans joining other living beings in shaping worlds. Matsutake and pine don’t just grow in forests; they make forests. Matsutake forests are gatherings that build and transform landscapes.<sup>274</sup>

271 Tsing 2015, 152.

272 Ibid.

273 Ibid.

274 Tsing 2015, 152.

The group of pine trees that has grown during these twelve years near the old pine on Harakka Island is perhaps not a forest, and there are no matsutake mushrooms anywhere near the area as far as I know. Tsing's idea of humans and others cultivating each other unintentionally, seems to make sense, however. She refers to human dependence of other life forms, "we proudly independent humans are unable to digest our food without helpful bacteria, first gained as we slide out of the birth canal."<sup>275</sup> There are more bacteria than cells in the human body, and they are necessary for us. Tsing refers to biologist Scott Gilbert and his colleagues, who claim that "almost all development may be codevelopment. By codevelopment we refer to the ability of the cells of one species to assist the normal construction of the body of another species."<sup>276</sup> "This insight changes the unit of evolution", Tsing writes. "Some biologists have begun to speak of the 'hologenome theory of evolution', referring to the complex of organisms and their symbionts as an evolutionary unit: the 'holobiont'<sup>277</sup>, she adds. Tsing describes how to emphasize development, "Gilbert and his colleagues use the term 'symbiopoiesis', the codevelopment of the holobiont", in contrast "with an earlier focus of life as internally self-organizing systems, self-formed through 'auto-poiesis'<sup>278</sup>. "More and more", they write, "symbiosis appears to be the 'rule', not the exception... Nature may be selecting 'relationships' rather than individuals or genomes."<sup>279</sup>

Tsing summarizes her view on codevelopment and contingency: "Interspecies relations draw evolution back into history because they depend on the contingencies of encounter."<sup>280</sup> Moreover, "interspecies

275 Tsing 2015, 142.

276 Gilbert quoted in Tsing 2015, 142.

277 Tsing 2015, 142.

278 Ibid.

279 Ibid.

280 Tsing 2015, 142.

encounters are always events, 'things that happen'. The units of history."<sup>281</sup> Events "cannot be counted on in the way self-replicating units can; they are always framed by contingency and time."<sup>282</sup>

And now, let us listen to some examples of the myriad voices of the world:

(the sound of wind and a voice in Finnish, with English subtitles, from the video is accompanied by THE CANTOR with live sound of theremin).

### **Day and Night of the Dog**

The video shown in the background, *The Pine Revisited* (16 min. 36 sec.), was based on a revisit in February 2018 to the site on Harakka Island where the *Year of the Dog - Sitting in a Tree* (2007) and *Day and Night of the Dog* (2007) were performed in 2006. These old works were both inserted into the video. The spoken Finnish language included in *Day and Night of the Dog* (performed 20 to 21 October 2006) was not comprehensible for most of the audience, but the English subtitles with the translations were visible:

October twentieth, a quarter past twelve. There is a fresh breeze from the East, drizzle. Only the pine tree is unchanged - calm, indifferent, resting in itself after standing it all.

Quarter past two. Damp, chilly, grey - not rain really, but some drops now and then. The wind is driving grey clouds across the sky.

Quarter past four. It is raining softly, feels like it is getting dark, due to the clouds. Now they are forming a uniform grey cover. The ground is wet.

Quarter past six. The wind is rising; it is still dusky, almost dark - blue twilight, though autumnal and gloomy. The sea is bluer when the sky darkens.

281 Ibid

282 Ibid.

Quarter past eight. It is dark, like at night, though it is still evening. The lights of the city are reflected from the clouds and illuminate the cliffs with a strange grey and yellowish glow.

Quarter past ten. Dark, cold - the night goes on unchanged. Luckily there is no rain. It feels like a long time until morning, and till spring as well.

Quarter past twelve. Midnight, middle, halfway - though it does not feel so, really. It is windy, cold, the glow of the city in the clouds. Quarter past two. The night goes on, it is windy. The sea is roaring. Luckily, I don't have to be in a boat at sea. There are many hours until daybreak, and yet the same glow.

Quarter past four. The night continues, maybe the wind is dieing [sic] down, or perhaps I just imagine.

Quarter past six. The wind has shifted to South-East, maybe - and it seems like there is some fog - at least the grey on the water looks like it.

Quarter past eight. Dawn or a grey day - there is a uniformly grey sky, slow dripping rain, and south-easterly wind still.

Quarter past ten. Now it really rains, not pouring, but enough to get wet. The needles of a pine tree do not shelter from rain, even the bark is wet.

Quarter past twelve. A last, additional "session" in the rain. Now the rain is calm and steady, wet; and feels like it will never end.

The revisit to the pine tree was part of the revisits to the sites of *Animal Years* included in the research project *How to Do Things with Performance?* It was especially meaningful because at the time I was also engaged in the artistic research project *Performing with Plants*<sup>283</sup> at Stockholm University of the Arts.

283 See *Performing with Plants* project archive <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/316550/316551>

## 5.2. Revisiting the Pine Again



Figure 12. *Revisiting the Pine Again* (2022)

*The Pine Revisited* (2018) was later displayed as an independent artwork in the exhibition “Revisiting the Pine and other video works” in Telegraph Gallery on Harakka Island<sup>284</sup>.

For that exhibition I made another revisit to the same pine on the third of May 2022 and recorded a video *Revisiting the Pine Again* (7 min. 25 sec.). The text spoken in English in real time and therefore containing some mistakes as well, was addressed to the pine tree and complemented with subtitles on the video, partly because the wind destroyed part of the recording.

Well, hello Pine. It's quite a while since I was here the last time. I think it was 2018 in the middle of winter. And then I came to revisit

284 The exhibition was open from 24 May to 5 June 2022, see blog post <https://annettearlander.com/2022/04/27/revisiting-the-pine-paluu-mannyn-luo-aterbesok-hos-tallen/>

you, because I used to visit you regularly in the year 2006<sup>285</sup>. You haven't changed that much in these four years, it's 2022 now, but I remember it was quite a shock to climb up on your lap or branches in 2018. Because I remember there was a comfortable branch to sit on. But in those 10 years or 11 years you had grown a completely different form. Now it's a very heavy wind. So, this will probably not, it will be difficult to distinguish anything of what I say. So, I might have to come here again later. There is a geese couple behind my back, but you protect me from them or them from me, I think, so they're relatively calm. Strange because after such a long time, we're not really, you don't feel like an old friend. But of course, I do remember our time together. This whole idea of revisiting has been a technique I've used for all the works I created on Harakka Island. And the idea has been to return to a place once where I used to come every week for a year. You were not the first place I returned to, but you were the first tree. After you I've met many, many pine trees. But you remain special, of course, because you're the first one. I thought I would discuss this idea of revisiting with you, but... In some sense, I was spurred to return to the idea of revisiting because I saw an exhibition in Stockholm by Mona Hatoum, who called her exhibition *Revisit* because she showed some old performance work from the 80s and so on. And somebody in the catalogue wrote that revisiting is very different from returning. Because revisiting is only a visit. It is not going back and staying there, but just going back to visit and then continuing. And of course, that's a strange idea for a pine tree, because you can't visit or revisit, you live here. And that's your life. And that's why we humans and other animals admire you, for being rooted and being able to somehow merge with the site, with the location, so in your body you show what the place is like. You somehow incorporate the place for us to

285 In the video the year is said to be 2007, incorrectly; the year was 2006-2007.

see and experience. Well, thank you for doing that. Although the sun is now slowly perhaps showing itself it's amazingly cold, there was hail earlier today. It's May but it doesn't feel like May. Last time I visited you for a longer time, for a whole day and night, was in October, and it was dark and damp and rainy. And compared to that this revisit is rather pleasant but it is nevertheless cold so maybe I leave you here and come back again in the summer. Thank you for being here and taking care of this place and yeah, there is a lot of offspring of yours I suppose; a lot of new pine trees growing right in front of you, between you and the sea but also behind you. So, I think they are more or less the result of your efforts. So, thanks for that too. But now, bye bye, and take care.

This second revisit took place as part of another artistic research project, *Pondering with Pines*<sup>286</sup> (2022-2024) and shows a rather different approach to the pine by acknowledging their subjectivity and speaking to them directly, perhaps even anthropomorphising them to some extent.

286 See *Pondering with Pines* project description <https://www.uniarts.fi/en/projects/pondering-with-pines/>, and media archive on the RC <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/1323410/1589526>.

### 5.3. The Shadow of a Pine Tree



Figure 13. *The Pine on the Shore Revisited* (2018)

In contrast to the revisits to the old pine tree, which served as a backdrop for a satirical performance in an academic context, or as video works in an art context, the attempted revisit to the pine on the shore on 19 March 2018, which resulted in *The Pine on the Shore Revisited* (17 min.)<sup>287</sup>, has not been shown as a video. Black and white still-images from the video have appeared as illustrations in a book chapter. Although the title of the text “The Shadow of a Pine Tree”<sup>288</sup> suggests a more prominent role for the pine, the text focuses on the various possibilities of understanding authorship afforded by the Finnish word for author, ‘tekijä’.

Material-discursive practices linked to specific, culturally situated concepts have a direct bearing on how we make, experience,

287 The video compilation *The Pine on the Shore Revisited* (17 min.) is nevertheless available online <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/profile/show-work?work=512220>

288 Arlander 2020a.

and understand performances. Considering the situated knowledges involved in various approaches to performance and performativity, depending on language, cultural context, and history, as well as academic discipline, we can ask whether it is possible to bring them into conversation. Situated knowledges here are understood not only as specific disciplinary contexts, such as performance studies or visual artistic research, but as the conceptual possibilities of a specific language, like Finnish. By bringing such specific perspectives into the critical conversation, this text hopes to contribute to the discussion of authorship and agency within performance studies and artistic research.

As Diana Taylor points out in her introduction to *The Archive and the Repertoire* (2003) – one of the first texts on performance studies to be translated into Finnish<sup>289</sup> – exploring other languages can increase our understanding as it “calls into question our taxonomies” and “points to new interpretive possibilities”.<sup>290</sup> For her, the untranslatability of terms like ‘performance’ has a positive function, as it reminds us that we do not understand each other; she proposes “that we proceed from that premise”.<sup>291</sup>

This text focuses on two notions related to performance and their use in Finnish: on the one hand, the single term for author, maker, and factor, *tekijä*, and on the other, the two different terms used for performing, the transitive *esittää* and the intransitive *esiintyä*. These will be used in an attempt to expand our understanding of agency. In the following they are described and discussed with the help of a practical example, a video work performed with a pine tree. Focusing on alternative ways of conceptualising authorship and performing with the help of another language,

289 Taylor 2010.

290 Taylor 2003, 15.

291 Taylor 2003, 15.

such as Finnish, will hopefully help us see beyond our habitual conceptualisations.

This text was initially presented as part of a panel, What is Performativity in Finnish?<sup>292</sup> whose title referred to the seminal work by performance studies scholar Heike Roms in *What's Welsh for Performance?*, a bilingual research project uncovering and archiving performance art in Wales.<sup>293</sup> The aim of this text, however, is more limited than that panel; I seek to focus on only two notions, 'authorship' and 'performing', and to discuss them related to an example of my own artistic practice, performing with a pine tree for the duration of a year. It is partly based on material discussed in Finnish, in the article "Mitä tekijä voi tehdä?" (What Can an Author Do?)<sup>294</sup> centred on the multiple meanings of *tekijä* (author, maker, factor).

If we join physicist and queer theorist Karen Barad, following Niels Bohr, in assuming that concepts are material arrangements which are productive of the phenomena they measure, that is, they determine what matters and what is excluded from mattering,<sup>295</sup> concepts like authorship and 'performerhood' (if such a term may be used) affect our understanding of agency, our ideas of who and what can perform. While Barad maintains that apparatuses are productive of the phenomena they measure, this does not mean that reality is a product of human concepts; rather, concepts are specific material arrangements.<sup>296</sup> The concepts and terms we use, however,

292 The What is Performativity in Finnish? Panel was prepared by the research project How to Do Things with Performance? and presented with Hanna Järvinen, Tero Nauha and Pilvi Porkola at the Cultural Mobility of Performance and Performativity Studies conference at the Jagiellonian University in Kraków in May 2018.

293 Heike Roms 2008. *What's Welsh for Performance?: An oral History of Performance Art in Wales 1968-2008*. OpenMute 2008.

294 Arlander 2016b.

295 Barad 2007, 334,

296 Ibid.

have consequences. They limit what we think we can do. According to Barad, entangled practices are productive, and who and what are excluded through them matters; different intra-actions produce different phenomena.<sup>297</sup> The differential boundaries between humans and non-humans, culture and nature, science and the social are set through causal intra-actions.<sup>298</sup>

The video used as an example, *The Pine on the Shore Revisited*<sup>299</sup>, records my attempt, on 19 March 2018<sup>300</sup>, to revisit the site where I repeated a performance for camera twelve years ago. I performed as the shadow of a pine tree growing on the western shore on Harakka Island in Helsinki for the year of 2006, as part of the series of works named after the Chinese calendar, *Animal Years* (2002–2014). The revisit in March could not take place due to unsafe ice conditions in thaw season, and the video had to be recorded from a nearby island, Uunisaari. Within that image from the nearby island, I inserted the four parts of the old video installation, *Shadow of a Pine I–IV*, which I performed approximately once a week, fifty-one times, between 7 November 2006 and 11 February 2007. In the original performance I recorded the actions<sup>301</sup> with the pine tree twice, first with the camera on a tripod facing north towards the city, then with the camera facing south towards the open sea. I divided the material into four parts while editing: In Parts I and II the human figure is lying with the head facing downwards, towards the sea, recorded from the south

297 Barad 2007, 58.

298 Barad 2007, 140.

299 *The Pine on the Shore Revisited* (17 min.) <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/profile/show-work?work=512220>

300 In the published text the date is incorrectly 20 March.

301 I call my actions performances, although they could also be called actions, in the sense of action art, because the mimetic element (like being a shadow of the pine) is not present while performing, but only recognised or added later, when naming and editing the work. I also call them performances because they are deliberately executed for the camera.

and the north while in Parts III and IV the figure is lying with its head upwards, towards the hill, mostly hidden by the rock, recorded from the south and the north. These four videos, sixteen minutes each, are synchronised to be shown simultaneously on projectors or monitors, with the first pair (I and II) next to the second pair (III and IV). In the compilation they are all inserted within one frame. Performing as the “shadow of a pine” was a precursor to a project explicitly working with trees, called *Performing with Plants*, where the overarching topic was: How is it possible to perform landscape today by collaborating with trees and other plants, with an awareness of the insights generated by post-humanist and new materialist research? In this project I used the techniques developed in the older works to perform with some specific trees in Stockholm.<sup>302</sup>

The pine tree is undoubtedly a key factor in *Shadow of a Pine I-IV*; we appear in the image together. If we could use the options available in Finnish, we might say that the pine tree is not only an actor or agent, but an important factor (*tekijä*) and in some sense, an author, (*tekijä*), or even a maker (*tekijä*) of the video. These three meanings of the word are usually separated, but in principle the term covers a wide spectrum of creation, production, and influence, to be discussed later. We could, of course, simply refer to agency, *toimija* or *toimijuus* in Finnish, and suggest that the pine tree is an example of non-human agency. The broad spectrum covered by *tekijä*, which refers to author, maker and (impersonal) factor, is a more challenging notion to consider in the context of the pine. In any case, we are performing, showing ourselves or on display (*esiinnymme*), together in the image space, a topic I will return to later. But first a few words on the problem of authorship.

302 This artistic research project was funded by Kone Foundation (2017) and The Swedish Research Council (2018–2019), see *Performing with Plants* website <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/316550/316551> (Arlander 2017b).

### **What is an author?**

Michel Foucault wrote his influential “What Is an Author?” (1969) in response to Roland Barthes’ “The Death of the Author” (2016 [1968]) suggesting that it was not enough to reiterate the interlinked deaths of God and the author<sup>303</sup> and analyses the fact that “in a civilization like our own there are a certain number of discourses endowed with the ‘author function’ while others are deprived of it”.<sup>304</sup> He acknowledges that art forms other than literature, such as painting or music, could be discussed, but he limits his analyses to texts, and finds four characteristic traits:

1. The author-function is linked to the juridical and institutional system that encompasses, determines and articulates the universe of discourses.
2. It does not always affect all discourses in the same way and in all types of civilizations.
3. It is not defined by the spontaneous attribution of a discourse to its producer, but rather, by a series of specific and complex operations.
4. It does not refer purely and simply to a real individual, since it can give rise simultaneously to several selves, to several subject-positions that can be occupied by different classes of individuals.<sup>305</sup>

Foucault’s assertion that analysing the author function is “a matter of depriving the subject (or its substitute) of its role as originator, and of analysing the subject as a variable and complex function of

303 Foucault [1969] 1998, 209.

304 Foucault 1998, 211.

305 Foucault 1998, 216.

discourse”<sup>306</sup> is well known. Less familiar, perhaps, is his idea that the author-function is a way of reducing fiction’s danger to the world: “the ideological figure by which one marks the manner in which we fear the proliferation of meaning”.<sup>307</sup> This observation is relevant today, with the proliferation of alternative facts and information from sources that are difficult to trace. On the other hand, one might ask: Why is it so dangerous to grant other beings, like the pine tree, authorship or agency?

Taking our cue from Foucault, we can distinguish the author who signs specific works and functions as a guarantee of their quality, their consistently developing world view and their identifiable style, that is, the author-function,<sup>308</sup> from the actual author or maker of the work. Even though they often coincide, the author can be someone other than the person that in reality produces or makes the work, as in the case of ghost-writers, editors etc. This is not limited to literature; artists can outsource the execution of their work. Besides the signing author and the actual writer or maker, there are, of course, many factors that affect the work in other ways, through environmental or economic circumstances, for example. In other words, we can look at authorship on other levels than the author-function that Foucault defines. I suggest it is useful to think of the three types of authorship (or ‘doership’ or ‘makership’), suggested by the meanings of the Finnish *tekijä* – the author, the maker, and the other factors.

In the context of performance and embodied or collaborative practices, it is more illuminating to think of the non-discursive (or rather material-discursive) dimension of authorship: as it relates to materiality and production (agency), even craftsmanship or ‘makership’, and as it relates to various environmental factors. One

306 Foucault 1998, 221.

307 Foucault 1998, 22.

308 Foucault 1998, 214.

aim of performance studies has been exactly that, to turn from the author-function (the author, director, artist) towards actual performance practices. In English, it is difficult to articulate the link between authorship and other forms of originating or producing factors, other 'sources' creating a work on an equal basis, because authorship is so closely tied to human activity, authority, and writing. We have a hard time accepting that a pine tree could be a co-author of a video if we think in terms of intentionality. It is even harder to see the melting ice as a co-author, even though it is an important factor affecting the work.

In trying to extend the idea of authorship I am taking as my starting point the three levels or meanings that we can link to the Finnish word and notion of author, *tekijä*, one who does or makes, from the verb *tehdä*, to do, to make. In Finnish we use one term for 1) the author as the person signing the work, 2) the maker (creator or producer) of the work and 3) the causal agent or factor affecting the work. It is mainly on the third level that non-human agents enter the picture in everyday parlance. Through these three dimensions, we can nevertheless significantly widen and open the traditional European view of authorship, which takes as its starting point the literary author, 'auteur' or authority, and which both Roland Barthes and Michel Foucault took as given. They focused on the first level, the dimension of the author and his or her signing function, the author-function. Another level, which is relevant for most types of performances and is often disregarded when there is a strong theory/practice or mind/body dichotomy, is the dimension of the producer, maker, or worker. Somebody makes an object, action or performance and is thus its maker or creator. Emphasising this second level is rather common in materialist thinking and in performance studies. The third level of authorship concerns effective causes, influencing factors; *tekijä* is variously translated as 'unknown factor', 'human factor', 'crucial factor' or 'environmental factor'.

Such factors include things like the space and the context, the framework, or the ecosystem, with all its sub-factors or elements, chemical agents, microbes and so on. One of the aims of my work in “performing landscape”, and lately, performing with trees, has been to show and emphasise how humans are only one part of and completely dependent on a complex web of life forms. Most forms of performance, however, tend to be human-centred; the environment is considered a backdrop. Working with individual trees, which are easier to accept as co-performers, as in this example, is one way to address this imbalance.

The Finnish term for authorship can have other meanings or connotations besides being an originator of something. Terms like composer, creator or even offender can be translated as *tekijä*.<sup>309</sup> These notions are linked to an action, the doing of it and taking responsibility for it; they help us to understand the notion of authorship beyond writing or authority. For an author or maker of performances, however, the three factors we initially mentioned are probably the most important: the signing author, the maker, and the influential factors. There is, of course, another crucial factor, the performer, who is, however, understood as engaged in another type of activity, and designated with another Finnish word, *esittäjä* or *esiintyjä*, to which I will return.

Thinking of factors probably reminds of Bruno Latour’s actor-network theory of actors or agents forming networks,<sup>310</sup> which

309 According to the MOT Internet dictionary, *tekijä* is firstly a cause, *syy*, *vaiikutin* (a factor), secondly *valmistaja* (a maker). Moreover, *tekijä* can be a maker of music (composer), or an important player in a field, or something like a part (element). Depending on what the author does, we can distinguish between the author of a book (writer), the author or maker of a crime (offender), the author of a work (creator), *pikku-tekijä*, an insignificant factor (tiddler), a common factor (rallying point), or an unknown factor. If we were to compare this list with a language other than English, it would be different (MOT-online).

310 Latour 2005.

could be one way to theorise the complexity of various influences. Other alternatives include Deleuze and Guattari's idea of various factors and their combinations forming assemblages,<sup>311</sup> or Jane Bennett's concept of 'thing power', which describes how very different entities and objects can be agents as influencing factors.<sup>312</sup> The hyper-objects mentioned by Timothy Morton, such as global warming, are perhaps the most crucial factors or agents in our day.<sup>313</sup> Karen Barad's agential realism, on the other hand, foresees no pre-existing entities or agents that could interact. Instead, she coins the term intra-action, which "signifies the mutual constitution of entangled agencies".<sup>314</sup> In her view, "distinct agencies do not precede, but rather emerge through, their intra-action".<sup>315</sup> After Barad, there are no authors, actors or agents given in the world; rather, they are produced through specific intra-actions and cuts of exclusion and inclusion. What we consider an author (maker, doer, creator, or relevant factor) is the result of material-discursive practices, including the terminology and concepts we use. Walter Mignolo raises a similar point when he describes the invention of the human and of the idea of nature and natural resources by Western imperial subjects as an effort "to separate their bodies from all living ... organisms on the planet".<sup>316</sup> As part of his decolonising project, he examines various indigenous cosmologies, and notes that we need vocabulary from not only the Greek and the Roman.<sup>317</sup> Why not from Finnish as well?

From a personal perspective, the three forms of authorship or agency included in the Finnish *tekijä* have been important in my

311 Deleuze and Guattari 2004 [1980].

312 Bennett 2010.

313 Morton 2013.

314 Barad 2007, 33.

315 Ibid.

316 Mignolo and Walsh 2018, 153–154.

317 Mignolo and Walsh 2018, 161.

professional experience. As a director and writer of radio plays my work mainly involved selecting, negotiating, and then signing the finished work. When I moved to working with video, I began making the material myself in the simplest possible manner, recording images of myself in the landscape with a camera on tripod, rather than making collages based on others' raw materials. I was exhausted by organising production and copyright negotiations and deliberately wanted to work as a primary producer, as a maker. Instead of selecting my material from a cultural reserve, I chose my materials directly from the landscape and shifted the emphasis from re-mixing to pointing at something. This meant giving more and more power to the influencing factors in the environment; various factors in the more-than-human world became my main collaborators or co-authors.

When performing with a pine tree, in the example described above, I am not making (or creating or producing) a pine tree, not even a representation of a pine tree, really; I just chose a pine tree in the landscape and recorded its performance. Although the pine is an important factor and agent, my co-author and co-performer, my acting partner in some sense, I am not willing to relinquish my position as the signing author on its behalf. In practical terms, the current copyright laws in Finland would not have allowed it, because only a 'natural person' can have copyright or authorship rights. This is a question of principle and is linked to post-humanist debates.<sup>318</sup> Current legislation really does not recognise non-human authors, and this is reflected in the attitudes of artists of my generation. I am happy to give the pine tree and the other factors in the environment and their transformations the leading role in my performance and a great deal of power in deciding how it is formed, but I remain the signing author. And this type of double standard regarding authorship does

318 See, for example, Braidotti 2013; Wolfe 2010.

not concern me alone. From another point of view, I am using the pine tree as my partner without asking for its consent, assuming the right to treat it as material in my work, a thing I would never do with a human co-performer. The tree has no rights in this case.

Authors' rights or copyrights are linked to the author function, the signing author. The maker can be a subcontractor with no copyright. Moreover, at least in Finland, the author needs to be a human being. Thus, all the agents referred to by the word *tekijä* in the Finnish language are not within copyright law. This is understandable for practical reasons. If all the agents, environmental factors, structures, creatures, objects and even concepts that can serve as influencing factors for a specific work were included in the credits, the task would be insurmountable. Yet we can agree with Barad that such agents and factors are produced through intra-actions and could always be differentiated in another way, though this does not relieve me of my responsibility to account for their inclusion and exclusion. When I speak of expanding the notion of authorship, however, and the inclusion of makers and influencing factors in the notion of authorship, I am not thinking primarily of copyright issues, but of a shift in cultural awareness. That said, cultural debates and legislation undoubtedly affect one another over time. Although the idea of humans granting rights to other beings is slightly absurd (assuming a god-like position in relation to beings and processes that we are entangled with), it is a development that many have deemed necessary, as in the Non-human Rights Project.<sup>319</sup>

### **Shared authorship**

Another way to think of all the factors contributing to a work is to look at them in terms of shared authorship. Authorship can be shared by deliberately giving parts of the artist's decision-making

319 Puleo 2019, 216.

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power to chance procedures, performers, participants, technology, the context, or circumstances, or to existing works (as in appropriation art). In place of different types of authorship, the idea of co-authorship or shared authorship is currently gaining ground in contemporary performance. We could perhaps understand my performance with the pine tree as created through shared authorship. An author can share her authorship in many ways, either by working together, or by giving credit to others involved in the work. One way is to invite other authors or makers to collaborate, either as subcontractors, and then authorship is really, not just nominally shared, or as a working group, so that authorship can be shared nominally as well. Authorship can also be shared with environmental factors, as I have tried to do in my project.

Shared authorship can also be approached with the help of various strategies for decision-making, an activity that is not restricted to humans. At approximately the time in the 1960s when Barthes and Foucault were writing about the death of the author or the author function, using the literary author and the institution of literature as their starting point, many authors (composers or artists) in music and fine arts gathered in the international Fluxus movement and explored the demolition of the author's autocracy and the sharing of authorship. Their experiments, briefly described in the following, are interesting in terms of performance and the performing arts, where, unlike in literature, authorship is often multiple and divided, distributed, or shared. In examining the development of the event score into a 'do-it-yourself' artwork in Fluxus, art historian Anna Dezeuse (2002) describes some ways that authorship was distributed or shared in that context. Event scores are often brief instructions, resembling poems or compositions to be performed or executed in various ways, either by the author herself, some other

performer or simply by the reader in her mind.<sup>320</sup> There is always the possibility of misunderstanding when interpreting a score, but this danger can also enhance the attraction of the moment<sup>321</sup> and increase the possibility of the unexpected.

Dezeuse retraces the development of the Fluxus score, beginning with experiments in music notation and concrete poetry, and continuing with compositional structures where any action or movement could be inserted by the performer, to event scores as instructions anybody can follow.<sup>322</sup> Based on her historical narrative, I will outline three principal strategies for shared authorship: a) sharing the decision-making power of the author in terms of composition, with the help of rules or chance operations; b) sharing the decision-making power of the author in terms of performance (or execution) with the performers (or makers); and c) sharing the decision-making power in terms of the event, with the audience, the participants or the experiencing individual. These alternative strategies of sharing authorship based on the Fluxus tradition of event scores – sharing the decision-making power of the author with chance, performers, or the audience – could be further expanded from a contemporary post-human perspective.

We could, for example, add a fourth strategy: delegating parts of the decision-making to technology. This strategy resembles the use of chance procedures but differs in that the automatic functions of technology are not necessarily random; they are based on assumptions of average values. In this example, I share a large part of my decision-making as an artist with the automatic functions of the camera. Using the automatic light meter and automatic focus,

320 Dezeuse 2002, 80.

321 Dezeuse 2002, 90.

322 Dezeuse 2002, 78–94.

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I delegate responsibility to technology, which reacts to the circumstances and makes decisions or choices based on pre-programmed calculations and assumptions of average conditions. There is a risk that the automatic functions become disturbingly visible, but at least the technical solutions are standardised, which means that the changes in the image are solely produced by changes in the environment. Technology is, in any case, often an important factor in defining and delimiting a work, even when the author is not deliberately delegating decision-making power to it, but simply adapts to, or follows the requirements of the technology used. This could lead us to the vast field of debate on digital data, robotics, artificial intelligence and more, but this is beyond my focus here.

As my example demonstrates, there is also a fifth strategy for sharing authorship: letting various environmental factors affect the work, accepting them as collaborators, receiving impulses from them or adapting to their movements. Common examples of this strategy are ‘site-specific’ works, where the site, space, place, circumstances, or cultural context function as the starting point or define the specifics of the work. In the same way as decisions can be delegated to be made by the performers, a work can be construed to be context-dependent in some respects. Most of my work, although small-scale, falls into this category. While performing landscape or making the landscape perform, I share some of my authorial power with environmental factors. The vegetation or weather, the sea, the sky, the birds, boats and so on, are visible besides the human figure, and constantly changing from image to image, thus performing in some sense. In this case it was mainly the pine tree on the shore to which I related. Environmental factors can also be and often are crucial in works without such a specific collaborator. To speak of the ‘environment’ as something separate from humans could also be criticized, as Stacy Alaimo has done, with her notion of “trans-corporeality, in which the human is always intermeshed

with the more-than-human world”, emphasising how “the substance of the human is ultimately inseparable from ‘the environment’”.<sup>323</sup>

A sixth strategy for sharing authorship is practically an opposite strategy; that is, using other authors’ works, or parts of them, as material. The area this approach covers is so vast that it could easily be divided into several subcategories. It can be done in the form of ‘appropriation art’, in the Duchampian tradition of the ready-made or in films based on found footage. In using material produced by another author, one delegates a great deal of authorial power to them. Various forms of recycling art use a similar strategy. Sometimes the difference between these two strategies – delegating decision-making power to environmental factors and recycling material made by others – is only a difference in degree, as in the case of documentary film, such as when an interviewee tells their story to the camera and the filmmaker appropriates it in their work. Likewise, when I record the pine tree in the landscape, I utilise it as a ready-made; I am not making or producing the tree myself. I am not manufacturing a pine tree, nor a replica or representation of a pine tree, I have chosen a specific pine tree, and I am appropriating it as part of my video work, as a performer in it, without its or their consent.

At the end of the day, the idea of a single author, alone responsible for a specific work, is almost ludicrous. Everything that we use in our works is made by others; like language, it exists before we use it. The death of the author described by Barthes and the author-function analysed by Foucault seem to be conditions for each other. Because the author as a separate, individual origin is ‘dead’ or at least unconvincing as an idea, the importance of the author-function in a judicial sense and in terms of property is accentuated. Inversely, because the author-function or the signing author is central, the

<sup>323</sup> Alaimo 2010, 2.

idea of the original author is unimportant, as are the makers, actual producers, and other factors.

When discussing authorship in relation to traditional issues like the division of labour, we might think of the signing author, the producing author, the performer (not included in the notion of author here), the participant, the audience, or the public. When discussing an expanded understanding of authorship in relation to agency in a post-humanist sense, we may think of influencing factors, elements or actors, various creatures or critters and their make-ups, technology, other works, or their parts and so on. In the former case, the problems often concern hierarchies and economic struggles rather than questions of principle. In the latter case, the issue of expanded authorship is affected by distributed agency – who or what can be recognised as author – and is at the heart of much post-humanist critique, currently triggered by developments in robotics and artificial intelligence. So far, only natural persons, humans, can have author's rights. The AI-dimension of the post-humanism debate is of less interest here, while “cross-species alliances with the productive and immanent force of *zoe*, or life in its non-human aspect”<sup>324</sup>, proposed by Rosi Braidotti could be fruitful in collaborating with trees. To her mind, “[z]oe-centered egalitarianism is ... a materialist, secular, grounded, and unsentimental response to the opportunistic transspecies commodification of life that is the logic of advanced capitalism”.<sup>325</sup> What could this mean for my collaboration with the pine tree? Finding some way to recompense the tree?

In my example, the pine tree, although a crucial factor, actor, agent, or author (*tekijä*) and collaborator in the work, is difficult to conceive as an author with intentions in the traditional sense. Although the tree can, at least superficially, be understood as a

324 Braidotti 2017, 31.

325 Braidotti 2017, 32.

natural individual making decisions, unlike many other environmental factors, and despite impressive developments in the study of plant intelligence<sup>326</sup>, it is very hard to accept the tree as an author. We can probably accept the pine tree as an influencing factor with agency; perhaps an agent, actor, factor; but an author, an authority? Even in Finnish, where the notion of author or originator, *tekijä*, is not linked primarily to writing or authority, the various meanings of the word are usually understood as separate, and never confused. The opportunity afforded by the Finnish language to see a connection between various types of authorship and to acknowledge a broad spectrum of authorship is not utilised. It is, nevertheless, a challenge that I would like to encourage us to face.

### **What about performing?**

Perhaps thinking in terms of authorship, of being the creator or originator of something, prevents us from looking at what the pine tree is really doing here. Could we say that it is performing with me? Understanding the relationship between performer and environment from a post-humanist and new-materialist perspective prompts us to consider how to perform together with the creatures, life-forms, and phenomena around us, including plants. Elsewhere, my aim has been to examine the implications of this ‘performing with’.<sup>327</sup>

When lying on the cliff by the tree and performing as ‘the shadow of the pine’ I was not attempting to communicate with the tree, make myself understandable to the tree or get a sense of the tree’s wishes or needs, nor to translate them to others. When performing or posing for camera together, I was using the tree as my performing partner, without its consent. We were performing together, or perhaps non-performing, if we consider the action of standing and

326 Trewavas 2011; Mancuso and Viola 2015; Gagliano et al. 2017.

327 Arlander 2018b; Arlander 2019a.

growing (the tree) or lying down or turning on the cliff (me) as too minimal an action to constitute a performance in the ordinary sense. We were sharing the same image space, much as we were sharing the space on the same shore and living in the same city. One meaning of the Finnish term for performing, *esiintyä*, describes what we were doing rather well; we were appearing or occurring together, being on display for the camera, for passers-by of all species, for each other.

Finnish uses two words for performing, the transitive form *esittää*, when you perform something, and the intransitive *esiintyä*, when you are performing as something or as yourself, in the sense of being on display. Both words have a whole spectrum of other meanings besides performing, such as to present, show, express, give, play, offer, suggest, propose, represent, pretend (*esittää*) or play, impersonate, pose as, occur, appear or be on display (*esiintyä*). Their difference was made clear to me by a musician who once said: Unfortunately, you cannot perform (*esittää*) music without performing (*esiintymättä*). By this he meant that to perform the piece of music for an audience, he had to be on display himself. In this sense, the distinction in Finnish between the two modes of performing, ‘showing doing’ and the ‘showing oneself’ or appearing, can help us to see the pine tree perform.

The act of recording a video is relatively easy to understand as a performance; the framing transforms the action performed for the camera into a performance. The camera takes the role of a witness, or the audience, and functions like a traditional curtain: When the camera is on, the performance begins, when it is switched off, the performance ends. According to Karen Barad, however, this is too easy, because there are performances taking place all the time. For Barad, discourse is not a synonym for language, and meaning or intelligibility are not human-based notions. “Discursive practices are the material conditions for making meaning ... [and] meaning is an

ongoing performance of the world in its differential intelligibility”.<sup>328</sup> In this sense, performances are taking place whenever one part of the world makes itself intelligible to another part of the world. Thus, it is not the presence of an audience that defines a performance. Rather, a performance could be understood as an ongoing activity of the world differentiating and articulating itself, however unnecessarily metaphysical this may sound.

The act of video recording, with all the material-discursive practices involved, means framing an image and cutting it from the surroundings, selecting a time continuum with beginning and end: a slice of time in the life of the tree, for instance. As Barad points out, apparatuses produce the phenomena they measure, and similarly, this act does not record or represent a pre-existing performance, it produces a performance in the image space. And as I have tried to show above, this activity is not the result of human decision-making alone, it is the result of collaboration between various authors, makers, and factors, including the camera, the tripod, the weather, the cliff, the path along the shore and of course, my main collaborator, the pine tree. It is informed by all kinds of cultural and theoretical ideas and material-discursive practices, including ones of authorship and ‘performerhood’ that we learn through our situatedness in our languages and are induced to think and to work with.





Figure 14. *Year of the Pig (installation)* (2008)

## 6. Revisiting the Year of the Pig

During the year of the pig (2007-2008) I chose three sites on Harkka Island, two of them on the north-western cliffs. I sat on the cliffs facing two directions, first towards the sea and then towards the city<sup>329</sup>, somewhat similarly as with the pine on the shore the year before. Rather than the small pale orange scarf I used with the pines the previous year I chose a large grey shawl and twirled with the shawl stretched between my arms on the highest spot with the city skyline as background.<sup>330</sup> That same spot and the same action I chose for the day and night of the pig recorded at the autumnal equinox.<sup>331</sup> The idea with twirling or spinning was to create a continuous movement. As an extra work and a continuation to my engagement with pine trees the year before, I chose to sit under the only spruce tree growing in the centre of the island.<sup>332</sup>

On 4 May 2018 I made a revisit to the site of the twirling and inserted *Year of the Pig – Weather vane I (short)*<sup>333</sup> (2008) and *Day and Night of the Pig I* (2008) into that recording for the compilation *The City Skyline Revisited*.<sup>334</sup> In august I recorded an image of the cliffs,

329 *Year of the Pig - Sitting on a Cliff I & II (short)* <https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/year-of-the-pig-sitting-on-the-cliff-i-ii-short/>

*Year of the Pig - Installation* <https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/year-of-the-pig-installation/>

330 *Year of the Pig – Weather vane I (short)* <https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/year-of-the-pig-weather-vane-i-short/>

331 *Day and Night of the Pig I* <https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/day-and-night-of-the-pig-i/>

332 *Under the Spruce I-III* <https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/under-the-spruce-i-iii/>

333 For some reason I called the work Weather vane rather than Weathervane.

334 I made several versions, for conference workshops, one version being available

too, without really revisiting the action, recording a background for *Year of the Pig - Sitting on a Cliff I & II (short)* (2008) to create *The Cliff Revisited*.<sup>335</sup> And finally I recorded a revisit to the spruce as well, in two versions, on 7 and 9 August, and created two versions of *The Spruce Revisited*.<sup>336</sup> One of the compilations with the spruce was shown as part of a conference presentation,<sup>337</sup> while the return to the cliff has not been shown anywhere, yet. Only *The City Skyline Revisited* has been published as a video essay<sup>338</sup>; in the following it is only slightly reworked.

online *The City skyline Revisited* (23 min. 48 sec.) <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/profile/show-work?work=727158>

335 *The Cliff Revisited (Year of the Pig)* (25 min.) <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/profile/show-work?work=880327>

336 *The Spruce Revisited 1* (28 min. 50 sec.) and *The Spruce Revisited 2* (28 min. 48 sec.) <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/profile/show-work?work=521487>

337 It was included in the performance installation “How to do things with performance in alliance with things, concepts, bodies or plants”, with the How to Do Things with Performance? project at the conference Alliances and Commonalities, Stockholm University of the Arts 25-27.10.2018.

338 Published as “The City Skyline Revisited – From networks to trans-corporeality.” *Research in Arts & Education* 1/2020, 37-55. (Arlander 2020b) <https://journal.fi/rae/article/view/119301>

## 6.1. The City Skyline Revisited - From Networks to Trans-corporeality



Figure 15. *The City Skyline Revisited* (2018)

The video essay that forms the basis for this text combines video works created in 2007-2008 on Harakka Island in Helsinki within the recording of a revisit in 2018 to the same site, to discuss the making of these works. This is done first in terms of actor network theory<sup>339</sup>, with combinations of video camera, tripod and site or of body, scarf and wind as assemblages with agency, trying to distinguish between stabilizing and destabilizing actors. Then three feminist and new materialist notions, sympoiesis<sup>340</sup>, intra-action<sup>341</sup>, and trans-corporeality<sup>342</sup> are explored as tools for a deeper understanding of the entanglements involved. Exploring the use of a video essay also involved

339 Latour 2007.

340 Haraway 2016.

341 Barad 2007.

342 Alaimo 2010.

asking whether combining a theoretical discussion as a voice-over with a compilation of videos could provide a more experiential and effective approach to sharing research.<sup>343</sup>

## Introduction

Artistic research is often presented as an account of artistic work framed by or inserted into a more academic discussion. Here I will attempt the opposite, framing a relatively theoretical discussion on video within a more personal account.

At the open seminar Research in Arts and Experience, in Aalto University 26.3. 2018 the title of my presentation was “Performing with Plants as Experiential Challenge”, and my presentation focused on the intersection between two research projects: How to Do Things with Performance? and Performing with Plants. Here I will focus on one part of the first project, namely revisiting the performance sites for the year of the pig in 2007. But first a few words about experience and artistic research, from a personal perspective.

The first issue of *Ruukku Journal* in 2013, which we edited together with Mika Elo, was on the theme experience and experientiality in artistic research. In my own work I have not used those terms too much. Only one article has experience in its subtitle: “Finding your way through the woods. Experiences in artistic research” (2008). Understanding, sharing, and imagining experiences of others, is relevant for most of what humans do. Somehow the term experience does not open any doors for me, however, even though experience is probably all I am interested in, in the end, both my own and the viewers.

Sometimes it seems that experience is a catchword for many different things. In informal conversations we often hear that we are

343 The video essay *The City Skyline Revisited* is also available on Vimeo <https://vimeo.com/manage/videos/371414673>

living in an attention economy<sup>344</sup>, and contemporary society has been analyzed in terms of experience economy<sup>345</sup>, it is possible to study experience design,<sup>346</sup> and more. As performers we are supposed to be able to hold the attention of an audience, and as artists we are supposed to provide experiences for the public. (This aspect comes close to the Finnish 'elämys' and perhaps the German 'Erlebnis'). Personal experience is a key tool for an artist, and for an artistic researcher as well, both in terms of using personal experiences as material and because experience serves as an aid in decision making or in discerning a way forward, sometimes into the unknown. (This aspect relates to the Finnish 'kokemus', and probably the German Erfahrung). And the same is true for artistic research. Experience, whether as so-called subjective experiences, affects or perceptions, or as accumulated professional experience is often central in artistic research.

In an early treatise on artistic research the writers propagated experiential democracy or democracy of experiences, in the sense that "no area of experience is in principle outside the reach of any other area of critical experience."<sup>347</sup> This means that "it is in principle possible to question and criticize any and all forms or areas of experience from the point of view of any other area or form of experience."<sup>348</sup> In much artistic research experience is not necessary a topic investigated, though, but more of a tool and sometimes the end result. And this is true in my case as well.

344 Attention economy is one of the terms used in developing marketing strategies, see Kane 2019 <https://www.nngroup.com/articles/attention-economy/>

345 The term experience economy was used by B. Joseph Pine and James H. Gilmore in 1998 in an article in Harvard Business Review (<https://hbr.org/1998/07/welcome-to-the-experience-economy>) and has since spread into common parlance.

346 According Patrick Newbery experience design is a perspective, not a discipline <https://uxmag.com/articles/experience-design-is-a-perspective-not-a-discipline>

347 Hannula & al. 2005, 30.

348 Hannula & al. 2005, 31.

One aspect of the word experience means that you gain experience when you have done something several times. Because my main artistic strategy has been repetition, returning to the same site and recreating the same framing of the image again and again<sup>349</sup>, I am accumulating experience, as it were. And now I can say, from my own experience, that experience does not equal skill or mastery, nor does it imply wisdom. In the worst of cases experiences transform into routine and in the best of cases to some form of ease in doing the things one has experience of doing.

Although I have never really focused on experience as such, my wish has been to use my own experience, and especially my sensory experiences as tools to register the changes in the landscape. In fact, it is the camera and its automatic functions that does most of that work. While I am experiencing the conditions of the environment, either enjoying them or enduring them, the experience of the viewer of the finished work, whether me or somebody else, is a very different one than my experiences on site while performing. Because I use a camera on tripod I have a dual experience, both as the artist or cameraperson, and as the performer or model. This decision, to work with a minimal crew of one, results in static images; the witnessing eye is on a tripod. As performer I am rarely moving either; I want to direct attention to changes in the environment. The example case is an exception; I am moving, swirling around with my arms spread out. Hearing a colleague describe my work – she is posing for the camera repeatedly in the same place with everything else changing while she remains unchanged – I realized the experience of the viewer can be rather different from mine. What he said is true in some way, of course, but not at all my experience of it. My understanding of what I am doing is that I am witnessing the changes taking place, sharing in the slow time of the ‘environment’ around me.

349 See for example Arlander 2014a.

Often while posing in the landscape, I am thinking of how different the view is from where I sit or stand compared to what the camera sees. Normally I start with choosing a site and checking, for instance, if I can get up on the rock. Then I choose the framing of the image, moving the tripod around to get rid of unnecessary visual disturbances. And only after that do I enter the image and see the world from that perspective. Recently I was sitting in a birch, watching the kids ride their sledges down the hill nearby, and I realized how little I really was aware of my performing partner, the tree I was sitting in.<sup>350</sup> My focus turned outwards, to the surrounding events, or then inwards, on my breath or muscle tensions. And the same is probably true for other actions, like swirling in the example that follows.

There is another dimension related to experience in this case, however, namely the experience of revisiting. I have been revisiting the sites of *Animal Years* (2002-2014) as part of the research project *How to Do Things with Performance?* and experiencing how the sites have changed, what I do remember of them and what I don't, how technology has changed and so on. One of the practical purposes of the first revisits was to record video images of contemporary HD quality that could serve as a backdrop and frame for the rather poor DV quality videos of the first *Animal Years*. Moreover, returning to or revisiting a site is an act of remembering, sometimes a profound experience of time passing even if not that much in the landscape has changed.

A third dimension of experience in my work is perhaps the most significant, namely the wish to share research in a more experiential manner. As the flourishing of media-enriched journals<sup>351</sup> in artistic

350 This was for another project, *Stockholm Tree Calendar* (2018), which began with *Birch in January - Humlegården* <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/profile/show-work?work=425662>

351 For example, *JAR (Journal for Artistic Research)*, *RUUKKU - Studies in Artistic Research*, *VIS - Nordic Journal for Artistic Research*, *JER (Journal of Embodied Research)* and so on.

research demonstrates, this is a concern for many players in the field. By exploring the format of a video essay, I want to join in this ongoing experimentation and provide the readers the opportunity to experience themselves, whether combining artworks and academic texts in the form of “dense video”<sup>352</sup> could be a more experiential and therefore also more effective way of sharing research.

The following text is a transcript of the voice-over text spoken on the video<sup>353</sup> with references for the quotes, some additional notes and subtitles added.

### **The essay**

By revisiting the site of a year-long performance project for camera, ten years later, observing the changes in the landscape, in the technology used, and in the performer, and by inserting the old works into the recording of this revisit, some theoretical notions relevant for the work then and now, are here explored in a remix of artworks and text.<sup>354</sup>

At the time of performing these works in 2007 I was interested in actor network theory or ANT, which has been highly influential in helping us see the agency of assemblages and of various forms of connections and in articulating our interconnectedness. In the following I am going to explore, from today's perspective, whether feminist new materialist terms like sympoiesis, intra-action, and trans-corporeality could be more useful for understanding the entanglements and the agencies involved.

352 Spatz 2017.

353 The video essay “The city skyline revisited (with text)” is available on Vimeo: <https://vimeo.com/371414673>

354 The video essay is a further development of material presented at PSi #24 in Daegu in July 2018. <http://psi-artistic-research-working-group.blogspot.com/2017/12/performance-and-response-networking.html>

This revisit was part of the Academy of Finland funded research project *How to Do Things with Performance?* where one of my tasks was to explore what can be done by returning to my twelve-year project “Performing Landscape” (2002-2014) and the resulting series of video works called *Animal Years* and *Animal Days and Nights*. Here my focus is on one of the performances. The video depicts my return on the 4 May 2018, to one of the sites I visited during the sixth year in the series, in 2007, the year of the pig. I tried to find approximately the same spot for the camera tripod – although my camera was completely different now – and to recreate approximately the same framing. I repeated the same action, albeit without a shawl; entering the image, spreading my arms and swirling, then standing for a moment before exiting the image space. Into this contemporary HD quality image in film format (9:16) I have inserted edited video works from 2008, recorded in DV quality and in TV format (4:3) at the time, juxtaposing a year and a day and night recorded on the same site. Versions of various durations or excerpts of them, based on the same recordings, are shown simultaneously.<sup>355</sup>

The synopsis for the video work *Year of the Pig – Weather vane (short)* from 2008, in the archive of the Centre for Finnish Media Art describes my action as follows: “A grey shawl across my shoulders, I spin around against the city skyline on the north-western cliffs of Harakka Island around once a week between 6 January 2007 – 3 February 2008.”<sup>356</sup> During the autumnal equinox that year I repeated the same action, with small torches hanging from my wrists to show some movement in the darkness at night. This resulted in the video *Day and Night of the Pig I* (8 min. 20 sec.) with the following synopsis:

355 In the voice-over I do not problematize the idea of duration, which is of course directly related to experience, often understood as experienced time.

356 *Year of the Pig – Weather vane I (short)* <http://www.av-arkki.fi/en/works/year-of-the-pig-weather-vane-i-short/>

“Holding a grey shawl and two small torches, I spin around against the backdrop of a [sic] city on the north-western cliffs of Harakka Island every two hours for a day and night during the autumnal equinox between 22 September [2007] at 4pm and 23 September at ... [4] pm.”<sup>357</sup> A shorter version called *Autumnal Equinox I and II* (2 min. 53 sec.) was edited of the same material.

The recorded material from these repeated performances – during a year and a day and night respectively – was edited into several works, and combined with other materials, for instance into *Year of the Pig – Installation* (2008), a three-channel installation (2 x 41 min.)<sup>358</sup>, where the third part consists of the swirling.<sup>359</sup> A shorter version, *Year of the Pig – Weather vane (short)* (23 min.) was edited for screening. An even shorter one, *Year of the Pig – Weather vane (mini)* (4 min. 52.sec.), with only one swirl in each image, was shown for the first time in august 2008 at the PSi #14 conference Interregnum organized at the University of Copenhagen, as part of the paper “Performing landscape – documenting weather”.<sup>360</sup> Later the work served as an example and an illustration in the text “Performing Landscape for Years” in *Performance Research* Special issue: On Time.<sup>361</sup>

357 *Day and Night of the Pig I* <http://www.av-arkki.fi/en/works/day-and-night-of-the-pig-i/> The time mentioned, 2 pm, is obviously a mistake, since according to the notes spoken on the video the last visit took place at 4 pm.

358 *Year of the Pig – Installation* <http://www.av-arkki.fi/en/works/year-of-the-pig-installation/>

359 This installation was shown for the first time in a small exhibition called *Year of the Pig*, in the Telegraph of Harakka Island 13.-31.8. 2008. <http://www.harakka.fi/arlander/sianvuosi/yearofthepig.html>

360 A reworked version of the paper was published in chapter 9.3. “Performing Landscape – Documenting Weather” in *Performing Landscape – Notes on Site-specific Work and Artistic Research* (Arlander, 2012a, 265-272).

361 Arlander 2014a, 27-31.

The project was documenting the changes in the landscape on Harakka Island in Helsinki Finland, in one place chosen for each year and for a day and a night during that year. Focus was on seasonal changes consequent of the cyclical character of planetary time, based on the movement of earth around the sun and around its own axis. In terms of experienced time or duration, the practice aimed at producing time on a personal level. On a societal level, the aim was to create collective ‘souvenirs’ of sorts, of what the landscape looked like on the northern shore of the Gulf of Finland during twelve years at the beginning of the twenty-first century.

But what can be done with this material today? Here, in this context, I am using some parts of the material as a basis for a theoretical discussion, comparing the approach of actor network theory with feminist new materialist approaches.

### **Actors and Networks**

At the time of editing the works that are here used as examples, I was fascinated by ANT or actor-network theory, and thinking of actors or factors and how they formed connections. I tried to distinguish between stabilizing and destabilizing actors or factors, and explored the combination of video camera, tripod, and site or of body, scarf, and wind as examples of assemblages with agency. This interest was reflected also in my first presentations. In “Performing landscape – documenting weather” in 2008 I referred especially to the ideas of Bruno Latour in his speech “A Plea for Earthly Sciences” for the annual meeting of the British Sociological Association in April 2007.<sup>362</sup> According to Latour, we have entered a period “of explicitation and of attachments”<sup>363</sup>. He stressed “the slow explicitation of all the attachments necessary for the sustenance of our

362 I want to thank Hanna Johansson for introducing this text to me.

363 Latour 2007, 3.

fragile sphere of existence”<sup>364</sup> and asked what happens “If we now move from the taking into account of a few beings, to the weaving of careful attachments with an ever-greater list of explicated beings?”<sup>365</sup> These ideas seemed highly relevant for my work with landscape at the time.

According to Latour, the rapid disappearance of what we call ‘nature’ and ‘society’ means that all matters of fact have become matters of concern.<sup>366</sup> He asks: “If the world is not made of either nature or society or any combination thereof, what is it made of?”<sup>367</sup> The answer seems to be different types of connections. Society (or the collective, as Latour prefers to call it) is the result of all the different types of associations – and not its cause.<sup>368</sup> And these attachments could be legal, technical, religious, scientific, political, and so forth. It makes “an enormous difference whether a connection is made legally, scientifically, religiously, artistically, politically or technically”,<sup>369</sup> he notes. On a general level, we could say that the connections I discuss here were made “artistically”, in the domain of art, but because focus is on the way of working, the connections could be understood “technically” as well.

With the help of the idea of connections I tried to understand or explicate the various actors involved in my practice of performing landscape. Thinking in terms of actor networks, I found the main connections or associations for this work to be a) site – tripod – video camera, and b) body posture – scarf – wind. The combination of site,

364 Ibid.

365 Ibid.

366 Latour 2007, 5.

367 Ibid.

368 “The social sciences have a true object which is not the social per se..., but the shifting attachments offered by various non-social modes of connections.” (Latour 2007, 5).

369 Latour 2007, 7.

video camera and tripod functions as a connection, and serves as a collaborator or co-actor, although invisible to the viewer of the edited video, and enables the artist and the witness (the performer and the videographer) to be the same person. Leaving the camera to stand on its own, and entering the image, using automatic focus and light balance accentuates the “independence” of the camera. Another important connection is formed by the performer’s body, the scarf, and the wind. The scarf creates a rhythmic play of light and shade when swirling in the wind; it catches the wind and clearly shows its direction and force almost like a sail; it exerts pressure on the movements of the body by accentuating and amplifying the wind. Moreover, the scarf functions as a dress, an impersonal disguise, besides being a visual element that shows changes of light and colour.

At the time I discerned two types of actors or collaborators within these connections: stabilizing (or maintaining) actors and destabilizing (or transforming) actors. The main stabilizing actor is the landscape, including the rocks and the seashore as well as the buildings of the city; they stay constant during the year and form the structure of the image, regardless of seasonal changes. The grey scarf is a stabilizing actor, too, which maintains continuity, and at the same time a destabilizing actor, reacting to shifts in the direction and force of the wind. The main destabilising or transforming actor is the weather, intertwined with seasonal changes. The quality of light varies according to the season and time of day and shifts due to atmospheric conditions. In some sense the weather plays the leading part, by influencing the experience of the performer and by producing the changes in the visual character of the landscape in the images.

### **New Materialist Notions**

From today’s perspective, notions like ‘sympoiesis’, ‘intra-action’, or ‘trans-corporeality’ seem more useful and inspiring to think with, rather than actor-network theory, which I began with. While

actor-network theory emphasizes connections or attachments, it nevertheless assumes pre-existing actors that make up the networks, whereas new materialist thinking, especially Karen Barad's agential realism, suggests that entities do not exist separately from their entanglements. Donna J. Haraway emphasizes relationality in a manner that is somewhere in-between these approaches.

### *Sympoiesis*

Sympoiesis is a term used by Haraway to emphasize various forms of relationality in action. She writes:

Sympoiesis is a simple word; it means 'making with'. Nothing makes itself; nothing is really autopoietic or selforganizing. ... earthlings are *never alone*. That is the radical implication of sympoiesis. Sympoiesis is a word proper to complex, dynamic, responsive, situated, historical systems. It is a word for worlding-with, in company.<sup>370</sup>

Haraway is critical of the so-called posthuman turn, although she seems very much part of it: "We are compost, not posthuman; we inhabit the humusities, not the humanities. Philosophically and materially, I am a compostist, not a posthumanist",<sup>371</sup> she playfully writes. "Critters – human and not – become-with each other, compose and decompose each other", she notes, "in every scale and register of time and stuff in sympoietic tangling, in ecological evolutionary developmental earthly worlding and unworlding."<sup>372</sup> She explains her understanding of earthly life as based on "sensual molecular curiosity", "insatiable hunger" or an "irresistible attraction toward enfolding each other", which function as "the vital motor

370 Haraway 2016, 58.

371 Haraway 2016, 97.

372 Ibid.

of living and dying on earth”, and of the forming of “sympoietic arrangements that are otherwise known as cells, organisms, and ecological assemblages.”<sup>373</sup> This approach seems closely related to thinking of networks of actors.

Haraway’s advice for today is stated in the title of her book *Staying with the Trouble*. “Staying with the trouble requires making oddkin; that is, we require each other in unexpected collaborations and combinations”, she writes. “We become-with each other or not at all.”<sup>374</sup>

If we examine the example in terms of sympoiesis, we could look at the wind, the scarf, and the human body becoming-with each other in the movement of swirling. Or, the humidity of the sea, the temperature, the movement of the air currents, the dust particles of the city, the breath of the algae and other organisms producing the clouds, becoming-with each other as clouds.

### *Intra-action*

Another useful and challenging term is intra-action, coined by physicist and queer theorist Karen Barad to replace the usual term interaction, which presumes that the interacting parts pre-exist the action (like the actors in actor-network theory). According to Barad “*agencies are only distinct in relation to their mutual entanglement; they don’t exist as individual elements.*”<sup>375</sup> For Barad, intra-action is a key element of her agential realist framework. It “signifies the mutual constitution of entangled agencies” and, unlike the ordinary term interaction, “recognizes that distinct agencies do not precede, but rather emerge through, their intra-action”.<sup>376</sup> In Barad’s account,

373 Haraway 2016, 58.

374 Haraway 2016, 4.

375 Barad 2007, 33. Italics in original.

376 Ibid.

phenomena (rather than independent objects) are “the basic units of existence”.<sup>377</sup> Phenomena are produced through intra-actions; as Barad specifies, “it is through specific agential intra-actions that the boundaries and properties of the ‘components’ of phenomena become determinate and the particular material articulations in the world become meaningful”.<sup>378</sup> The differential boundaries between humans and nonhumans, culture and nature, science and the social are constituted through causal intra-actions.<sup>379</sup> Entangled practices are productive, and who and what are excluded through them matters; different intra-actions produce different phenomena<sup>380</sup>, she notes.

According to Barad, determinate entities emerge from their intra-action; thus, following her, we should understand phenomena as specific intra-actions, not as objects-in-themselves. “A *phenomenon is a specific intra-action of an ‘object’ and the ‘measuring agencies’*; the object and the measuring agencies emerge from, rather than precede, the intra-action that produces them.”<sup>381</sup> Phenomena for Barad are physical-conceptual, material-discursive intra-actions, where intra-action signifies “*the mutual constitution of objects and agencies of observation within phenomena*”.<sup>382</sup> She summarizes her point as follows: “Different material intra-actions produce different materializations of the world”.<sup>383</sup> Compared to actor-network theory this is a more radical position, assuming not only that “networks” precede “actors” but that differences are made, not found.

377 Barad 2007, 333.

378 Ibid.

379 Barad 2007, 140.

380 Barad 2007, 58.

381 Barad 2007, 128. Italics in original.

382 Barad 2007, 197. Italics in original.

383 Barad 2007, 380.

Elsewhere I have explored the act of framing an image of a landscape in terms of intra-actions and agential cuts.<sup>384</sup> If we look at the example of swirling in terms of intra-action, we could ask in what manner and with the help of what apparatuses phenomena like wind, scarf, clouds, traffic emissions, breath, body, and time are produced as distinct rather than entangled phenomena. We could think of when exactly is the air we breathe a part of us and when is it not? Is it part of us when touching our skin, or when inside our lungs or only when absorbed into our blood? How are the borders of our bodies constituted?

### *Trans-corporeality*

Focusing on bodies brings us to the third notion, trans-corporeality, a term coined by feminist and environmental humanist Stacy Alaimo. As a theoretical site, trans-corporeality is the meeting place for “corporeal theories, environmental theories and science studies”.<sup>385</sup> The concept stresses “movement across human corporeality and nonhuman nature”, and the need for “complex modes of analysis that travel through the entangled territories of material and discursive, natural and cultural, biological and textual”.<sup>386</sup>

Alaimo writes: “Imagining human corporeality as trans-corporeality, in which the human is always intermeshed with the more-than-human world, underlines the extent to which the substance of the human is ultimately inseparable from ‘the environment’.”<sup>387</sup> She explains how the notion trans-corporeality emphasizes “movement across bodies” and “reveals the interchanges and interconnections between various bodily natures”.<sup>388</sup> By stressing this movement, the

384 Arlander 2018c.

385 Alaimo 2010, 3.

386 Ibid.

387 Alaimo 2010, 2.

388 Ibid.

notion “opens up a mobile space” to acknowledge “the often unpredictable or unwanted actions of human bodies, nonhuman creatures, ecological systems, chemical agents, and other actors”<sup>389</sup>, she adds. Alaimo emphasizes “the material interconnections of human corporeality with the more-than-human world” because that allows for “ethical and political positions that can contend with ... [contemporary] realities in which ‘human’ and ‘environment’ can by no means be considered as separate”.<sup>390</sup>

This material, physical and chemical interconnectedness, regardless of volition or consciousness of the precise connections, makes a difference to our sense of self. As Alaimo points out, “...understanding the substance of one’s self as interconnected with the wider environment marks a profound shift in subjectivity.”<sup>391</sup> The material self is entangled in “networks that are simultaneously economic, political, cultural, scientific, and substantial”, and therefore the “human subject finds herself in a swirling landscape of uncertainty”, she writes, “where practices and actions that were once not even remotely ethical or political matters suddenly become the very stuff of the crises at hand.”<sup>392</sup>

When thinking of this example, with the wind and the air, the clouds, the oxygen, carbon dioxide and other chemicals in the breeze from the sea and from the city, moving inside and outside the human body, the notion trans-corporeality makes sense. In terms of trans-corporeality, all the bodies of rocks and clouds as well as humans and birds and the small rowan on the hill are sharing in their tissue the same materials and chemicals and constantly exchanging them. Rather than looking at actors that are connected

389 Ibid.

390 Ibid.

391 Alaimo 2010, 20.

392 Ibid.

to form networks, our interconnectedness is the starting point for trans-corporeality. We could nevertheless choose to examine specific connections or flows, such as where do the dust particles in the wind come from and where do they go, where do they concentrate? Who will benefit and who will suffer, and so on. Starting from interconnectedness does not exclude specificity.

### **Inevitable Interdependence**

Looking at the example, the versions of the video *Year of the Pig – Weather vane* [sic] inserted into the recording of a revisit to the same site ten years later, provided a starting point for comparing the approach of actor network theory with feminist new materialist approaches. Analysing the various actors such as the human body, the scarf and the wind, and their connection or combined agency seems straightforward. Their combined effect, however, the ‘human weathervane’, could also be understood as the result of a sympoiesis of sorts, of a ‘making with’ by the wind, the body, and the scarf. Thinking of the phenomenon as the result of an intra-action and its components as produced by that intra-action is not as intuitive, though. Surely the human body, the scarf, and the wind exist also independently of each other. But following Barad they are deeply entangled and differentiated only through various materializations. The wool for the scarf, for instance, is produced by cutting it from the skin of sheep on the other side of the world; it is processed by workers, woven, traded and transported by others, traded again, and was here gathering dandruff from my body, dust from the city and moist from the sea while swirling in the wind. In trying to understand such entanglements, the notion trans-corporeality is helpful. The human body, the scarf, and the wind contain many of the same chemicals, are traversed by the same electric, radioactive, or magnetic waves and are also influenced by the same economic, ecological, and political circumstances. Alaimo’s trans-corporeality makes

Barad's entanglements and intra-actions palpable; separations and differentiations are secondary; they are the result of complex processes. This is not to downplay the very real differences and inequalities between bodies and entities, but to stress that rather than given, these are produced through various material-discursive practices involving intra-actions of apparatuses. The main point I want to underline is simply that notions like intra-action or trans-corporeality highlight how we are even more intimately and inevitably interconnected and interdependent than notions such as assemblages or networks of actors suggest.

### **Concluding remarks**

In the introductory remarks to this text, I suggested that artistic research accounts are often framed by or inserted into a more academic discussion and that I would attempt the opposite, by framing a relatively theoretical discussion within a more personal account. I also suggested that exploring the format of a video essay provides the readers with the opportunity to experience themselves, whether combining and mixing artworks and academic texts could be a more experiential way of sharing research. For me personally, the video essay is an inspiring medium, that enables mixtures of various kind, including artworks or documentary materials, academic references, and even literary experiments. The example case here is a rather straightforward combination of video works and a voice-over text. This time, for instance, I did not add quotes as subtitles on the video, as I have done elsewhere<sup>393</sup>, because I did not want to make the imagery completely subservient to the text. Combining several images and thus several temporalities within one frame is already rather complex, and therefore such constant visual layering of text and image might be too much.

393 See Arlander 2018a.

What really happens when artworks and academic concepts loosely related to those works are combined? Will the text remain the primary medium, and the so-called experiential part, the video, stay as a supportive illustration for those with time and energy to engage with it? Or, is adding the text as a spoken voice-over on the video rather disturbing the experience of the video compilation? Hearing and seeing can support understanding, especially when trying to follow a non-native speaker. For some people listening is a preferred mode, while others find reading at one's own pace easier, with the possibility to adjust the rhythm according to the difficulty of the topic. In many cases showing something is a more reliable and efficient way of sharing information, than trying to describe it in words, but not always.

Why did I want to combine exactly these concepts with exactly these video works? One reason for these choices was the fact that I had discussed actor network theory in the context of the *Year of the Pig* videos before.<sup>394</sup> The combination of site – tripod – video camera as well as body – scarf – wind was easily understandable in terms of actor-network theory. Now, nearly ten years later, I was interested in exploring whether new materialist notions like sym-*poiesis*, intra-action and trans-corporeality that describe landscape as process more accurately, could tell me something else about the same works, although the notions might seem counter-intuitive at first. I was also interested in looking at how not only the physical landscape, but the intellectual environment had changed between 2008 and 2018. Whereas actor-network theory is certainly still much used, new materialist feminist thinking and especially Barad's agential realism has gained much attention lately. And of course, I have changed myself; not only my body is older and stiffer, but my thinking is different, due to experience, and (hopefully) more nuanced.

394 Arlander 2012a; Arlander 2014a.

But why link this documentation of material-discursive changes in these various technological and intellectual landscapes with experience research? In terms of experience research any other video work of *Animal Years* might serve as a starting point equally well. Perhaps the main point is that experience here is not the object, topic, or problem of the research, but a tool, an aid, a method of sorts. I am not investigating my experiences of the environment or my experiences of the art works, nor the experiences of somebody else. I am, however, using my experiences – of the landscape, the videos and of the theoretical notions discussed – to help me understand the changes taking place. And surely the resulting combination of introductory text, video essay and concluding remarks will produce some kind of experience for the reader-viewer. Thus, experience is also the result or outcome of the research, part of the output to be shared. The experience is possibly uninteresting or disturbing, and in that case this exploration remains a futile attempt at enhanced communication. Or, perhaps this is more like a capitulation in face of the demands of the prevailing experience economy to turn everything into an ‘experience’. I do hope, however, that this type of playing with combinations of media will at the very least point towards future possibilities for developing ways of sharing research in a more experiential manner.





Figure 16. *Year of the Rat – Mermaid 1-2* (2009)

## 7. Revisiting the Year of the Rat

The rat is usually considered the first animal that begins the Chinese Calendar. For *Animal Years* the year of the rat was more like a half-way point in the series; by now it seemed possible to complete the twelve-year cycle. The year of the rat (2008-2009) marked the end of the first part recorded in DV quality and 4:3 format, because I invested in a new camera but decided to use it only the following year. This year I chose the sculpture of the Little Mermaid as my model, a rock on the northern shore to sit on, a pale lilac scarf to wear<sup>395</sup>, and recorded my walk down and up the stairs<sup>396</sup> to the shore as well. As in previous years, I recorded a day and night on the rock, too.<sup>397</sup> I also recorded a more performative gesture pouring water with a glass jar from the sea back to the sea while standing in the sea.<sup>398</sup> Moreover, I sat with the same scarf on other shores during my travels<sup>399</sup>, as well as next to the sculpture in Copenhagen<sup>400</sup>. The resulting video works were shown in Katarina Gallery<sup>401</sup> in the city

395 *Year of the Rat – Mermaid 1-2* <https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/year-of-the-rat-mermaid-1-2/>

396 *Year of the Rat – Uphill – Downhill* <https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/year-of-the-rat-uphill-downhill/>

397 *Day and Night of the Rat – Mermaid* <https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/day-and-night-of-the-rat-mermaid/>

398 *Year of the Rat – Dripping (short)* <https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/year-of-the-rat-dripping-short/>

399 *Mermaid Variations 1-9* <https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/mermaid-variations-1-9/>

400 *The Little Mermaid – 95<sup>TH</sup> Birthday* <https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/the-little-mermaid-95th-birthday/>

401 Videos and still images, Gallery Katarina 25.11.-13.12. 2009.

centre, unlike most of the previous years, which were shown only on Harakka island.<sup>402</sup>

The revisit to the rock on the shore took place on 11 August 2018 and was the basis for my presentation during Research Day III<sup>403</sup> organized by the research project *How to Do Things with Performance?* It was later developed into a video essay<sup>404</sup> published in *GPS* or *Global Performance Studies*.<sup>405</sup> The question of diffraction (and self-diffraction) discussed in that text I have considered in other publications not directly related to these revisits.<sup>406</sup> Much later, on 21 July 2020, I revisited the stairs, created a video presentation<sup>407</sup> for a NSU (Nordic Summer University) meeting, and further developed that into a video essay for *PARtake: The Journal of Performance as Research*.<sup>408</sup> Both of these texts are included here, slightly revised, to be less dependent on the video material.

402 Year of the Horse on Harakka - diary and performance document, Telegraph of Harakka 3.-16.6. 2003

Tomtebo – Year of the Monkey on Harakka, Telegraph of Harakka 20.7.-31.7.2005

Year of the Rooster, Ammunition cellar on Harakka 19.7.-6.8.2006

Three Pine Trees – In the Year of the Dog 2006, Telegraph of Harakka 4.7.-22.7.2007

Year of the Pig, Telegraph of Harakka 13.-31.8. 2008

403 See documentation of Research Day III <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/281037/281038/9975/1551>

404 *Revisiting the Rock*, with text or without text (39 min. 50 sec.) <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/profile/show-work?work=953850>

405 See Arlander 2020c. *GPS* vol 3 No 2 (2020) <https://gps.psi-web.org/article/view/57>

406 See “Performing with Trees and the Tide – A Diffractive Reading” in *RAE* 3/2019 (Arlander 2019b) and “Diffraction, Mixture and Cut-ups in Performing with Plants” in *Performance Research* 25:5 2021 (Arlander 2021a).

407 *Returning to the Stairs* (20 min. 10 sec.) <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/profile/show-work?work=953843>

408 See *PARtake* Vol 5. No 1 (2022). Arlander 2022a. <https://partakejournal.org/index.php/partake/article/view/1487>

## 7.1. Revisiting the Rock - Self-diffraction as a Strategy



Figure 17. *Revisiting the Rock* (2018)

In this text, linked to a video essay<sup>409</sup> I am exploring alternative versions of presenting a video essay, partly inspired by the notion “dense video” suggested by Ben Spatz (2017), partly by previous attempts.<sup>410</sup> Contrary to my initial plan I have not “densified” the video essay by adding subtitles and references to the images on video. As a compilation of several video works inserted into each other and an added voice-over text it seems to be rather dense as it is. The density in this case is not created by references and quotations, nor only by the spoken text, but by the variations or “diffraction patterns” produced by combining and inserting related videos and performances

409 The video essay is on Vimeo, with text <https://vimeo.com/manage/videos/358442938> and without text <https://vimeo.com/manage/videos/397399076>

410 One inspiration for inserting variations of older videos into a contemporary one was an artwork by Vincent Roumagnac, “We Split We Split,” which I saw in Helsinki in 2016.

for camera into one-another and next to one-another. To make the “self-diffraction” thus produced more explicit, there are two versions of the video essay; the original version with a voice-over text as well as the same compilation of works as a visual essay without added text.<sup>411</sup> In order to give more prominence to the video compilation as such I made a visual version of the video essay without a voice-over text. This way I hope to make the self-diffraction (or diffractive practice) in the video works more easily recognizable, to provide the possibility to enjoy moments of silence with more focus on the images for those who prefer that option, and to open the idea of what constitutes a video essay for those who expect it to fit in with the genre of the film essay.

### **Revisiting the Rock**

In this video essay, I experimented with the format by creating a remix of artworks and reflections in a spoken commentary. By using a video recording of a revisit in 2018 to the site where the video work *Year of the Rat – Mermaid* was performed during the year 2008 as a base, I combined variations of the work as well as ideas related to it later, with a focus on “self-diffraction,” a notion I develop from diffraction as used by Karen Barad (2014). The main question is: What is the pedagogic, political, or therapeutic potential in such “self-diffractive” rather than self-reflective exercises?

This revisit is part of the research project *How to Do Things with Performance?* where one of my tasks has been to explore what can be done by returning to my twelve-year project “Performing Landscape” (2002-2014) and the series *Animal Years*. For the year of the rat, in 2008, I took the sculpture *Den Lille Havefrue* or *The Little Mermaid* as my starting point, posing weekly on a rock on Harakka

411 Both versions of *Revisiting the Rock* (39 min. 50 sec.) are available on the RC as well <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/profile/show-work?work=953850>

Island in Helsinki in a position resembling the statue in Copenhagen. Variations of the pose were repeated along other shores, including next to the statue itself, during her 95<sup>th</sup> birthday, accidentally. The notion “self-diffraction” is here proposed as a notion to describe these variations, an interference pattern of multiple versions of the self. In these examples self-diffraction is rather subtle, like imitating the body posture of the sculpture and referencing the fairy tale through bare feet, combined with responses to the specificities of each site. The simplest form of diffraction comes into play through repetition; there is no one image, no one representation repeatedly reflected, but an almost endless wave of variations.

In a presentation during a research day on performance pedagogy,<sup>412</sup> organised by the How to Do Things with Performance? research project, I presented a record of a revisit in august 2018 to the rock where the video work *Year of the Rat – Mermaid* was performed during the year 2008. Besides examining ideas related to the work in texts I wrote a few years later, such as choosing silence, or affirmation as a strategy<sup>413</sup> I asked whether there was any pedagogic, political, or therapeutic potential in such self-reflective or rather “self-diffractive” exercises? That presentation served as a starting point for this experiment.

In the research project we have explored, together with Hanna Järvinen, Tero Nauha and Pilvi Porkola, what can be done with performance; what actualizes when a performance takes place, when it is documented, and when it is written about? In that context I have returned to my twelve-year project “Performing Landscape” from 2002 to 2014 and the resulting series of video works called *Animal*

412 Research Day III: Performance Pedagogy, 16 November 2018, University of the Arts Helsinki Theatre Academy, see documentation in the HTDTWP project archive <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/281037/281038/10039/1109>

413 See Chapters 12.2. and 13 in *Performing Landscape* (Arlander 2012a).

*Years* and *Animal Days and Nights*, with each year named after the animal in the Chinese calendar. The project was documenting the changes in the landscape in one specific place, on Harakka Island in Helsinki Finland, during twelve years, as well as a day and a night in the same place each year. By using a static camera on tripod, the project combined approaches from performance art, video art and environmental art, and inevitably had an autobiographical dimension as well. The final video works are not pedagogical in any obvious sense and do not offer a chance to participate directly but could hopefully function as an encouragement for the viewer to “try this at home”, and to develop performative practices of their own.

By returning to the sites on the island where the weekly performances took place during the years 2002-2014 and recording my revisits, I have created basic images using contemporary technology into which the old video installations can be inserted, in miniature. Thus, I have formed video compilations, beginning with the first and last year, the year of the horse (2002 and 2014) at the kick-off seminar of the project in the autumn of 2016. Now the turn has come to year of rat, the seventh year in the series. On 11 of August 2018, I visited the rock I sat on ten years earlier and tried to recreate approximately the same framing as the one used in *Year of the Rat – Mermaid*, performed once a week before sunset in the year 2008. I used the sculpture *Den Lille Havefrue* as my starting point, posing weekly on the northern shore of Harakka Island in a position resembling the statue in Copenhagen. The two-channel video work *Year of the Rat – Mermaid 1 -2* (2009), edited of those performances for camera, is inserted into the recording of the revisit. A synopsis in the Centre for Finnish Media Art reads as follows:

Part 1. (right) With a lilac scarf on my shoulders I sit on a rock on the Northern shore of Harakka Island approximately once a week before sunset between 26 [January] 2008 and 24 [January] 2009.

Part 2. (left) I sit on a rock further away from the camera on the same occasions.<sup>414</sup>

*Day and Night of the Rat – Mermaid* (11 min. 10 sec.), with the following synopsis, was performed on the same rock, and was added to the mix:

With a lilac scarf on my shoulders, I sit on a rock by the northern shore of Harakka Island every two hours after the winter solstice for a day and night from 22nd December 2008 at 4 p.m. to 23rd December at 2 p.m.<sup>415</sup>

### Choosing Silence?

At the time I wanted to play with a sculpture as inspiration and chose the iconic figure of the little mermaid in Copenhagen, thinking it would be easily recognisable. The fairy tale *The Little Mermaid*, written by the Danish author Hans Christian Andersen in 1836,<sup>416</sup> translated into English in 1872, and later made famous by Walt Disney, among others, served as inspiration for the sculpture by Edvard Eriksen, who used his wife Eline as a model. The sculpture was a gift to the city of Copenhagen from brewer Carl Jacobsen. It was placed on its site at Langelinie on 23 August 1913 and soon became an important symbol of the city.

414 *Year of the Rat – Mermaid 1-2* <https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/year-of-the-rat-mermaid-1-2/>

415 *Day and Night of the Rat – Mermaid* <https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/day-and-night-of-the-rat-mermaid/>

416 Andersen, H.C. "The Little Mermaid." *Hans Christian Andersen: Fairy Tales and Stories*, Translated by H. P. Paull, 1872 (orig. 1836), [http://hca.gilead.org/il/li\\_merma.html](http://hca.gilead.org/il/li_merma.html)

When I reread the fairy tale, I realised choosing silence is a central theme in the story where the little mermaid exchanges her tongue and her voice for a pair of human feet, not only because of her love for a human man, but also for the hope of acquiring an immortal soul like a human being. Is this what I am doing in my performances for camera? That was one of my questions in a text written later, “The Salt Basins at Santa Maria – Non-places and the Challenges of Performative Research,” first published in Finnish in 2012, and later in English<sup>417</sup>. There I used another version of the work made on Cape Verde, called *Sal 1-2*<sup>418</sup>, as an example. I wrote:

Artworks form a substitute for immortality; they remain as the traces of our performances. By choosing to perform for a camera in a deserted and rather distant place, I am exchanging the live encounter with an audience for the dream of a digital afterlife, an immortality of sorts. By choosing to remain silent, I am letting go of the need to express my own experiences of the landscape in order to give space to the interpretations and projections of a potential viewer confronted with the images. In that sense, there is a connection between the little mermaid who exchanges her tongue and her voice for a pair of human feet, and me exchanging my voice or my words for a dream of an eternity of sorts. Performances are ephemeral and disappear, while images remain – at least for a while.<sup>419</sup>

In terms of feminist critique, much could be read into a story where only the love of a man and marriage will guarantee an immortal soul for the beloved wife, I added. And it could be expanded in terms of de-colonial efforts as well. What sacrifices are needed for

417 Arlander 2012c, 9-26, and Arlander 2012a, chapter 13, 377-395.

418 *Sal 1-2* <https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/sal-1-2/>

419 Arlander 2012a, 393.

somebody to be allowed to participate in so-called civilized society? Today, I wrote at the time, the idea that mermaids and other sea creatures could obtain an immortal soul through good deeds is perhaps the most fascinating one<sup>420</sup>, but left it at that. Perhaps, like so many others today, I am pursuing a dream of some form of digital immortality. Performing landscape, however, is not performing the self only. Performances that involve imagining sharing existence with other forms of life were not my main concern then. At the time, I focused on Amelia Jones' concept self-imagining<sup>421</sup>, Barbara Bolt's performative research paradigm<sup>422</sup> and Marc Augé's notion of nonplaces<sup>423</sup>.

“Every story is the silencing of another one. Every image that is created is covering the ones that were not made.”<sup>424</sup> That is also a question of self-reflection: “One of the tasks proposed for artists engaging in research is to articulate or make explicit the tacit knowledge involved in the production of art”.<sup>425</sup> Because many aspects of artistic work are at least partly unconscious, the task can be more challenging than it seems. “Simple skills can be hard to translate into discursive language if they have become automatic and, thus, unconscious and are experienced as intuitive knowing. And how does one identify which aspects of the tacit knowledge involved in each specific case are relevant or even possible to clarify, articulate and reflect upon?”<sup>426</sup> But, choosing silence is, after all, the opposite of knowledge production.

420 Arlander 2012a, 393.

421 Jones 2006.

422 Bolt 2008.

423 Augé 1995.

424 Arlander 2012a, 390.

425 Arlander 2012a, 394.

426 Ibid.

### **Affirming by Attention**

Another text related to these works, “Performing Landscape as Affirmative Practice” from 2012<sup>427</sup> is perhaps more relevant in the context of pedagogy. There I begin by referring to Rosi Braidotti’s text “Affirming the Affirmative: On Nomadic Affectivity” from 2005/2006, and to an interview with Elisabeth Grosz in 2007, where Grosz explains why she avoids critique.

I’ve made it a policy for quite a while to avoid critique. Critique always affirms the primacy of what is being critiqued, ironically producing exactly the thing it wants to problematize. But more than that, critique is a negative exercise. It is an attempt to remove obstacles to one’s position. It is really difficult to continue work only on material that you don’t like, or that’s problematic or oppressive.<sup>428</sup>

After discussing how to move beyond patriarchy, she concludes:

We need to affirm the joyousness of the kind of life that we are looking for. The joyousness of art, the pleasure of thought, feminism needs to return to something that makes it feel happier as well as productive. Joy, affirmation, pleasure, these are not obstacles to our self-understanding, they are forms of self-understanding. /--/  
The only way we can make a new world is by having a new horizon: And this is something that art can give us: a new world, a new body, a people to come.<sup>429</sup>

427 Arlander 2012a, 368-376.

428 Grosz qtd. in Kontturi and Tiainen 2007, 255.

429 Grosz qtd. in Kontturi and Tiainen 2007, 256.

But what could this mean in practical terms? One way is of course performing something, or with something, affirming it by focusing on it, attending to it, giving it attention.<sup>430</sup>

In the context of performance pedagogy, it sounds provocative to speak of the advantages of being an auto-didact.<sup>431</sup> By pointing to the advantages of being a self-taught performance artist<sup>432</sup>, I do not claim that they are more numerous than the disadvantages, but rather suggest that there is some value in the tradition within performance art of creating your own methods, making your own mistakes, and sometimes even indulging in being unskilled – all more or less illusionary aspects – that might nevertheless be important counterpoints in the context of pedagogy. There is a tradition to speak of performance art as something that cannot be taught, as discussed for instance by Tero Nauha<sup>433</sup>. The point is rather that performance art can and must be reinvented by the one who practices the form. And that is probably why it has such a great pedagogical potential, as suggested by Charles Garoian in his early work in 1999. One could say that the mainstream of performance art is centered around subjectivity, and that is perhaps the main connection to performance art remaining in my work. There is not much ordeal involved in sitting on a rock, despite the repetition.

430 This is something I have focused on in more recent works, especially in the project *Performing with Plants* <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/316550/316551>

431 The subtitle of my presentation was “On the Advantages of Being an Auto-didact”. See program of Research Day III: Performance Pedagogy, 16 November 2018, <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/281037/281038/10039/1109>

432 It is ironic to call oneself an auto-didact, if one has been studying for a large part of one's life. I spent 22 years as a student at Helsinki University, for instance, besides engaging in doctoral studies for seven years at the University of the Arts Helsinki, while my basic education was that of a theatre director and theatre scholar. As a performance artist, media artist and visual artist I am completely self-taught.

433 Nauha 2017, 61-70.

## Reflection or Diffraction?

Self-reflection is one of the skills emphasized in the training of artists and artist researchers alike. And reflexivity is of course a core value in much social science research. Referring to Donna J. Haraway's critique of reflection physicist and queer theorist Karen Barad has endorsed her proposal of diffraction as an alternative methodology. While diffraction is used by Haraway as a counterpoint to reflection, for Karen Barad it is, among other things, "a tool for thinking about social-natural practices in a performative rather than representationalist mode".<sup>434</sup> In classical physics diffraction is understood as the result of the superposition or interference of waves<sup>435</sup> while in quantum physics diffraction experiments are "at the heart of the 'wave versus particle' debates about the nature of light and matter".<sup>436</sup> They have shown how "wave and particle are not inherent attributes of objects, but rather the atoms perform wave or particle in their intra-action with the apparatus".<sup>437</sup>

During the year of the rat, I made another work on the same site which has more recognizable links with performance art, *Year of the Rat – Dripping (short)* (6 min. 47 sec.) The title probably reminds of event scores by George Brecht<sup>438</sup>, although I did not actively consider that while choosing a simple action that could be repeated in a cyclical way and edited into a continuous repetition. While performing, I increased the number of jars filled with water and emptied back into the sea each week until halfway into the summer and then

434 Barad 2007, 88.

435 Barad 2007, 78-79.

436 Barad 2007, 72-73.

437 Barad 2014, 180.

438 See George Brecht Drip Music (1962) <https://www.moma.org/collection/works/127311>

decreased them again.<sup>439</sup> The short version shows only one jar of water for each image. The synopsis reads as follows:

With a lilac scarf on my shoulders, I stand in the sea, take water in a jar and pour it back to the sea on the northern shore of Harakka Island approximately once a week before sunset between 26th January 2008 and 24th January 2009.<sup>440</sup>

In her seminal text from 2003, “Posthumanist Performativity: Toward an Understanding of How Matter Comes to Matter”, Barad explains:

Moving away from the representationalist trap of geometrical optics, I shift the focus to physical optics, to questions of diffraction rather than reflection. Diffractively reading the insights of feminist and queer theory and science studies approaches through one another entails thinking the “social” and the “scientific” together in an illuminating way. What often appears as separate entities (and separate sets of concerns) with sharp edges does not actually entail a relation of absolute exteriority at all. Like the diffraction patterns illuminating the indefinite nature of boundaries – displaying shadows in “light” regions and bright spots in “dark” regions – the relation of the social and the scientific is a relation of “exteriority within.” This is not a static relationality but a doing – the enactment of boundaries – that always entails constitutive exclusions and therefore requisite questions of accountability.<sup>441</sup>

439 The process is described in detail in Arlander 2012a, 371-376.

440 *Year of the Rat - Dripping (short)* <https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/year-of-the-rat-dripping-short/> There is a longer version (68 min. 47 sec.); an installation version includes *Year of the Rat - Dripping & Jar* (2 x 6 min. 47 sec.)

441 Barad 2003, 803.

In 2014, in “Diffracting Diffraction: Cutting Together-Apart”, Barad writes: “Diffraction is not a set pattern, but rather an iterative (re)configuring of patterns of differentiating-entangling.”<sup>442</sup> Therefore, “there is no moving beyond, no leaving the ‘old’ behind.”<sup>443</sup> According her “no absolute boundary” exists “between here-now and there-then.” “There is nothing that is new” she writes, and “there is nothing that is not new”.<sup>444</sup> Barad further explains how diffraction, rather than a singular event, is “a dynamism that is integral to spacetime mattering.”<sup>445</sup> Time “is diffracted, broken apart in different directions, noncontemporaneous with itself. Each moment is an infinite multiplicity.”<sup>446</sup> According her “‘Now’ is [...] an infinitely rich condensed node in a changing field diffracted across spacetime” in an “ongoing iterative repatterning”.<sup>447</sup>

Helen Pritchard and Jane Prophet (2015) have used diffraction as a tool in exploring the controversial relationship between mainstream contemporary art and new media art, proposing the term “diffractive art practice,” for their entanglements. Although my practice produces digital video works, I am not proposing to use that term to describe my work. Rather, I am interested in how they describe diffraction as a methodology. Pritchard and Prophet borrow the notion from Barad, who “introduces the optical metaphor of diffraction for re-thinking the relationship between entities and agencies that emerge from scientific practices”<sup>448</sup> while they use it to theorize “knowledge that emerges from art practices” and to demonstrate how such practices “continuously reconfigure the

442 Barad 2014, 168.

443 Ibid.

444 Ibid.

445 Barad 2014, 169.

446 Ibid.

447 Ibid.

448 Pritchard & Prophet 2015, n.p.

boundaries between them”.<sup>449</sup> The physical phenomenon of diffraction refers to the ways that waves of water, light or sound combine when they overlap, or “the process of bending and spreading out that occurs when waves encounter obstructions”.<sup>450</sup> They use “the example of ripples that appear when stones are dropped into a pond, where dynamic and overlapping ripples change one another’s form” to emphasize that “diffractive patterns are always in movement”.<sup>451</sup> They also note that “reflection [...] might be to ‘look back onto’ arts practice,” while “diffractive patterns manifest through reading practices through each other”.<sup>452</sup> In some sense I am of course looking back onto a practice here, in a self-reflective manner, but also looking at several variations of that practice through each other. What I try to explore is whether a concept like diffraction or self-diffraction could be generative in relation to this specific practice.

In new materialist discourse thinking diffractively can imply a self-accountable, critical, and responsible engagement with the world, while reading diffractively can mean reading texts through one another to produce unexpected outcomes, as suggested by Geerts and van der Tuin. Rather than such a “boundary-crossing, trans/disciplinary methodology,” which is “blurring the boundaries between different disciplines and theories to provoke new thoughts”<sup>453</sup>, my understanding of diffraction here is more modest and perhaps more literal. Examples of posing on various shores, could serve as an example of further “ripples” or “bendings,” or “interference patterns,” diffractions produced by shifting circumstances. The synopsis for a collection of such ‘ripples’ in *Mermaid Variations 1-9*, a three-channel installation (3 min. 58 sec.), reads as follows:

449 Ibid.

450 Ibid.

451 Ibid.

452 Ibid.

453 Geerts and van der Tuin 2016, n.p.

With a lilac scarf on my shoulders, I sit by the sea or in the water in different locations around the world.

A. (left) “Mermaid Variations 5-4-7”: Jeju, Jeju, Jeju.

B. (centre) “Mermaid Variations 2-6-9”: Kadermo, Jeju, Jeju.

C. (right) “Mermaid Variations 1-3-8”: Bergen, Cape Verde, Cape Verde.”

These examples from Jeju Island between Korea and Japan, Kadermo, a small island in the Finnish Archipelago, Bergen, a city on the Atlantic coast in Norway and Cape Verde Islands west of Africa are spanning from warm to cold seas. In the video essay only six of them are shown, due to time constraints.

In “Thinking through picturing” (2015) Sofie Sauzet interprets diffraction and Barad’s agential realism for educational purposes. She explains how Barad’s agential realism as a methodology “is about creating reality, not reflecting it”.<sup>454</sup> Sauzet describes her “construction of a ‘diffraction apparatus’ to allow students to work with an emergent feminist materialist inspired concept [...] through situated practices” and her understanding of “concepts as material-discursive practices that emerge as phenomena in complex practices”.<sup>455</sup> Her diffraction apparatus in the context of her pedagogical practice, consists of an assignment of snaplogs (snapshots and notes describing them) and interviews. Sauzet explains how the “the central idea is that ‘the thing’ ‘we’ [...] research, is enacted in entanglement with ‘the way’ we research it.”<sup>456</sup> She understands diffraction as “the process of ongoing differences,” in contrast to reflection, which “invites images of mirroring” and maintains that “diffraction helps us attend and respond to the effects of our meaning-making

454 Sauzet 2015, 39.

455 Sauzet 2015, 41.

456 Ibid.

processes,” such as, “how answers emerge from questions, or how analyzing through particular interests makes particular aspects come to the fore and leave others out.”<sup>457</sup> Thus, for her “diffraction is the practice of making differences, of enacting worlds by being in the world.”<sup>458</sup> According her “diffraction can attune us to the differences generated by our knowledge-making practices and the effects these practices have on the world”.<sup>459</sup>

### **Self-imaging**

An open understanding of diffraction as a making of differences, of variations, could be combined with the notion of self-imaging developed by Amelia Jones, which I have discussed in relation to similar works before<sup>460</sup>, or rather, they could be looked at diffractively through one another.

In her book *Self/Image – Technology, Representation and the Contemporary Subject* (2006), art historian Amelia Jones discusses images and projects that are not “self-portraits” in the traditional sense, but which enact the self (often of the artist themselves) within the context of the visual and performing arts (including film, video and digital media) and participate in what she calls “self-imaging” – the rendering of the self in and through technologies of representation.<sup>461</sup> Jones focuses on images by artists who explore the capacity of the self-portrait photograph to foreground the “I” as other to itself.<sup>462</sup> However, not only exaggerated examples of theatrical, photographic self-production, but in fact all images work reciprocally to construct bodies and selves across the interpretive bridges that

457 Sauzet 2015, 42.

458 Ibid.

459 Ibid.

460 Arlander 2018d.

461 Jones 2006, xvii.

462 Jones 2006, 43.

connect them<sup>463</sup>, as Jones points out. According to Jones, representation, especially in its photographic (and digital) variants, preys on our desire for the body to remain suspended in time forever. There is an urge built into all representational practices involving images of the body to delay or foreclose on death; “self-images – renditions (in some form) that the maker has forged involving his or her own body – make this profound paradox of representation explicit,”<sup>464</sup> she writes.

### **Self-diffraction**

Combining self-imaging and diffraction we get self-diffraction (which is also an optical term, which I am not referring to here). At a basic level it could simply mean a mode of diffracting rather than reflecting the self in self-imagery. By developing diffraction into something that I call self-diffraction, as an alternative to self-reflection, I am proposing to explore what such a change of terminology could lead to.

These videos are perhaps not the best possible example of self-diffraction, because the basic pattern is one of repetition. It is not a repetition in the sense of a copy, a reflection, but a repetition with a difference, as reverberating variations that resemble the interference of waves. The repetitions over time, once a week, approximately, create some form of ripples of the previous action. And showed together they mix and entwine with the other variations and the more recent recording on the site. These repetitions could be understood as a form of self-reflection as well, but something changes with the multiple reverberations, that I would like to call self-diffraction. Based on these examples I suggest that self-diffraction could be understood as self-multiplication with variation, a diffracting or bending in the face of an obstacle or model, a mixture

463 Jones 2006, 43-44.

464 Jones 2006, 245.

of a fictional character and self, or self in response to context in different spatial and temporal dimensions, here and there, then and now, again and again.

Besides sitting on various rocks and other shores, I was also posing next to the statue *Den Lille Havefru* in Copenhagen, the “original site” as it were, which was in no way the origin or end, as it looks like here, inserted towards the end, but one bend along the way. This was during her 95<sup>th</sup> birthday, accidentally, after the Performance Studies International conference in Copenhagen in august 2008.<sup>465</sup> The resulting video combines two moments of posing, one at daytime and another moment later in the evening. The synopsis for the video *The Little Mermaid – 95th Birthday* (10 min. 5 sec.) is brief: “I’m sitting next to the statue of the Little Mermaid in Copenhagen on ‘her’ 95th birthday.”

Concerning the notion “self-diffraction” we could ask whether various forms of role-playing or identity games could be more obvious examples of self-diffraction, creating interference patterns of a multiplicity of dispersed versions of the self. In my examples experimentations with self-diffraction are rather subtle, consisting of on the one hand an imitation of the body position of the iconic sculpture of the little mermaid in Copenhagen, and referencing the fairy tale of the little mermaid through the bare feet. And on the other hand of a division into an “observing self” on the rock in the foreground looking at a “posing self” appearing on a smaller rock further away. A third diffractive dimension, and perhaps the most important one, comes into play through the repetition with variations – there is no one image, no one reflection, not one true representation, that

465 PSI #14 conference Interregnum at the University of Copenhagen, 20-24 August 2008. When I wrote about the work for the first time, the sculpture had temporarily been transported to Shanghai for Expo 2010, with a live streaming from there on a screen at the original site.

is repeated, but instead an almost endless wave of variations or diffractions, including the day and night, the dripping and so on. This is further accentuated by all the variations created with the same scarf and the same pose in other places, bending for obstacles on other shores.

In these works, my way of doing things with performance is based on repeating an action or a pose in the same place once a week for a year, then returning to that site ten years later, trying to repeat the same framing (which is not fully possible) and the same action (not fully possible). Rather than as a form of self-reflection, I would like to think of this returning and revisiting, too, as a self-diffraction of sorts, a doubling or overlapping, an ongoing process. As Barad notes, “there is no moving beyond, no leaving the ‘old’ behind” and “no absolute boundary between here-now and there-then”<sup>466</sup>. When repeating a variation of the action in other places, adjusting to those places, again and again, there is a literal bending, shifting and even spreading out of the pose, the position and the composition taking place.

But can we speak of performance here? How malleable should our understanding of performance be? Here I understand performance as an action or a pose and a process, which does not necessarily involve imitation, accomplishment, or an audience, although the camera on a tripod serves as a witness of sorts and posing with the statue as a model involves some form of imitation and attempted accomplishment. The act of sitting on a rock or something similar could be seen as a minimum of a performance, even a non-performance, but of course there is a series of performances surrounding it, if we think of all the actions involved in one session, on one day, like getting to the site, preparing the camera and so on. What you see is only brief fragments of my repeated posing and in some sense

466 Barad 2014, 168.

the performance is created in the repetition, in the diffraction patterns and their combination. But what about the one-off variations, where I sit on a shore only once in each place, albeit in shifting circumstances? Those sites are overlapping with the scarf and the pose in various ways, combined and diffracted in relation to the other sites as well as to the other figures.

We can perhaps understand context as a form of apparatus, which does things, produces diffractions; “given a particular measuring apparatus, certain properties become determinate, while others are specifically excluded”.<sup>467</sup> The shift of context between the performances in one place from one time to the next, between the site returned to and the sites visited only once, between the singular moment and so on, including the showing and viewing of this video compilation, could be thought of in terms of representation – what does this suggest – and in terms of production – what does it lead to? Here I have tried to think of them in terms of entanglements and process, of differentiation, of diffraction. The context on Harakka Island in 2008 and in 2018 allowed different actions and produced different effects, as did the context on Langelinie in Copenhagen. On the island during my revisit the changes in technology and in the terrain necessitated some bending and generated some kinds of diffraction. In Copenhagen the public space and all my co-performers provided other challenges – and diffractions.

In the video essay the negotiation takes place with time and duration, how much can be included and made visible at the same time, and perhaps also with other approaches to doing things with performance. Why look at this now? Is there a point in doing less? And what happens when this “less” is multiplied, layered, and diffracted? Does it do something to our usual understanding of self-representations and self-reflective activities? Does it make any difference if I

467 Barad 2007, 19.

call it self-diffraction? And the question we began with: What is the pedagogic, political, or therapeutic potential in such “self-diffractive” rather than self-reflective exercises? One obvious use is to assist us in moving beyond the idea of self as a given or fixed entity and realize the multiplicity and relationality involved in all forms of self-imaging or performances of the self. That said, self-diffraction could also be interpreted as simply multiplying variations or images of the self, as a celebration and excess of selfie-fantasies; the ultimate aim and tool of the current selfie-culture?

Self-diffraction or not – choosing a place (or perhaps simply a pose) and returning to it regularly, with or without a recording device, can serve as an example of an affirmative practice, one which is available to artists and non-artists alike.<sup>468</sup> Sitting, standing, posing or some other kind of simple action repeated in a particular place, requires no special skills. This kind of repetition provides an opportunity to rest and reflect, to enjoy the living environment; and if documented, the practice can produce a record of the constant transformations taking place. Such traces can be used as artworks, like the video works shown here, but also as a form of journaling. Choosing a place in a living environment and choosing an action that emphasises the sensual experience of that environment increases the joyful, healing, and affirmative qualities of the practice. Perhaps something of those qualities can be experienced through documentation as well. The effect of the video works on the viewer, however, and the effect of the actual practice on the performer of the action should not be conflated. In this context it is interesting to focus on the actual practice, since that could be developed into a method to be used by others for pedagogical purposes.

468 These thoughts are a further development of my discussion in “Performing Landscape as Affirmative Practice” (Arlander 2012a, 368-376).

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We could ask whether such practices could have a therapeutic function? The idea of repetition is perhaps more easily associated with obsessive actions, negotiating repressed or traumatic experiences impossible to articulate or experience directly. But repetition with a difference can be a powerful tool, as feminist theoreticians have argued again and again. By way of repetition, we learn new ways of acting and experiencing. By repeating something that gives us pleasure, joy, or peace, we incorporate those experiences into our lives and turn them into habits. Finding a place to visit, or a pose to “diffract”, and performing a private ritual as an interruption in one’s daily life can function as an affirmation of one’s connection to the living environment, as an action to restore balance, invigorate and energize, or an aid in imagining alternatives, and thus, as a therapeutic practice on a small scale.

Perhaps such activities could be used as pedagogical tools as well, even as a form of performance pedagogy? But teaching what? Not performance skills or communication skills or collaborative skills, not even endurance or willpower, but rather the skill of creating alternative habits or new versions of the self and thus empowering us to develop our lives, at least on some level. Whether this kind of softly affirmative practice could give us a new horizon or something even hinting at “a new world, a new body, a people to come,” as Elisabeth Grosz suggested, is perhaps to ask for too much. Or perhaps it is not. Perhaps we should believe the streetwise girls, who say: you get what you ask for.

## 7.2. Returning to the Stairs - On Temporality and Self-portraiture



Figure 18. *Returning to the Stairs* (2020)

Another kind of video essay or rather digital media exploration related to the year of the rat consists of the video *Returning to the Stairs*<sup>469</sup> (20 min.) made in 2020 and a short text discussing the work in terms of temporality and a possible relationship to cinematic self-portraiture, based on a voice-over narration performed live as an accompaniment to the video.<sup>470</sup>

### **Returning to the stairs**

In July 2020, when I spoke the following words as a voice-over to the video *Returning to the Stairs*,<sup>471</sup> we lived in the year of the golden rat,

469 *Returning to the Stairs* <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/profile/show-work?work=953843>

470 Published in *PARtake: The Journal of Performance as Research* as “Returning to the Stairs – on temporality and self-portraiture” (Arlander 2022a).

471 This text is based on a narration prepared for a presentation at the NSU (Nordic Summer University) meeting 26-27.7.2020 that took place on Harakka Island, the

or metal rat. In 2008, the previous year of the rat, the earth rat, I was performing my sixth year in what was later to be called *Animal Years* on Harakka Island, in Helsinki. Usually, the twelve-year cycle of the Chinese Calendar begins with the rat. My series, however, had begun with the year of the horse. By now, in 2008, that is, I knew I was engaged in a series, wanted to explore different directions on the island and chose the northern shore for my weekly visits. My main work was posing on a rock by the shore in the position resembling the statue of the little mermaid in Copenhagen and standing in the water, taking some water in a jar, and pouring it back to the sea. On the way to the shore, I made an additional video image, placing the camera on a tripod above the stairs, facing North-north-east and then walking down the stairs and back up again. Unlike previous years I tried to stick to a relatively regular time, at dusk right before sunset. The synopsis of the two-channel video installation *Year of the Rat - Uphill - Downhill* (19 min. 12 sec.)<sup>472</sup> in the Centre for Finnish Media Art reads as follows:

1. (left) With a lilac scarf on my shoulders I walk down the steps on the Northern shore of Harakka Island approximately once a week before sunset between 26th January 2008 and 24th January 2009.
2. (right) I walk up the steps during the same times.

On the 21 July 2020 (a few days before the event where this text was performed) I decided to return to those stairs, and record an image with my current camera, using HD quality and 16:9 format, rather than the DV quality and 4:3 format I used in the original

site where these works were made. It was part of my contribution "Precarious Playground", which consisted of an introductory walk and a screening of *Returning to the Stairs* with a voice-over narration performed live.

<sup>472</sup> *Year of the Rat - Uphill - Downhill* (2009) <https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/year-of-the-rat-uphill-downhill/>

work. My plan was to insert the old two-channel work in this new recording, and I wanted to repeat the same action as a frame of sorts, walking up and down the stairs in the beginning and at the end – which meant some careful timing.

Similar revisits and compilations are made for all the twelve years in the *Animal Years* series, as part of my efforts to reactivate or actualize these works today. That is what I promised to do in the plan for the four-year Academy of Finland funded research project *How to Do Things with Performance?* Some years, like the year of the rat, I used several sites and made several works, so I have tried to choose the most important work and revisit that site, or, then make several revisits, like in this case. The site of the main work, *Year of the Rat – Mermaid*, the rock below the stairs, I revisited already in August 2018. That revisit resulted in the video essay “Revisiting the Rock – Self-diffraction as a Strategy”, published in *GPS (Global Performance Studies)*<sup>473</sup> and again here, in the previous chapter.

In most of these video essays or compilations, I have not only returned to the site of the yearly performances for camera, but also revisited texts that I have written with those performances in mind. And that poses a problem for me now, when revisiting *Year of the Rat – Uphill - Downhill*, because I have never written anything about that work. The installation has been shown once after the original exhibition in Katarina gallery in Helsinki in November-December 2009; it was shown in the Helsinki Kunsthalle as part of the exhibition called “Me: Self-portraits Through Time” from May to August 2017. I remember being astonished that it was selected for that show, unbeknownst to me, because I never thought of the work as a self-portrait. But of course, it is a self-portrait, too. And unlike the works where I pose with my back to the camera to downplay my identity and personality and serve as a more general human

473 Arlander 2020c.

figure (even if that is rarely possible), in this work you can clearly see my face and who I am when I walk uphill. Because I am moving, I stand out from the environment, and because the stairs and the white pumphouse in the background are human constructions, the landscape seems secondary, a mere setting. Temporality, however, which is always central in these works depicting a year and the changing seasons, is probably also accentuated by the movement.

I have often explained that I try to depict time passing, but what does that really mean? In a text called “Performing Landscape for Years”<sup>474</sup> I described the twelve-year project that resulted in *Animal Years* with three aspects related to time:

- 1) The cyclical time in nature consequent of the movement of Earth is distinct from humanmade cycles of time. The cyclical time of video-installations (based on nonstop-loops) stands in contrast to the linear or narrative time of most live performances and films and can be compared with cyclical, static and progressive dramaturgy, terms used in classical drama-analysis or with the techniques of time distortion in post-dramatic theatre.
- 2) The duration of production and consumption do not coincide in performances for the camera; the performer’s experience of duration differs from the viewers’ experience of duration watching a video work. A single duration of production can be transformed into various durations of consumption.
- 3) Repetition rather than continuity can produce an experience of extended duration if moments of time are repeated continually. An illusion of real time can be produced for the viewer, which is unlike the shared experience of duration in real-time aesthetics used in

474 Arlander 2014a.

classical performance art. Repetition becomes duration in the experience of the performer, over time, producing a form of refrain, even an existential refrain (Deleuze and Guattari 1987).<sup>475</sup>

By way of conclusion, I added:

The contrast between a comforting cyclical time and the inevitable irreversibility of linear time is actualized at the end of a cycle. At the end of this twelve-year process, after literally performing landscape for years, I ask myself what I have learned about time. And my main observation is embarrassingly trivial: time takes place through constant change, in cycles of various duration, but you do not notice the transformations without attending to the seemingly static elements, the repetitions.<sup>476</sup>

These aspects of temporality are of course specific for that project. Another account of the same project could emphasize other aspects of temporality.<sup>477</sup>

### **Temporalization and self-portraiture**

In a collection called *Performance and Temporalization – Time Happens* (2015), the editors Stuart Grant, Jodie McNeilly and Maeva Veerapen examine temporality from many perspectives. One of their main points is that time is not a given, but the result of processes like “perception, measure, experience and worlding”.<sup>478</sup> “Time is the product of processes of temporalization. Time temporalises, is

<sup>475</sup> Arlander 2014a, 27.

<sup>476</sup> Arlander 2014a, 31.

<sup>477</sup> See for example Arlander 2016a.

<sup>478</sup> Grant, Stuart, McNeilly, Jodie and Veerapen, Maeva (eds.) 2015. *Performance and Temporalisation. Time Happens*. Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 3.

temporalised.”<sup>479</sup> Moreover, performance allows for “unique embodied, emplaced, experiential approaches and perspectives” to “the question of the coming-forth of time”.<sup>480</sup> The editors present various philosophical debates regarding time, like the questions of “tense, passingness, reality, relativity and reversibility”<sup>481</sup> in the analytic philosophical tradition, or the concerns around objective and subjective time in the Continental tradition.<sup>482</sup> While “Heidegger’s early work” elaborates “the structure of time as the basic constitution of the human”<sup>483</sup> the poststructuralists deal with “duration, presence, historicity, narrative, genealogy and process” including “Deleuze’s (1988) appropriation of Bergsonian ‘duration’ and the Whiteheadian ‘event’”.<sup>484</sup> Thus they distinguish several positions and traditions in the philosophical enquiry of time, such as “the analytic, the phenomenological, the poststructuralist and the messianic” and note that the question remains unresolved.<sup>485</sup>

Meanwhile, “performance studies scholars debate notions like liveness and presence”, while “diverse artistic practices engaging places, things and bodies in installations, environmental art and durational performances are concerned with time.”<sup>486</sup> In performance art temporalization is a core concern; film, video and music are explicitly temporal forms and “dancing bodies are not ‘in time’, they are ‘of time’”.<sup>487</sup> Despite the importance of temporality in many forms of art there is nevertheless “a lack of well-developed methods for understanding the experience of time in performance and other

479 Ibid.

480 Ibid.

481 Grant et al. 2015, 4.

482 Ibid.

483 Grant et al. 2015, 5.

484 Ibid.

485 Grant et al. 2015, 6.

486 Grant et al. 2015, 7.

487 Grant et al. 2015, 8-9.

art practices” and “the relations between time, space, place and the world”,<sup>488</sup> they write. The collection is divided into four sections focused on 1) world, space, and place, 2) self, movement, and body, 3) image, performance, and technology and finally 4) apotheosis. The text that I will utilize here is from the third part, namely “A Certain Dark Corner of Modern Cinema” by Adrian Martin.<sup>489</sup>

Martin discusses the celebrated filmmaker Naomi Kawase’s cinematic self-portraits and contextualizes them within the discussion of self-portraits in experimental film and video, such as the work on its genealogy by Raymond Bellour. Bellour understands the “truly fragile vein of exploration in the audiovisual self-portrait” as “a certain dark corner of modern cinema”<sup>490</sup> despite canonical and celebrated self-portraits such as Chris Marker’s *Sunless* (1982). Martin places Kawase in that dark corner as well. I would not place my video works in that corner, however, and in the following I am by no means juxtaposing my work with Kawase’s. Rather, I utilize some of the classic distinctions that Martin refers to, to analyze my work.

To begin with I use neither of the “two essential gestures of this pictorial form: filming oneself in the mirror... and filming one’s own elongated uncanny shadow”<sup>491</sup>, but show my body more directly. The artist’s body is “at the core of the filmic self-portrait, but almost never at its literal, visible centre,”<sup>492</sup> Martin writes. “If we see the artist’s body at all, it is usually through an indirect, fleeting mediation”<sup>493</sup> like a shadow, or an accidental reflection. There is, however, an “inescapable documentary aspect” in cinematic self-portraits,

488 Grant et al. 2015, 11.

489 Martin 2015, 180-189.

490 Martin 2015, 181.

491 Martin 2015, 181.

492 Martin 2015, 182.

493 Ibid.

including “the evidence of time passing, of ageing, of mortality”.<sup>494</sup> And that aspect is clear in my work as well.

Martin refers to Michel Serres’ idea of multiple spaces and the body, which “moves in Euclidean space, ... *sees* in one space (projective), *feels* in another (topological), *suffers* in yet another (somatic).”<sup>495</sup> These spaces relate to the “three major dimensions or orderings of time operative in cinema (and its subsequent mediations in video and media arts)”, he adds, which could be simplified to “‘story time’, ‘plot time’ and ‘emotional time’”.<sup>496</sup> He describes them as follows: “Story time is the complete, imaginable slice of time covered or evoked within a narrative, conceived in a linear, unfolding sense”.<sup>497</sup> In my example this could be either the year of the rat in 2008-2009, or the total span of time from 2008 to 2020. “Plot time refers to the specific ordering of story time into a structure that lasts the duration of the work – usually in a condensed and shuffled, achronological form, with flashbacks, flashforwards, ellipses and so on.”<sup>498</sup> Only in the case of so-called ‘real time’ do these two dimensions coincide. In my example there are no flashbacks or flashforwards, but plenty of ellipses formed by the jump-cuts between the weekly repetitions in 2008, as well as the big jump of twelve years between the year of the rat then and now. The third dimension, or emotional time, “time as an elastic or plastic matter that contracts or expands according to how we *feel* or experience it”<sup>499</sup> is perhaps the most problematic one in my case. Does the rather mechanical repetition evoke boredom in the viewer, or induce calm and peacefulness, or perhaps apprehension in the face of the inevitable...?

494 Ibid.

495 Martin 2015, 182.

496 Martin 2015, 183.

497 Ibid.

498 Ibid.

499 Ibid.

Martin discusses “two major, dominant options: cutting (montage) versus long take (*mise en scène*)”.<sup>500</sup> He notes that there are film directors associated with the cut or edit and the contrast, shock or ‘third meaning’ created by the connection of two shots and other directors associated with “the *long take*, the organic coherence and clarity of real space unfolding in time”.<sup>501</sup> He emphasizes, however, that there is a third way, combining both. Martin mentions the critique towards some of the films trying to follow this ‘third way’ as “modishly New Age” presumably suggesting that “we are all one with nature; past, present and future trace a single, unbroken weave; we all form one, collective soul; and so on.”<sup>502</sup> I would not place my work in any of these categories – and I would not claim it to be film – although I can understand that the monotonous repetition of the same image and the recording of the seasons might suggest something resembling this ‘third way’. Unlike some other years where I sit immobile on a rock or in a tree, however, the movement up and down the stairs does not invite readings that focus on the human figure merging with the environment or the like. The movement keeps focus tightly on the human moving, although the seasonal changes that provide the main development or narrative in this cyclic structure give some prominence to the place and the environment.

The idea of a self-portrait, however, is the most puzzling one. Compared with more traditional filmic self-portraits where the filmmaker as filmmaker, as the provider of a personal subjective perspective on the world, is somehow foregrounded, the self-portrait here is rather blunt and simple, seemingly objective rather than subjective simply because the camera is static, on a tripod. Walking up and down the same stairs with the same scarf, come rain or shine,

500 Martin 2015, 186.

501 Ibid.

502 Martin 2015, 187.

provides an almost embarrassingly brutal, even comical depiction of a stubborn artist, probably creating associations to obsession rather than research. As one variation among many in a series of years, a series of attempts at exploring repetitive actions that can become cyclical, the work nevertheless has a place, and some relevance, I hope. And through the double perspective provided by combining a previously created time-lapse video with the repetition of the action in real-time, temporality is foregrounded, for sure.

At this point I would like to invite the reader to watch the 20-minute video *Returning to the Stairs*<sup>503</sup> and observe what reflections or diffractions on temporality they will experience...

### **Some concluding remarks**

When returning to the video I looked at the details distinguishing the revisit, the real-time video from 2020 serving as the frame for the time-lapse video, the inserted two-channel installation from 2009. One such detail is the reddish-brown private dress standing out against the greenery during the revisit in contrast to the pale lilac scarf, which I wear over black clothes during the repeated performances. The size of the scarf was much larger than I remembered, and when I looked more carefully, I saw that it really does shrink during the year, probably because of being soaked in various seas, and is much smaller at the end than in the beginning – a curious materialization of time passing, albeit within that one year rather than between 2009 and 2020.

The contrast between the real-time video and the time-lapse, the “now” (2020) and the repeated “double flash-back” (2008-2009), is further accentuated by a passing boat and some people walking through the image “now”. The framing is slightly different, too, with the opposite shore visible behind the trees only in the time-lapse, not

503 The video *Returning to the Stairs* on Vimeo: <https://vimeo.com/779424719>

in the real time image. The trees and shrubs have grown, and the movement of the leaves in the wind keep the real-time image alive. The time of day and the direction of the light accentuate the greenery and the shadows in the real-time frame, while the flashbacks are all recorded in evening light and seem mostly pale. Thus, not even the summer images in the time-lapse fully coincide with the frame.

Another surprise was the direction of the action on the stairs. In the beginning the human figure walks uphill towards the viewer past the camera, and at the end she walks downhill disappearing into the image. This makes sense as an idea; she comes to the stairs to look and remember and then goes away again. While performing my action was the opposite: placing the camera on the tripod, turning it on, walking down the stairs, waiting for a moment, and then returning up the stairs to turn off the camera. When returning to the video now, I see that not only the temporal layers of the images are mixed, but also the memories of the real actions. For a reader-viewer a somewhat similar layering might take place, if the action in the images is mixed with other related memories of stairs or walking – uphill, downhill, now, and then.





Figure 19. *Year of the Ox – Walking in circles* (2010)

## 8. Revisiting the Year of the Ox

In the year of the ox (2009-2010), I worked on several sites related to the military history of the island, wearing a rust-coloured scarf. The year of the ox begins the second part of *Animal Years*; it was the first full year recorded with HD quality and in film format. I had made some experiments with my new camera during the previous year, but now the change was implemented for real. This also meant that the purpose of the revisits changed, because now there was no longer a big difference in image quality or format. I did not revisit the rusty buoy on the hill that I was riding on<sup>504</sup>, nor the niche in the wall,<sup>505</sup> nor the rocks by the shore where I sat in a yoke<sup>506</sup>, but chose to return to the rusty ring that I had been chained to and circling around for a year and a day and night.<sup>507</sup> The revisit took place on 20 December 2018 and the video compilation *Revisiting the Rusty Ring*<sup>508</sup> was presented at the Research Day IV on 20 March 2019.<sup>509</sup>

504 *Year of the Ox – Riding a Buoy* (2010) <https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/year-of-the-ox-riding-a-buoy/>

505 *Year of the Ox – Sitting in the Wall* (2010) <https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/year-of-the-ox-sitting-in-the-wall/>

506 *Year of the Ox – In a Yoke 1-2* (2010) <https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/year-of-the-ox-in-a-yoke-1-2/>

507 *Year of the Ox – Walking in Circles* (2010) <https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/year-of-the-ox-walking-in-circles/>, *Year of the Ox – Walking in Circles (short)* <https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/year-of-the-ox-walking-in-circles-short/> and *Day and Night of the Ox* (2010) <https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/day-and-night-of-the-ox/>

508 *Revisiting the Rusty Ring* (21 min. 20 sec.) <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/profile/show-work?work=592843>

509 See documentation of Research Day IV: Performance and Feminism <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/281037/281038/1030/2778>

The video was later reworked into a video essay for *PARTake Journal*, “Returning to the Rusty Ring – Ecofeminism today?”<sup>510</sup> At this half-way point in the series, before taking up the discussion on ecofeminism, it is worth taking a closer look at the site, Harakka island. An older text dealing with the year of the ox and the island, as well as the idea of site more generally, called “Performing Time Through Place”<sup>511</sup> (2012) is here slightly updated.

510 “Returning to the Rusty Ring – Ecofeminism today?” *PARTake* Vol 3. No 1 (2020) (Arlander 2020d) <https://journals.colorado.edu/index.php/partake/article/view/473>

511 Published in Riku Roihankorpi and Teemu Paavolainen (eds.) *SPACE-EVENT-AGENCY-EXPERIENCE* Open Access E-Publication of the DREX Project. Centre for Practice as Research in Theatre. University of Tampere 2012. (Arlander 2012d, no longer available online).

## 8.1. Performing Time Through Place



Figure 20. *Year of the Ox – Riding a Buoy* (2010)

Performances that take place in public spaces are mostly presented for an art audience as video documentations; performances based on live interaction end up as video clips on the web. The trend of a double audience, one for the event, another for the document, has characterized performance art from early on.<sup>512</sup> Live Art practices or site-specific performances have participants on location simultaneously with viewers on the web.<sup>513</sup> In site-based projects within contemporary art the site of intervention and site of effect are pulled apart.<sup>514</sup> This development has implications for all kinds of performance practices. One possible consequence of performances created increasingly for the camera is the opportunity to take a renewed interest in place, in the materiality of the site. Some projects

512 Auslander 2006.

513 Hill & Paris (eds.) 2006.

514 Kwon 2002.

created on an island off Helsinki in 2009, titled *Year of the Ox*, will serve as examples of private performances created in a public space and documented as video works, thus aimed for several audiences. They focus on place as a process, as an event, as a crossroads of influences<sup>515</sup> providing material to discuss contrasting aspects of place and its relationship to landscape.<sup>516</sup>

By private performances I mean performances for an audience of one (the performer herself) or for the camera – except for occasional passers-by and some birds in this case – and repeated as a private practice or diary, not personal in a confessional or autobiographical sense or intimate as in so called one-on-one performances.<sup>517</sup> By public space I mean areas accessible to the general public, including urban nature, like a small island close to the centre of Helsinki in this case, part nature preservation area, part recreational area, part historical remains. Public space is often understood as a mainly urban phenomenon, with nature excluded from the idea. In countries like Finland nature or park-like areas form a large part of cities and are clearly publicly owned and used. The works titled *Year of the Ox*, which I use as my examples, consist of a sequence of performances, in which I return to the same place once a week for a year, and perform a simple action with the aim of producing a video to foreground the changes in the landscape. These performances took place from January 2008 to January 2009, during the Chinese year of the ox. They were presented as video works for the first time in the Muu gallery in Helsinki in September 2010, and are distributed for screening or installation use by the Distribution Centre for Finnish Media Art.

515 Massey 1994; Massey 2005; Ingold 2010, 33.

516 Wylie 2007; Ingold 2000.

517 One-on-one performances are increasingly popular within Live Art. See Zerihan (ed., n.d.).

This text consists of several parts.<sup>518</sup> To begin with I describe briefly the possibilities afforded by performing for camera, then I discuss Doreen Massey's idea of place as meeting place and what that could mean in my examples; then I describe the context for this project and discuss the different uses of repetition in it. In the end I explore various approaches to place in my examples by bringing in Tim Ingold's notions of taskscape and wayfaring.

### **Performing for the camera as a means of production**

The focus on recorded or mediated performances enables a renewed interest in place. Since most performances end up as video clips on the web in the last instance,<sup>519</sup> it is possible to focus on the specificity of place, not only on a specific audience. This interest is somewhat paradoxical, because one of the main ideas with documenting and recording is to be able to enjoy something in a different place and time than the one in which the recorded event took place. When live performance is the main distribution technology, the performance must be presented in a place suitable for the target audience. If not, one can choose a place that is important or special, and invite only a few people there, or rely on chance encounters for the primary audience, or then trust the camera as the sole witness and build one's work, "the final result", on what remains, on documentations, which will hopefully find a secondary audience and a posterior life. Performing mainly or even entirely

518 This text is based on the paper "Private performances in public spaces" presented at the Performance Studies International Conference *Performing Publics* in Toronto, 9-12 June 2010, and on the presentation "Exhausting modernity - Repetition and time in the year of the ox, liveness in the shadow of the hawthorn" at the IFRT/FIRT World Congress *Cultures of Modernity* in Munich, 25-31 July 2010.

519 On YouTube, Vimeo, private websites, and so on.

for the camera creates new possibilities for the production itself. In my examples these include:

- 1) The choice of a special or marginal place, not easily available to many people or with a fragile nature that must be protected from too many visitors; not everybody needs to come to the site.
- 2) The choice of unconventional duration and process, like repeating an action once a week for a year; it would be cumbersome to ask people to come and witness a performance every week.
- 3) The choice of an insignificant activity, like walking in circles or sitting in a niche in a wall, which would not hold the attention of an audience alone; the performance is produced by repetition and by editing, not by a single event.<sup>520</sup>
- 4) The choice of addressing a secondary audience who would not bother to visit the place or be interested in this type of activity in situ; they could nevertheless enjoy it on video or on the web.
- 5) The choice of a practice with an impact on the performer, regardless of the effect possibly aimed for the viewer of the documentation.

Different approaches to almost the same place exemplify these options. All variations of *Year of the Ox* are part of an on-going process in which I return to the same place once a week for a year and perform a simple action for a fairly short duration each time. In one variation, *Year of the Ox – Walking in Circles*,<sup>521</sup> I locked myself with

520 Working with documentation of a performance as material provides the option of a new kind of semi-fictional performance taking place in the picture space or the film space – what Philip Auslander discusses as theatrical documentation, using Yves Klein's constructed photo *Leap into the Void* as a classic example (Auslander 2006, 1-2).

521 Two versions exist of this work: one 90 minutes, for installation use *Year of the Ox – Walking in Circles* <https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/year-of-the-ox-walking-in-circles/>

a chain to an iron ring attached to the cliff and walked around it six or seven times once a week for a year. In another variation, *Year of the Ox – Riding a Buoy*,<sup>522</sup> I rode on a rusty buoy on the hill, clothed in a rust-coloured scarf that combined us into one shape, again once a week. In a third variation, *Year of the Ox – Sitting in the Wall*,<sup>523</sup> I sat in a niche in the fortification wall and in a fourth one, *Year of the Ox – in a Yoke*,<sup>524</sup> I sat on the shore with a piece of wood on my back. In addition to these variations repeated for a year I walked in circles around the iron ring for a day and a night on the first of May, *Day and Night of the Ox*.<sup>525</sup> No audience was present, besides birds, or occasional passers-by. The camera on a tripod was the witness, documenting on video these actions and changes in the surrounding landscape.

The video works created from the documentation of these performances combine a documentary quality produced by rough camerawork (camera on tripod, with automatic focus) resembling “live recording,” and a semi-fictional effect, because cutting the beginning and end of each action or my entering or exiting a pose produces an illusion of continuity.<sup>526</sup> In comparison with these works based on repetition and editing, one part of the same project, a performance

- and one 20 minutes, for screening, *Year of the Ox – Walking in Circles (short)*  
<https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/year-of-the-ox-walking-in-circles-short/>
- 522 *Year of the Ox – Riding a Buoy* (2010) <https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/year-of-the-ox-riding-a-buoy/>
- 523 *Year of the Ox – Sitting in a Wall* (2010) <https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/year-of-the-ox-sitting-in-the-wall/>
- 524 *Year of the Ox – In a Yoke 1-2* (2010) <https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/year-of-the-ox-in-a-yoke-1-2/>
- 525 *Day and Night of the Ox* (2010) <https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/day-and-night-of-the-ox/>
- 526 This topic I have discussed in a paper at the NSU (Nordic Summer University) meeting *Documentation, Performance and Re-search*, Tampere University 31 Jan 2009, published in abbreviated form in Arlander 2009a.

called *Annual Rings*<sup>527</sup> around another iron ring on the same cliffs, can serve as an example of a traditional approach to performance. The first version was performed in summertime for a live audience present at the site, the second version, in winter, was performed for the camera, once only. After making the first editing experiments I decided to combine the works in pairs when presenting them for the first time. The first pair consisted of walking around the iron ring on Harakka, *Year of the Ox – Walking in Circles* (once a week for a year) and *Day and Night of the Ox* (for a day and night with two-hour intervals), accentuating the double circular movement and the cycles of time. The second pair consisted of sitting figures: *Year of the Ox – Riding a Buoy* (sitting on the buoy once a week for a year, on Harakka) was combined and synchronized with riding on cliffs and tree stumps in various places, a work called *Year of the Ox – On Rock and Wood*<sup>528</sup> (recorded on the island of Gomera and elsewhere with the same scarf, with various distances to the camera), thus contrasting a static and a constantly changing image composition. A different approach was used for the rest of the works. *Sitting in the Wall* is a single channel work, for installation use, while *In a Yoke* is a short piece for screening, almost a joke.

The place was in focus in all versions; the site was chosen with the visual impact and meaning of the place rather than with public accessibility in mind. (The fact that I have my studio on the island was relevant as well.) Unlike the actual performances, which practically nobody saw, the video works can be shown almost anywhere; though a two-channel video installation with projections is site-specific to some extent and creates a completely different experience for

527 The summer version of the performance “Vuosirenkaat” [Annual Rings] took place as part of the event Harakan muisti [Memory of Harakka], the winter version was made for camera only. <https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/annual-rings/>

528 *Year of the Ox – On Rock and Wood* (2010) <https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/year-of-the-ox-on-rock-and-wood/>

a viewer than a single channel work for screening. And the publics these works are addressing are different. For video works it is easy to imagine a potentially unlimited audience, although it is clearly limited by the technology used and the technology available for the viewers. Inevitably video documentation can show only some aspects of a place. Places, like landscapes, are mostly experienced in a multisensory way through active engagement, as environmental aestheticians have long insisted.<sup>529</sup> In these cases the focus on specific details, locations and objects served to emphasize the temporality of landscape,<sup>530</sup> the event of place<sup>531</sup>.

### **Place as event, as a meeting place**

Thirty years ago, in “A Global Sense of Place”<sup>532</sup> geographer Doreen Massey discussed the effects of our living in a world defined by the so called “time-space compression” and the difficulties of thinking about the specificity of the local in such circumstances. She noted that there is an increasing uncertainty to what we mean by places and sometimes an idealized notion of places supposedly inhabited by coherent and homogenous communities is contrasted with the current situation. However, place and community have only rarely been coterminous. The romantic or even nationalistic longing for places and seeking the sense of place is seen by many as inevitably reactionary, like searching for comfort in the past or in some imaginary rootedness and evading the challenges of contemporary life. Massey wanted to challenge this view and tried to create an understanding of place not as self-enclosing and defensive but as opening outwards, as a meeting place for various influences rather

529 For example, Berleant 1997, 12-13.

530 Ingold 2000, 201.

531 Massey 2005, 130.

532 Massey 1994.

than defined through its borders. She presented an alternative interpretation of place, one that allows for a sense of place which is extroverted, which integrates the global and the local:

[W]hat gives a place its specificity is not some long-internalized history but the fact that it is constructed out of a particular constellation of social relations... movements and communications... [T]hen each place can be seen as a particular, unique point of their intersection. It is indeed a meeting place. Instead of thinking of places as areas with boundaries around, they can be imagined as articulated moments in networks of social relations and understandings... constructed on a far larger scale than what we happen to define for that moment as the place itself.<sup>533</sup>

She highlighted several ways in which to develop a dynamic and more progressive concept of place. First of all, places are processes, like the social interactions that are tied together by them are processes. Secondly, places do not have boundaries that would be necessary for their definition; they can be understood not in opposition to an outside but through their links with that outside. Thirdly, places do not have single “identities” but are full of internal conflicts (about their past as well as their future). Fourthly, the specificity of a place is continually reproduced, by the globalisation of social relations (and uneven development) and from layers of different sets of linkages. The character of a place can only be constructed by linking that place to places beyond. We need a global sense of the local, she concludes, a global sense of place.<sup>534</sup>

In a later summary of her ideas, *For Space* (2005), Massey defines space as “a simultaneity of stories-so-far” and places as “collections

533 Massey 1994, 7.

534 Massey 1994, 7-8.

of those stories, articulations within the wider power-geometries of space,”<sup>535</sup> as products of disconnections and exclusions as well as intersections and inclusions. “Places not as points or areas on maps, but as integrations of space and time; *as spatio-temporal events*.”<sup>536</sup> Place as a temporary constellation includes differing temporalities, not only of social encounters but geological processes, like tectonic movements of seemingly timeless rock formations. There is no ground in the sense of stable position, she insists, and no way of going back to nature, of trying to hold nature still.<sup>537</sup> But where is “here”, she asks, if there are no fixed points. Referring to Bruno Latour’s observation that essences become events she coins the term *event of place* and maintains that “here” is necessarily here and now. “It won’t be the same here when it is no longer now.”<sup>538</sup> Now is as problematic as here, however, since spatial narratives and trajectories all have their own temporalities; for those who meet in a place some there and then is implicated in the here and now.<sup>539</sup> “[W]hat is special about place is ... that throwntogetherness, the ... challenge of negotiating a here-and-now ... which must take place within and between both human and nonhuman.”<sup>540</sup> The event of place in the most basic sense refers to a constellation of processes rather than a thing, to place as internally multiple, a coming together of trajectories.<sup>541</sup>

535 Massey 2005, 130.

536 Ibid.

537 Massey 2005, 137.

538 Massey 2005, 139.

539 Ibid.

540 Massey 2005, 140.

541 Massey 2005, 141.

### **Harakka island as a meeting place**

Following Massey's idea of place as an event and a meeting place, we can analyse Harakka Island, the site of my examples, as the meeting place of numerous groups of creatures with different interests and needs. To name just a few:

- 1) The Environment Centre of the City of Helsinki governs the nature preservation areas on the island, protected either because of rare vegetation or as nesting areas for birds, and maintains the nature house as well as aquariums and exhibition spaces in the old ammunition cellars.<sup>542</sup>
- 2) The Cultural Centre of the City of Helsinki governs the main building, rents studios for artists and the auditorium for organizers of seminars.<sup>543</sup>
- 3) The National Board of Antiquities guards the preservation of the fortifications and the old military structures and the restrictions in the use of the main building.
- 4) The caretakers' family living on the island negotiate their gardening, maintenance duties etc.
- 5) A regularly visiting scientist couple gathers data of butterflies with lamps placed in different places in the terrain year after year.
- 6) Bird watchers visit the small hut on the south-eastern shore of the island to remain unobserved while observing the migration of seabirds.
- 7) School children taking part in excursions organized on the island often prefer to roam freely disregarding the protected areas.

542 About the Harakka Nature Centre, see <https://www.hel.fi/en/urban-environment-and-traffic/protection-of-the-environment-and-nature/environmental-education-and-the-nature-centre/harakka-nature-centre>

543 About the Culture Centre, today Culture and Leisure Division <https://www.hel.fi/en/decision-making/city-organization/divisions/culture-and-leisure-division>

- 8) Visitors coming for picnics or to walk the so-called nature path around the island appreciate the stairs with rails and ask for a cafeteria.
- 9) Artists who rent studios in the main building would like to renovate their spaces freely and work in peace and isolation on the island.<sup>544</sup>
- 10) Organizers of events who rent the auditorium would prefer catering and easy access by boat all year.
- 11) People with boats, who do not have access officially, sometimes land on the pier in any case.
- 12) Local politicians would like to create more profitable uses for the island.
- 13) Dogs, who are not allowed on the island (because of the birds) are sometimes brought there (especially in winter), regardless of all warning signs.
- 14) Global visitors like the Barnacle geese occupy the island for parts of the year.

And so on. Listing all the species of birds that nest on the island would be impossible here. And what about the fish on display in the aquariums, or those living in the surrounding sea? The island is jointly inhabited by a plethora of creatures.

The identity of an island is to some extent based on its borders. Harakka Island, however, is historically related to the nearby islands of the Suomenlinna Sea Fortress,<sup>545</sup> a UNESCO world heritage site, and the rest of the archipelago around Helsinki, which is still gradually rising from the sea after the ice age. The island is slowly expanding and geologically interesting as well, since various rock formations and traces of the ice are visible on the (relatively) bare cliffs.

544 About the Artists' House <https://harakka.fi/briefly-in-english/>

545 For a presentation of the fortress island, a major tourist attraction in Helsinki, see <https://www.suomenlinna.fi/en/>

The recent history of the island is an example of a crossroads of influences, too, as the few buildings on the island testify. Queen Kristina donated the island to the city of Helsinki in 1643 and the first fortifications were commenced during the time of Swedish rule in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The state bought the island from the city in 1869 and the fortifications and ammunition cellars in their current form were built between 1878 and 1894 by the Russian military. The wooden buildings, like the old telegraph, which is used as a summer gallery today, date from the time of Russian rule. Since independence in 1917 and the Treaty of Tartu in 1920 the Finnish state governed the island, with the large stone building designed by Oiva Kallio and built in 1928 to be used as the chemical research laboratory of the Finnish Armed Forces. And on top of these historical layers, there is a bunker for dismantling land mines built after the Second World War in the southern part of the island. Since 1989 the island is again owned by the city of Helsinki, mainly occupied by environmentalists and artists, and transformed from a closed military area into an educational park for ecological recreation.<sup>546</sup> Military history and maritime nature have co-created the environment, which is continually changing. Some rare vegetation dates to Russian times, from seeds coming with the building materials and workers from the east. The plants were preserved on the island because of the years of restricted access to the public. Other plants remain from the chemical researchers' hobbies, like the old garden with cultivated spring flowers gone wild, below the spruce tree in the centre of the island. The southern tip is closed for visitors in summertime during the sea birds' nesting season. Some of the birds are relatively new arrivals, like the Barnacle geese, which have begun to nest on the island during the last twenty years.

546 See information about the island <https://www.hel.fi/en/culture-and-leisure/outdoor-activities-parks-and-nature-destinations/islands/harakka-island>

In this case the materiality of the site means on one hand the economic and social conditions that have created the environment, and the various forms of material historical remains, like the traces of the navy, the old rusty buoy, and the iron ring on the cliff, which I used in my performances. On the other hand, its materiality includes the living occupants, who produce and constantly recreate the place. A good example is the effect of the geese. They have completely transformed the former sand yards of the island by their excrements, which function as a strong fertilizer. Today the sand yards are overgrown with grass and shrubs.

A small island is easily conceived as a meeting place. The occasional fishermen of earlier times, when the island was only an islet far out at sea, the Swedes beginning the fortifications, the Russian soldiers and officers creating the fortifications and the wooden buildings, the Finnish soldier-chemists and researchers experimenting with gasmasks and explosives in the laboratories, the materials washed ashore from ships passing by and later the various inhabitants of Helsinki and the visiting tourists finding an easy place to experience “wild nature” close to the city centre, not to forget the artists and the environmentalists who work there today; all these and many more meet on that small rocky piece of land and contribute to its specific sense of place. In this case it is easy to understand that there is no single identity and that place and community do not coincide. Over the years various communities have used the island, and today several different groups share the place. Most of the inhabitants come and go like the migrating birds.

### **Practical context for Year of the Ox**

*Year of the Ox* was the 8<sup>th</sup> year in a series of attempts at performing landscape on Harakka Island. The series was based on the Chinese calendar, which consists of twelve yearly cycles where each year is named after an animal. I have developed a mode of working where

I document the landscape by video recording myself in the same place, dressed in the same scarf once a week for one year. Each year I have recorded a day and a night as well. Moreover, every year I have videoed small studies in various landscapes somewhere around the world. Each year I have chosen a specific approach to the landscape and tried to focus attention on a particular aspect of the environment, with a different relationship between my body and the surroundings. The position of the human figure in the landscape and in the picture space have varied from a domineering position covering part of the view to a tiny figure forming the focal point in the scenery, with references to classical and romantic landscape painting.<sup>547</sup> I have played with the tradition of performance art, too, in which performances based on endurance use one year as their time span, like the durational works of Taching Hsieh<sup>548</sup> and Linda Montano.<sup>549</sup> My main aim has been to emphasize the passing of time by showing the shifts in the landscape according to changing seasons, weather conditions and the climate.

This practice combines approaches in performance art, video art, and environmental art. As a working method it is rather traditional, even “old fashioned” compared to more filmic and narrative approaches used by many contemporary video artists.<sup>550</sup> Due to the use of simple technology this way of working can be related to current issues as well, like the relationship between art and the everyday. The videos, the final artworks, do not offer the viewer a chance to participate or interact as many relational works do today. Rather I hope they could function as an inspiration for the viewers

547 Andrews 1999.

548 Heathfield & Hsieh 2009.

549 Linda Montano's website: <https://www.lindamontano.com/index.html>

550 Iles 2000.

to “try this at home,” as an encouragement to undertake something similar on their own.

During the year 2009 I was using a rust-coloured woollen scarf for the performances on the island and in different parts of the world. That year the places I returned to were related to the military and naval past of the island, with rust as the starting point. I was sitting on a rusty buoy on the hill and walking around a rusty ring fastened on the cliff, but I was also sitting in a niche in the fortification wall or at the shore with a piece of wood on my back. I played with some ideas of the past of the place and with the thought of riding an ox, of walking chained like an ox, of wearing a yoke like an ox. The main purpose of these works was not to tell a story of the military and maritime past of the place, but to bring attention to the changes in the landscape following the changing seasons, weather conditions and the climate and thus to demonstrate time, to show the passing of time. One can also connect them to traditional Buddhist ox herding pictures, which have been used as an aid in self-realization,<sup>551</sup> though the emphasis in these works was not on a spiritual practice but on the performer’s physical-material experience of the environment.

If we compare the approaches to place in these works, they seem to imply different relationships to site despite their common mode of production through repeated returning. Walking in circles tied with a rusty chain to the iron ring on the cliff suggests one kind of sense of place, being tied to the spot literally, like a prisoner or some of the forced laborers working on the island repairing the Russian barques in historical times. Riding a rusty buoy means being equally tied to the spot, even more static, immobile, but could also refer to a statue of some military hero, or then a fantasy figure travelling in the imagination only, a baron Munchausen riding on

551 Daido Looi 2002.

his canon ball. Perhaps the image could be seen as an ironic commentary on Po Chang's paradox of riding an ox in search of an ox.<sup>552</sup> As mentioned before, these works were produced by documenting a series of repeated performances and by editing the material into a continuous action or pose, a fiction of sorts. We could assume that the works gain part of their effect from their documentary feel, from being recorded live, as a real action, not constructed for the camera in the studio or created by photo-shopping the background. All of them use repeated images of a single place to create an experience or illusion of the passing of time. The place becomes the protagonist through repetition. But the place is not narrating its own story; the place presents itself as a process and tells the story of time passing.

### **Repetition and time in *Year of the Ox***

Doreen Massey's on-going critique concerns the understanding of space and time as opposites, where time is equated with movement and progress and space is understood as stasis and reaction. In *For Space*, she convincingly argues that in reality space and time cannot be separated.<sup>553</sup> Time is a central theme of the twelve-year project, focusing on seasonal changes due to the cyclical nature of our planetary time, based on the movement of the earth around the sun and around its own axis. The project is documenting the changes in the landscape in one particular place (actually several locations within one place) for one year as well as during one day and a night of that year. Time is important also in the sense of experienced time or duration, since this practice aims at producing time on a personal level, something I have discussed elsewhere.<sup>554</sup>

552 Kershaw 2007, 52.

553 Massey 2005, 9-19.

554 For example, in Arlander 2009b.

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If formulated as a score of actions, an instruction or recipe, this project seems to consist of sheer repetition: Take the same scarf and go to the same place, put the camera on tripod in the same spot and choose the same framing, perform the same action in the same spot in front of the camera etc. Repeat this procedure once a week for a year. Repeat the same procedure the following year, but choose a new place, a new scarf, a new spot for the camera, a new action to perform and so on. Of course, the “new” is relative, and could be considered a variation of the preceding choices and is thus a kind of repetition again. This way of working with landscape could be called a generative process in a broad sense, since repetition is utilized to generate material with variations, which can then be put together more or less automatically and chronologically, that is, using all the versions in the order they have been created. The interesting changes are caused by the changing seasons and weather conditions as well as various accidental occurrences, around the basic structure of a few initial choices. Repetition is the main compositional strategy. To put it roughly, I make one artistic choice a year and then repeat it again and again. But in a traditional theatrical sense I never repeat, nor do I rehearse.

Considering repetition in performance we can first distinguish between the use of repetition in the creation of work and the use of repetition in its distribution, though this is a simplification of course. In standard stage performance, repetition is used in rehearsal to develop and “fix” the performance. And repetition is used for distribution when the performance is repeated for new audiences. A third dimension of repetition is brought into play when repetition is used as a compositional tool, as in much modern and contemporary performance and dance. In *Year of the Ox* the two first types of repetition are missing. Firstly, I do not use repetition in the creation process to develop and fix a performance; I do not repeat the actions to find the right version. I use repetition to generate material, but instead

of discarding previous versions, as in rehearsal, I repeat an action to have many versions of it. Every variation is more or less like the previous ones, and they are all used in the final work. Secondly, I am not repeating the performance for new audiences. Only the edited video work is shown to the public, and can be repeated, rearranged or adapted to various circumstances. Nevertheless, repetition is an important aesthetic principle; it is what the audience sees.

When using repetition as an aesthetic principle or a compositional strategy, we can ask what is repeated and what changes? What stays almost the same every time, and what is constantly shifting? By repeating something you can focus the attention of the viewer on the repeated action and the small variations in it. Or, by repeating an action or pose you can focus the viewer's attention on that which is not repeated around the action, but changes, like the surrounding landscape. However, for a spectator very much tuned to watching people only, the latter might be hard to accomplish. *Year of the Ox* is one instance of repetition in a series of twelve years. There is variation in the repetition however, from year to year; repetition and variation function on the macro level, too. There are variations within each one-year project as well. Most years I have chosen two or more actions or positions and used several places. We can distinguish several levels of repetition during the year.

Within the cycle of twelve years, what is repeated, what is changing? What is new for this particular year? During the year of the ox (2009) I used a brown scarf (compared to a lilac scarf the previous year), rusty iron elements like a buoy and a metal ring, related to the military past of the island (rather than changes in the water level on the shore the previous year), and sites in the south-eastern part of the island, mainly (compared to north-east the previous year). Within the cycle of one year, what is repeated, what is changing? During the year of the ox (2009) four actions were repeated in four places on the island: walking in circles, riding a buoy, sitting

in a niche in the wall, sitting on the shore with a piece of wood on my back. Within one place, like walking around the iron ring, one version consists of repetition once a week for a year and another version of one day and night with two-hour intervals. Within one action, like one session of walking in circles, I repeated the circle six times (no more was possible without the chain starting to twist into a knot). Walking involves repetition; left foot front, right foot front, left foot front and so on. Life consists of repetitions, breathing in and breathing out.<sup>555</sup> And of course there were other repetitions involved, like locking the chain to the iron ring and unlocking it again after the performance, placing the tripod in the same place as exactly as possible and adjusting the framing of the image to be repeated as exactly as possible, and so on.

All these repetitions produce small variations, the main variation nevertheless being the shifting landscape, changing seasons, weather conditions, time of year and time of day. There are also chance occurrences like a bird building its nest on my path or occasional passers-by entering the image. Some changes are more like developments, as when I found a pair of brown trousers to go with the scarf rather than the blue jeans that I started the year with. The rhythm of my walking is shifting each time, since I do not try to control it. The camera position, too, tends to shift, though that I do my best to control. *Year of the Ox* is all about repetition, and time. Perhaps we could even call it a refrain.<sup>556</sup>

### **Simultaneity and process**

By emphasizing the cyclical nature of time, do I unwillingly strengthen a static conception of space? An image of the world where the planet turns around its own axis day after day, and circles around

555 In Live Art this has been emphasized by Anthony Howell 1999.

556 See Deleuze & Guattari 2004, 342-86 ("1837: Of the Refrain").

the sun year after year in an eternal return, a static worldview? How to perform landscape in a way that is not nostalgic or conservative, keeping in mind the long tradition of landscape painting commemorating the possessions of the wealthy? If one is interested in the materiality of place, of specific places, how to avoid a protectionist and even reactionary approach to place?

If we understand space like Massey, as a dimension of relations, of simultaneity, of parallel existences, this quality does not come to the fore in the individual video works, since each work concentrates on one viewpoint on one place. The idea of the simultaneous existence of various viewpoints and temporalities becomes apparent in an installation, however, when several versions or interpretations of the year are juxtaposed, such as riding on a buoy and riding on rocks or walking in circles for a year and for a day and night, and are presented next to each other. These works do not stress the place as a meeting place in any obvious sense; only one human figure is involved. Attention is focused on aspects that usually tend to form the ground and background of meetings, while those who meet, whether humans or animals, take centre stage. Inevitably that happens in these works as well; probably the most exciting moments consist of negotiations concerning territorial rights when a goose or seagull couple have built their nest close to a spot on my path.

What these works do focus on is the place as a process. They accentuate the transformations of the place over time and depict time as much as they depict the place. Unlike works that try to catch the characteristic aspects of a landscape within one image, like some traditional landscape representations, these works attempt to demonstrate the incessantly shifting character of each place. They are based on a repeated returning, and take advantage of the fact, observed by Massey, that one can never return to the same place; since the place is a process, it has already moved on. Besides

providing a counterpoint to fixed, static and reifying landscape imagery they try, by showing a place as constantly changing, to participate in creating an understanding of the world as something that is alive and transforming. The focus on place as process, or on the event of place more generally, could probably be accomplished in many ways. In these cases, it is done by performing primarily for the camera, and by repeating a performance in the same place, thus generating material that can be condensed by editing. Thus, an emphasis on time, on time passing in a place and thus on place as process, is possible. To be able to focus on the temporal dimension of a place in a way that would include more of the various temporalities of its elements, however, would require much longer periods than a year, or even twelve years.

### **Space, place, and taskscape**

Describing the temporality of landscape in terms of dwelling, anthropologist Tim Ingold has coined the term *taskscape*, in order to overcome the dichotomy between a naturalistic view of landscape as a backdrop to human activity and the culturalist view of landscape as a symbolic ordering of space.<sup>557</sup> He notes how “a place in the landscape is not ‘cut out’ from the whole either on the plane of ideas or on that of material substance,”<sup>558</sup> and defines landscape as “the world as it is known to those who dwell therein, who inhabit its places and journey along the paths connecting them.”<sup>559</sup> For him the concepts landscape and body are complementary terms like organism and environment, they imply each other.<sup>560</sup> As tasks are the constitutive acts of dwelling, a *taskscape* is “the entire ensemble of tasks,

557 Ingold 2000, 189.

558 Ingold 2000, 192.

559 Ingold 2000, 193.

560 Ibid.

in their mutual interlocking.”<sup>561</sup> And “as the landscape is an array of related features, so – by analogy – the taskscape is an array of related activities.”<sup>562</sup> Ingold compares landscape to a painting, which is the result of a process of painting, and argues that if landscape must be understood as a living process and if every object can be regarded as a collapsed act, then “*the landscape as a whole must likewise be understood as the taskscape in its embodied form: a pattern of activities ‘collapsed’ into an array of features.*”<sup>563</sup> For him “landscape is the congealed form of the taskscape.”<sup>564</sup> Interestingly he insists that the resonances of activities that comprise the taskscape embrace all rhythmic phenomena, animate and inanimate. He sees the world as a total movement of becoming: “Our actions do not transform the world, they are part and parcel of the world’s transforming itself”<sup>565</sup> and asks us to imagine a film of the landscape shot over years, centuries, millennia, and speeded up until the solid rocks seem to bend and the world seems to breathe.<sup>566</sup>

It is easy to see the connection of his example with my modest attempts in *Year of the Ox*, but what about the taskscape? Could Harakka Island be analysed as a taskscape formed of the activities of all the different dwellers, or groups of creatures meeting there? Could we understand the landscape of the island as the congealed resonances of layers upon layers of activities of all the creatures participating in its life over the centuries since the ice age, or even before, the remaining cliffs having survived the pressure of the ice? In these specific video works we could perhaps imagine an attempt at revitalising a historical taskscape by using its material remains,

561 Ingold 2000, 195.

562 Ibid.

563 Ingold 2000, 198. Italics in the original.

564 Ingold 2000, 199.

565 Ingold 2000, 200.

566 Ingold 2000, 201.

like the rusty buoy on the hill or the iron ring fastened in the cliff. Was the iron ring in the cliff utilized to tie the ropes of boats or ships when it was closer to the shore before the land rose from the sea to its current level? Who brought the buoy, probably used by ships as well, up from the sea and placed it on display on the hill? Were these rusty objects used by the Russian military in the 19<sup>th</sup> century or were they part of the equipment of the chemical research laboratory in the 20<sup>th</sup> century? What was the niche in the fortification wall used for? The video works address none of these questions. Rather than re-creating a past taskscape they reinvent and adjust the contemporary taskscape by playing with the detritus from the past. And inevitably this playing has consequences for the landscape, too, like disturbed birds or temporary paths in the grass.

In seeming disagreement with Massey, but actually emphasizing many of the same issues, Ingold argues in a more recent text “Against Space: Place, Movement and Knowledge” (2010) that the ancient concept of room as clearing has by an inversion in contemporary thinking turned into space and place, transforming “the affordances of dwelling opened up along a path of movement into an enclosed capsule for life suspended in the void.”<sup>567</sup> For him the idea of places situated in space is the result of this inversion. He demonstrates this by drawing, by showing how a line, a circular pathway, can be transformed into a circle, an enclosure against a backdrop.<sup>568</sup> Ingold stresses movement, the way through (rather than meetings or multiplicity, like Massey) as key to understanding place. “Places ... are delineated by movement, not by the outer limits to movement.”<sup>569</sup> When he writes about places as knots, they seem to be speaking congenially:

567 Ingold 2010, 32.

568 Ingold 2010, 32-33.

569 Ingold 2010, 34.

Where inhabitants meet, trails are entwined, as the life of each becomes bound up with the other. Every entwining is a knot, and the more that lifelines are entwined, the greater the density of the knot.<sup>570</sup>

For Ingold these knots are tied from the threads of lines of way-faring<sup>571</sup> almost like the nodes in smooth space.<sup>572</sup> He analyses the contrast between wayfaring (travelling along a route) and transport (being transported from one point to another) and illustrates it with the difference between a continuous line and a series of dots, a dotted line.<sup>573</sup>

This distinction is interesting for *Year of the Ox*, if applied to time or duration as well as movement in space. Instead of recording a performance of continuous duration in one place these works consisted of short visits to the place, interrupted by breaks of one week, and were thus recording temporally disconnected slices of time. If we compare a performance in real-time with a continuous line, like travelling along a route, these repeated performances for camera are like the dots on a dotted line. Like the traveller on an airplane, who knows only the place he leaves and the place he arrives at, and has no idea of what exists in between, I cannot know what happens in the place between my visits, I return to the place as if from the air. By combining the recorded slices of time in the place through editing, a new artificial continuity is created, not exactly an illusion of real-time, but a reconstructed development, a story. This working method resembles the scientific process of collecting data

570 Ingold 2010, 33.

571 Ibid.

572 Deleuze and Guattari make a distinction between the smooth space of the nomads, with paths and their meeting points, as opposed to the striated space of farmlands or cities, which is divided into areas. See Deleuze & Guattari 2004, 523-51 ("1440: The Smooth and the Striated").

573 Ingold 2010, 36.

to be analysed (in this case to be recombined) in order to form an overview, a synthesis.

Ingold describes a related dichotomy regarding knowledge: “The same logical operation that bifurcates room into place and space also bifurcates knowledge into culture and science.”<sup>574</sup> Cultures appear to be in place, with traditional knowledge in the heads of local people, while science seems to be in space, to be global and universal, based on exported facts from those self-enclosed sites. But inhabitants’ knowledge is forged through histories of wayfaring, not by fitting the data of observation into the compartments of a received traditional classification,<sup>575</sup> he notes. Perhaps we could imagine an artist’s experiential, embodied and practice-based knowledge as wayfarers’ stories in opposition to objectified, depersonalized, and generalized research findings. Ingold is quick to add, however, that scientific knowledge, too, is generated within the practices of wayfaring; scientists are inhabitants of the same world as the rest of us.<sup>576</sup> And thus they are telling stories like artists, environmentalists or Barnacle geese do, I suppose. Perhaps the reverse could apply as well; “the rest of us” make generalisations, too, and even occasional claims to universality with our observations.

The question of inhabiting is of relevance here. Would I consider myself an inhabitant of Harakka Island, a local? Could my activities there, like performing for the camera weekly, be characterized as dwelling? Yes and no. I do not sleep on the island, nor do I work there daily; I visited the island for the first time in 1993 only. I have had my studio there since 1997, so in some sense I consider myself local, especially in relation to people who come there for the first time. Perhaps I am dwelling in many places. Wayfaring is also an

574 Ingold 2010, 42.

575 Ingold 2010, 42-43.

576 Ingold 2010, 43.

interesting notion in this case, since movements to and from the island by boat, a type of commuting, form an important part of the specificity of the place for everybody working there. Perhaps wayfaring could be used to distinguish between the video works in which the human figure walks in a circle, tied with a chain to an iron ring in the cliff, producing a path in the landscape, and the works in which the figure is immobile, sitting on the shore, in a niche in the wall, or on a rusty buoy. A repeated circular movement is very different from a static pose, both as experienced embodied practice and as an effect produced by the video work, although both performances use an almost equally limited area as their site of action. The circular movement, restricted by the chain, is an artificial, symbolic action, a meaningless task, and so is riding a buoy; they take one nowhere. In this case wayfaring could best describe the activities of the digital video works, which are able to multiply and move far and wide from their production site on a rocky island in the Baltic Sea.

## 8.2. Revisiting the Rusty Ring - Ecofeminism Today?



Figure 21. *Revisiting the Rusty Ring* (2019)

Ten years later, in 2018, I revisited the same works and the same site that I discussed in the previous text. That revisit resulted in the video *Revisiting the Rusty Ring*.<sup>577</sup> The following text is a transcript of the voice-over narration on that video essay, the spoken and recorded text published as part of “Revisiting the Rusty Ring – Ecofeminism today?”<sup>578</sup> here slightly revised to work separated from the video.

On 20<sup>th</sup> December 2018 I made a revisit to the site where *Year of the Ox – Walking in Circles* and *Day and Night of the Ox* were performed in 2009. The rusty ring was there on the cliffs as before, but I could not find the rusty chain I used to attach to it and used

577 *Revisiting the Rusty Ring* (21 min. 20 sec.) (2019) video essay on Vimeo <https://vimeo.com/375148286> and on the RC <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/profile/show-work?work=592843>

578 “Returning to the Rusty Ring – Ecofeminism today?” *PARTake* Vol 3. No 1 (2020) (Arlander 2020d) <https://journals.colorado.edu/index.php/partake/article/view/473>

a simple rope instead. As part of the research project *How to Do Things with Performance?* I have revisited old works, a twelve-year project based on weekly performances for the camera on Harakka Island in Helsinki, and the resulting series of video works called *Animal Years*, made between 2002 and 2014. Some of these revisits have resulted in video essays, such as “The Shore Revisited” (2018) or “Return to the Site of the Year of the Rooster” (2019). Now the turn has come to the year of the ox. The video essay consists of two of the old works from that year inserted into the recording of the revisit to the site. I will use this video compilation as an impulse to revisit some ecofeminist ideas about our relationship to nature, environment, and place.

The synopsis for the video work depicting the *Year of the Ox* reads:

A rust-colored scarf around my shoulders, I walk in a circle tied with a chain to an iron ring on a cliff on the South-Eastern shore of Helsinki’s Harakka Island once a week for a year, between 25<sup>th</sup> January 2009 and 6<sup>th</sup> February 2010.<sup>579</sup>

While the synopsis for the *Day and Night of the Ox* reads as follows:

With a rust-colored scarf around my shoulders, I walk in a circle tied with a chain to an iron ring on a cliff on the South-Eastern shore of Helsinki’s Harakka Island every two hours during a day and night between 1<sup>st</sup> May 2009 at 6pm and 2<sup>nd</sup> May at 6pm.<sup>580</sup>

579 *Year of the Ox – Walking in Circles* (2010) <https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/year-of-the-ox-walking-in-circles/> and *Year of the Ox – Walking in Circles (short)* (2010) <https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/year-of-the-ox-walking-in-circles-short/>

580 *Day and Night of the Ox* (2019) <https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/day-and-night-of-the-ox/>

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I have discussed these works, as well as other works made during the same year, wearing the same scarf, such as *Year of the Ox - Riding a Buoy* or *Year of the Ox - Sitting in a Wall*, in the text “Performing Time Through Place,” published in 2012, (no longer available online and therefore reprinted above). There I focus on Doreen Massey’s ideas of a place as a meeting place and combine the planetary time of one year or one day and night with the historical layers of Swedish, Russian, and Finnish military rule still visible in the buildings and constructions on the island. What brought me to ecofeminism was the reaction of a colleague to what she saw as a provocative confrontation between the nesting seagulls and the human performer. That seems like the very opposite of an ecofeminist sensibility, at least understood in a superficial sense.

So, let’s begin by listening to the birds. (pause)

At this point, I should explain that despite my interest in landscape, and despite belonging roughly to the same generation with the founders of ecofeminism, ecofeminism has remained rather unfamiliar to me. In my mind, ecofeminism has been related to Goddess mythologies, motherhood, natural living, biodynamic agriculture, crafts, and so on, all admirable endeavors but not so easy to accommodate with the urban, postmodern, and cyborg sensibilities I was surrounded by in the 1980s. The idea of “mother earth” or “mother nature” and the assumption that women would have a natural affinity with nature through motherhood has later been severely and rightly criticized. Today, however, ecofeminism is re-appearing in new forms in many activist contexts. At the time of the climate crisis, mass extinction of species, explosion of toxic waste in oceans, and indigenous struggles for land rights, the idea that degradation of nature and the environment is linked to the degradation of women’s rights seems important again. Today it seems ever more necessary to overcome the strange aversion regarding

nature, or the environment, which prevails among many of those who feel policed by ideas of “the natural,” because it is so often used to justify binary gender roles and racialized structures of exploitation and oppression.

The closest I have come to issues related to ecofeminism recently is via Stacy Alaimo. In her book, *Bodily Natures – Science, Environment, and the Material Self* (2010), Alaimo introduces the concept trans-corporeality to describe human corporeality, to underline how the human is always intermeshed with the more-than-human world and ultimately inseparable from ‘the environment.’ In “early twenty-first century realities,” she writes, “‘human’ and ‘environment’ can by no means be considered as separate.”<sup>581</sup> She focuses on issues of environmental justice and environmental health and gives an account and critique of previous feminist theorizations of the body. For her, “trans-corporeality as a theoretical site is where corporeal theories, environmental theories and science studies meet and mingle.”<sup>582</sup> In any case, “the material self cannot be disentangled from networks that are simultaneously economic, political, cultural, scientific, and substantial”,<sup>583</sup> she notes. Alaimo emphasizes “the need to cultivate a tangible sense of connection to the material world” to counter “the pervasive sense of disconnection that casts ‘environmental issues’ as containable, eccentric, dismissible topics”.<sup>584</sup> This dismissal is no longer so easy today, with the increasing awareness of the climate crises, the extinction of species, and disasters, which are no longer concerns for specialists only.

Before continuing further, let’s hear what the birds had to say on that day in the beginning of May. (pause)

581 Alaimo, 2010, 2.

582 Alaimo, 2010, 3.

583 Alaimo, 2010, 20.

584 Alaimo, 2010, 16.

What has ecofeminism to do with these videos of a human figure walking in circles on the cliffs tied with a chain to a rusty ring? There is no nurturing or caring intended, but rather a drudgery of sorts, even a violence, through the act of whipping the heavy metal chain over the ring to keep it mobile. By being literally chained to the spot, am I trying to stress our dependence of the ground we tread on? Or is it a self-ironic comment to the repetitive way of working, which by then I was tiring of? Or is it a play with associations to the toil of the animal of that year, the year of ox? Am I trying out the position of the ox?

When making these works, I had no thoughts of ecofeminism. When looking at the videos now, I realize they could be discussed in terms of 'motherhood.' The nesting birds and especially the seagulls who love to create drama are making a big fuss of my repeated circling on their territory in springtime, especially in the *Day and Night of the Ox*, recorded on the first of May 2009. While performing, I took it as a challenge, an ordeal, and was rather scared at times because a seagull couple made their nest almost exactly in the spot where I had placed my tripod. Later I learned that I could have prevented that by putting some branches and twigs there well in advance of the nesting season. I saw the eggs turn into small fluffy chicks and survive my repeated visits. Thus, for me, the violent reactions of the seagulls and other birds were their rightful but exaggerated way of protesting, which I chose to ignore. We were fighting for the right to use those cliffs, and I was convinced that they should get used to me, as I tried to get used to them.

When I showed the video as part of a compilation, a colleague reacted very strongly and was horrified at the suffering she felt I caused to the birds, or perhaps at what she saw as an uneven combat. That reaction opened my eyes for a different reading of the situation than the one I had experienced. As a woman and potential mother, I should, in simple ecofeminist terms, have another sensibility to

empathize with the nesting birds. Well, I did not. I thought the birds were deliberately overreacting and trying to chase me away, and had the right to do that, of course. But I had also the right to resist. From today's perspective, I can see the ethical problems in my attitude, but I find the example nevertheless interesting in terms of ecofeminist ideas. What is our relationship to nature and to other beings as part of it? Do we idealize nature as something alien to be protected from humans? Or do we see ourselves as part of nature and its processes, enmeshed and entwined with its various life forms?

### **What is ecofeminism?**

The first site I encountered in response to my search with that question, called "Women and Life on Earth" (no date), explains: "Ecofeminism is an activist and academic movement that sees critical connections between the domination of nature and the exploitation of women."<sup>585</sup> Moreover, "[e]cofeminist activism grew during the 1980s and 1990s among women from the anti-nuclear, environmental, and lesbian-feminist movements."<sup>586</sup> The site mentions the conference "Women and Life on Earth: Ecofeminism in the Eighties" held at Amherst in 1980 as "the first in a series of ecofeminist conferences, inspiring the growth of ecofeminist organizations and actions..."<sup>587</sup> This was all news to me.

A website called "Ecofeminism for beginners" (2018) notes that "[e]cofeminism' (or environmental feminism) might seem like a new-fangled term thrown around by millennials", whereas "this socio-political theory, which connects both environmental and gender issues to the structure of patriarchy, has actually been around

585 "What is Ecofeminism?" *Women and Life on Earth*  
<http://www.wloe.org/what-is-ecofeminism.76.0.html>

586 Ibid.

587 Lorentzen, Lois Ann and Heather Eaton 2002. Quoted in *Women and Life on Earth*.

since the 1970s as an offshoot of the environmental activism of that period.”<sup>588</sup> We further learn that the “term was first used by French feminist and activist Françoise d’Eaubonne in her 1974 book *Le Féminisme ou la Mort*”, where “she relates the oppression of ‘subordinate groups’ (such as women and people of color) to the oppression of nature by man.”<sup>589</sup> The fact that many environmental activists in the 1970s were women led to ideas “that the split between nature and society could be healed only by women’s ‘nurturing spirit’,” or the ideas of the importance of “certain ‘feminine’ values present in nature – such as reciprocity, co-operation, and nurturing.”<sup>590</sup> Such emphasis on gender binaries seems slightly odd today, although there is also a widespread interest in the ethics of care.<sup>591</sup>

Another useful summary is included in “A Very Short Summary of Ecofeminism Theory and Practice” (2012). There we can read that although “ecofeminism is a broad category referring to a plurality of theoretical positions /.../ most ecofeminists would agree on several core assumptions” such as the “significant connections between the oppression of women and the oppression of nature,” the “need to understand linkages between the oppressions of women and nature in order to understand the oppression of women and the oppression of nature” and the double demand that “[f]eminist theory and practice must consider ecological/environmental perspectives” while “[e]cology and environmental ethics must include feminist perspectives.”<sup>592</sup>

588 Zamre, Rutvi and Rea Kamath. 2018. “Ecofeminism for beginners” *Rebootmag* June 4 2018. (no longer available online)

589 Ibid.

590 Ibid.

591 For example, the theme of the PSi (Performance Studies international) conference 2020 was planned to be “the crises of care”.

592 Graff, Hollace. 2012. “A Very Short Summary of Ecofeminism Theory and Practice”. <https://www.oakton.edu/user/2/hgraff/WGSSummaryEcofeminism.html>

With these basic introductions in mind, we can try to understand some more specific debates. For example, an article titled “Ecofeminism and Globalism” (2001) published in *Democracy and Nature*, argues for a material ecofeminism. While ecofeminism sees “the domination of women and nature” as “intrinsically linked,” material ecofeminists “focus on the material conditions of women’s lives locating the source of this twin domination in patriarchal capitalism.”<sup>593</sup> The writers point out that “this materialist emphasis is not common to all ecofeminist thinkers.” Some “spiritually oriented ecofeminists seek to celebrate women and their association with nature as a source of strength, power and virtue.”<sup>594</sup> This is seen as problematic by material ecofeminists, who are “critical of the tendency of spiritual ecofeminists to endorse essentialism, that is the view that men and women are essentially and inherently different in character and nature.”<sup>595</sup> Moreover, a materialist ecofeminist analysis, “sees spiritual ecofeminism as failing to come to terms with the effects of capitalism, such as the perpetuation of sexism and environmental damage.”<sup>596</sup>

### **Ecofeminism and new materialism?**

Fifteen years later, in her article “Ecofeminist Echoes in New Materialism?” (2016) Marie-Anne Casselot argues that bringing ecofeminism and new materialism together would be fruitful “because ecofeminism can offer illuminating insights to new materialism especially when it comes to analyzing oppression and the effects of oppressive structures on humans, ‘natural others’ and more-than-human

593 Sydee, Jasmin and Beder, Sharon 2001. “Ecofeminism and Globalism” *Democracy and Nature* July 2001 abstract.

594 Sydee & Beder 2001, 1.

595 *Ibid.*

596 *Ibid.*

elements.”<sup>597</sup> She maintains that “[n]ew materialism would benefit from a close rereading of ecofeminist theory and history” while new materialism “could extend ecofeminist insights beyond a closed worldview of the natural world by infusing its dynamic new theorizations of the fluidity and the indeterminacy of matter.”<sup>598</sup> According to her “[t]he political and ethical strength of ecofeminism could be *enhanced* by new materialist ontological claims because it makes clear the connection between corporeality and environment, while avoiding positing a gendered special connection to nature.”<sup>599</sup>

In her concluding remarks, Casselot notes that “ecofeminism and new materialism share some objects of study but they do not approach them in the same manner.”<sup>600</sup> They share an “opposition to dualism and dichotomies,” “a special interest in embodiment,” and the “goal of positing new ethical practices and new political understandings of the world.”<sup>601</sup> For instance, “ecofeminism and new materialism differ on agency /--/ Who is the ecological subject? Can there be a ‘subject’ if we grant agency to inert matter and natural elements?”<sup>602</sup> Lastly, they differ in terms of constructivism-essentialism: “while ecofeminism has been somewhat split between its essentialist and constructivist trends, new materialism more boldly goes beyond both constructivism and essentialism.”<sup>603</sup> Casselot notes that, on the one hand, “ecofeminism has been criticized for cultural appropriation of Indigenous and Native spiritualities, for being Western-centric and color-blind.”<sup>604</sup> On the other hand, today, “ecofem-

597 Casselot, Marie-Anne 2016. “Ecofeminist Echoes in New Materialism?” *PhaenEx* 11, no.1. Spring/summer 2016, 73-96.

598 Casselot 2016, 73.

599 Ibid.

600 Ibid.

601 Casselot 2016, 92.

602 Ibid.

603 Ibid.

604 Casselot 2016, 93.

inist activism is interconnected more than ever before with struggles against speciesism, racism, [and] colonialism.”<sup>605</sup> She strongly believes “there are inspiring coalitions to construct, theoretically and politically, between ecofeminists and new materialists.”<sup>606</sup>

### **Decolonizing relationships with nature**

Inspired by these claims, I started looking for ecofeminist classics and encountered Val Plumwood. In one of her latest texts, “Decolonizing relationships with nature” (2003), Plumwood provides a clarifying account of some of the mechanisms that characterize both colonial and anthropocentric approaches to the other, namely a strong focus on dualism, exaggerating differences and denying commonality. One aspect is hyper-separation or radical exclusion: “The function of hyper-separation is to mark out the Other for separate and inferior treatment”.<sup>607</sup> In looking at the environment “from an anthropocentric standpoint, nature is a hyper-separate lower order, lacking any real continuity with the human.”<sup>608</sup> Moreover, such a perspective “stresses heavily those features that make humans different from nature and animals, rather than those we share with them.”<sup>609</sup> Another mechanism is homogenization or stereotyping, seeing the Other “not [as] an individual, but a member of a class stereotyped as interchangeable, replaceable, all alike - that is, as homogenous.”<sup>610</sup> Moreover, “[a]nthropocentric culture conceives of nature and animals as all alike in their lack of consciousness, which is assumed to

605 Ibid.

606 Ibid.

607 Plumwood, Val. 2003 “Decolonizing relationships with nature” In William M. Adams and Martin Mulligan (eds.) *Decolonizing Nature. Strategies for Conservation in a Post-colonial Era*. London. Sterling, VA: Earthscan Publications Ltd., 54.

608 Plumwood 2003, 54.

609 Ibid.

610 Plumwood 2003, 55.

be exclusive to the human.”<sup>611</sup> Plumwood summarizes: “These two features of human/nature dualism – radical exclusion and homogenization – work together to produce, in anthropocentric culture,” she adds, “a polarized understanding in which the human and non-human spheres correspond to two quite different substances or orders of being in the world.”<sup>612</sup>

And this makes sense for my relationship to the nesting birds I was competing with on the island. On the one hand, I did not see them as totally other, but rather as complaining or irritating neighbors to quarrel with. On the other hand, I was homogenizing them into a pack, despite the very different reactions of, for example, seagulls and geese. Regardless of this specific case, watching out for these two mechanisms, radical exclusion, and homogenization, which easily creep into discussions concerning the environments we share with other life forms, could be a way to rethink our way of cohabiting. And a way to begin to acknowledge the work done by early ecofeminists like Plumwood, today.

When looking at the old videos inserted in my recent revisit to the site, I cannot help sighing at the naïveté in my attempts at performing landscape. But I also recognize my striving to articulate a bonding to place, situatedness, and dependence as facts of life, rather than something to idealize, to like or dislike. My relationship to the environment in these works is not to an imagined wilderness, but to place as a meeting place, as suggested by Massey, to nature as our crowded home, where we must learn to negotiate our living with others, be they seagulls, geese, microbes, or other humans. And to do it more wisely and sensitively than I was doing at the time.

611 Ibid.

612 Ibid.



Figure 22. *Year of the Tiger* (2011)

## 9. Revisiting the Year of the Tiger

During the year of the tiger (2010–2011) I chose to wear a whitish shawl and selected as my site one of the old stone bases of buildings still visible in the eastern part of the island. This time I concentrated on one site and chose instead to record four different perspectives, following the square form of the base, and repeated a rather complicated choreography walking around it and lying down in each corner. Only one part of the work was edited into an installation, *Year of the Tiger*.<sup>613</sup> The day and night was recorded on a smaller stone base nearby.<sup>614</sup> During the year I played with the colour white and performed with bird droppings<sup>615</sup> as well as fumes from volcanoes<sup>616</sup>, resulting in works which were shown in an exhibition of their own<sup>617</sup> and were discussed independently of the *Animal Years* series.<sup>618</sup> The

613 *Year of the Tiger* (2011) <https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/year-of-the-tiger/> and *Year of the Tiger 1-2 (long)* (2011) <https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/year-of-the-tiger-1-2-long/>

614 *Day and Night of the Tiger* (2011) <https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/day-and-night-of-the-tiger/> and *Day and Night of the Tiger 1-2* (2011) <https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/day-and-night-of-the-tiger-1-2/>

615 *On the Birds' Rock* (2011) <https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/on-the-birds-rock/> and *On the Birds' Shore* (2011) <https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/on-the-birds-shore/>

616 *Vulcano 1-3* (2011) <https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/vulcano-1-3/>, *Furnas 1-3* (2011) <https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/furnas-1-3/> or *Krysuvik 1-5* (2011) <https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/krysuvik-1-5/>

617 The Steaming Earth, Muu gallery 28.9.-17.10 2012.

618 “The Steaming Earth – A Terra Fumegante”, in Teatro Em Campo Expandido – Theatre in the Expanded Field, *Art Research Journal* 3, 2016, 142-157 (Arlander 2016c).

works created on Harakka Island were shown in Gallery Jangva in January 2012<sup>619</sup>.

I revisited the old stone base on 17 June 2019 and created two compilations, *Remembering the Year of the Tiger* and *Remembering the Round of the Tiger*,<sup>620</sup> which were used as part of a Long Table organised by How to Do Things with Performance? at the PSi (Performance Studies international) conference in Calgary.<sup>621</sup> They formed the starting point for the text “Remembering the Year of the Tiger – Image, Memory, Site”<sup>622</sup> presented in the following.

619 Year of the Tiger, Gallery Jangva 11.- 29.1.2012.

620 *Remembering the Year of the Tiger* (32 min. 36 sec.) and *Remembering the Round of the Tiger* (10 min. 5 sec.) <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/profile/show-work?work=651844>

621 “Elastic Connections – Creativity, Resistance, Resilience: A Long Table by the How to Do Things with Performance? research project” at PSi #25 in Calgary 4-7.7.2019.

622 Published in *Näyttämö & Tutkimus 8: Muisti, Arkisto ja Esitys* [Stage & Research 8: Memory, Archive and Performance] 2020, (Arlander 2020e) <https://journal.fi/teats/article/view/122815>

## 9.1. Remembering the Year of the Tiger - Image, Memory, Site



Figure 23. *Remembering the Year of the Tiger* (2019)

As have been pointed out many times, in the research project *How to Do Things with Performance?* (HTDTWP 2016–2020) one of my tasks has been to re-activate the twelve-year project “Performing Landscape” (2002–2014) and the series of video works *Animal Years*. In this text, I focus on the video compilation *Remembering the Year of the Tiger*, with the videos *Year of the Tiger 1–4* inserted in the recording of a revisit, in June 2019, to the site where those works were performed in 2010–2011 on Harakka Island in Helsinki. A former emphasis on a strong distinction between animate and inanimate, influenced by Teresa Brennan, is juxtaposed with an understanding of the materiality of the site, influenced by Karen Barad’s agential realism and Stacy Alaimo’s notion trans-corporeality. By returning to the performance site and combining images and ideas from then and now, issues related to memory, image and performance are brought to the fore and discussed.

My starting point is my own “archival work”, returning to the sites where some previous performances for camera were made in the years 2002–2014 and editing old material into new compilations, thus, in some sense “performing my personal archive”. This endeavour can be placed within the realm of performance as research and artistic research in performance.<sup>623</sup> As an example of performing the archive in an expanded sense, it is hopefully useful for those interested in other types of archives as well.

### **Performing archives and dense video**

Gunhild Borggreen and Rune Gade note in their introduction to *Performing Archives/Archives of Performance* (2013) how the two seemingly contrasting concepts, performance and archive, are increasingly blurred today. “New ways of understanding archives, history, and memory emerge”, and influence our “theories of enactment and intervention”, while the proliferating concepts of performance “enable a critical focus on archival residue.”<sup>624</sup> They summarize the familiar debate concerning the ontology of performance with regard to documentation, starting with Richard Schechner’s understanding of performances as actions, via Marvin Carlson’s remark that the increased use of performance as metaphor has helped focus attention from the “what” to the “how” of culture, to Jon McKenzie’s claim that performance, besides an analytical tool, is also a disciplinary instrument (“perform, or else”). They note how various critical responses have complicated Peggy Phelan’s famous claim regarding performance ontology: performance’s only life is in the present, and performance’s being becomes itself through disappearance.

623 For a brief presentation of these terms and a summary of their relationship see overviews, like Cull 2019; Arlander 2018e.

624 Borggreen, Gunhild, and Gade, Rune. 2013. “Introduction: The Archive in Performance Studies.” In Gunhild Borggreen and Rune Gade (eds.) *Performing Archives/Archives of Performance*, Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press, 9–10.

For example, Philip Auslander has deconstructed the opposition between live and mediated forms; Rebecca Schneider has maintained that archives disappear as well, while performances not only remain but also constitute bodily techniques of remembering, and Diana Taylor has politicised the idea of considering performances as ephemeral, in her influential discussion of the archive and the repertory.<sup>625</sup> Following Taylor, Borggreen and Gade note the need to “take seriously the repertoire of embodied practices as an important system of knowing and transmitting knowledge.”<sup>626</sup> To their summary, we could add the understanding of performance as repetition, as in Schechner’s restored behaviour, Butler’s performative reiterations of normative gender production, or Barad’s posthumanist performativity.<sup>627</sup>

Another aspect they note, which has relevance for the following study, is the popularity of practice as a methodology: “Parts of performance studies known as PaR (Performance as Research) use creative practice as a methodological approach”, they write, “and thus emphasize a mutual response between doing and knowing in the scholarly process.”<sup>628</sup> Their observation that “[r]evisiting a performance is also relevant for artists who may wish to reflect on their own performance in order to evaluate and sharpen key issues, or consult other artists’ works for consumption, inspiration, or collaboration”,<sup>629</sup> was one of the starting points for a text, where I discuss my revisit to a former performance site on Harakka Island, “Repeat, Revisit, Recreate—Two Times Year of the Horse”<sup>630</sup> in relation to

625 Borggreen and Gade 2013, 13–15.

626 Taylor, quoted in Borggreen and Gade 2013, 15.

627 Schechner 2006; Butler 1990; Barad 2003.

628 Borggreen and Gade 2013, 12.

629 Ibid.

630 Arlander 2016a, see chapter 1 in this volume.

debates concerning re-enactments.<sup>631</sup> For Borggreen and Gade “there is not only a close relationship between research and performance – since many scholars are practising artists themselves, and many artists engage in critical theorising about the way in which they do or perform – but also because the distinct categories of artwork and research can no longer be upheld.”<sup>632</sup> This latter claim has become increasingly meaningful for my current explorations concerning the video essay as a format. A video essay can be made to be shown as an artwork at a screening or in an exhibition, and video essays are increasingly published as contributions in scholarly journals, too. In theory, the same video could serve in both academic and art contexts.

As part of the Academy of Finland funded research project *How to Do Things with Performance? (HTDTP)* one of my tasks has been to look at the twelve-year project “Performing Landscape” (2002–2014) and the resulting series of video works *Animal Years*, asking what the performative potential of the series is from today’s perspective. My main way of engaging with them – besides creating two video compilations shown at a seminar in the research pavilion in Venice and later made available via AV-arkki<sup>633</sup> – has been to revisit the sites on Harakka Island in Helsinki, trying to remember and often to repeat the actions I used to perform there.<sup>634</sup> I have also recorded those revisits on video and into this contemporary material I have then inserted the original video installations in miniature, creating a combination of two different times in the same place within one image. In the moment of writing this text I have

631 For an overview, with a focus on performance and live art, see Jones & Heathfield 2011.

632 Borggreen and Gade 2013, 12.

633 *Animal Years I* <https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/animal-years-i/>, *Animal Years II* <https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/animal-years-ii/>.

634 For a description of the island and its history, see Arlander 2012d and chapter 8.1 in this volume.

recorded revisits to all the twelve performance sites and created video compilations by inserting the original edited video works into those images, using them as a backdrop of sorts. Some of these revisits have been published as video essays or articles with a video component, others have been shown as part of conference presentations. The first attempt was the above-mentioned text, an ordinary text-based article<sup>635</sup> discussing the remake of the first *Year of the Horse* from 2002–2003 in 2015, *Year of the Horse – Calendar*. The first article in the form of a video essay was based on a revisit to the site of the *Year of the Goat*<sup>636</sup>, inspired by the challenge presented by the then newly founded *JER (Journal for Embodied Research)*, which accepts only videos, with the text merely as a supporting transcript. After that, I published an article including a video compilation based on *Year of the Rooster*<sup>637</sup>, while video essays based on *Year of the Pig*<sup>638</sup>, *Year of the Rat*<sup>639</sup> and *Year of the Ox*<sup>640</sup> have been published in 2020. In these experiments, I have explored how to combine performative writing and video documentation as a form of material-discursive practice, and I suggest that these explorations have relevance for digital archiving as well as enhanced online publication.

In his introduction to the anthology *Documenting Performance* (2017), editor Toni Sant makes a distinction between a focus on documents and an interest in the process and practices of documenting. He also maintains that documentation is something more than simple documents (documentary residue), namely a process of turning a collection into an archive that provides long term access to

635 Arlander 2016a.

636 Arlander 2018a.

637 Arlander 2019a.

638 Arlander 2020b.

639 Arlander 2020c.

640 Arlander 2020d.

documents.<sup>641</sup> In that sense, these experiments are less about documenting performances and more about creating archives of images, memories of places, even mementoes or souvenirs. Furthermore, they are about reusing and recycling materials.

For the concerns of this text, Ben Spatz's article in the above-mentioned collection "What do we document? Dense Video and the Epistemology of Practice" is the most interesting one. He argues for the video essay as a parallel form of sharing practice to the public performance, and as a parallel form to the scholarly article. Although his main interest is in describing, developing, sharing, and archiving various physical performance techniques – and video clearly is a useful tool for that – his notion 'dense video' has relevance for the use of video in these examples as well. In comparing 'dense video' with dense text he writes: "I take the density of a document to be the richness of information found in any given frame or excerpt" and explains how the "density of prose can be increased by the use of footnotes, parenthetical annotations, citations and references, specialized language" and other "textual complexities that tend to distinguish academic writing from popular non-fiction".<sup>642</sup> According to him, such techniques can be developed for video as well, starting with "a simple linear video... consisting of a single take, an uninterrupted recording that documents a moment of practice". To serve "as a citable document in the growing archive of our field" he suggests that at least two basic metadata are needed, "a title frame – identifying the author, practitioners, location, and date – and continuous time code (essential for stable referencing)." The possibilities to create 'dense video' do not end there, however, "there are myriad ways in which the density of a video document might be increased."<sup>643</sup>

641 Sant 2017, 2.

642 Spatz 2017, 246–247.

643 Spatz 2017, 247.

Adding an explanatory voice-over text is one possibility, a traditional technique used in much anthropological and documentary film. Layering autobiographical video imagery has been explored extensively by Pekka Kantonen<sup>644</sup> and there is also a rich tradition of discussing essay films beyond the documentary tradition.<sup>645</sup> The technique used in the original videos in these examples is more basic, the simple time-lapse video, where an image with the same framing is recorded repeatedly, sometimes for long periods of time. Inserting one video into another is another technique of “densifying” a video, as is juxtaposing images “then” and “now”, both techniques I have explored in the more recent video compilations. My main device for increasing density has been to insert old video material into contemporary footage from the same site.

### **Remembering things done with performance**

In this text, I focus on two video compilations *Remembering the Year of the Tiger*<sup>646</sup> and *Remembering the Round of the Tiger*<sup>647</sup>, which are based on a revisit, in June 2019, to the site where I performed during 2010, an old stone base of a building on Harakka Island in Helsinki. The video was presented at Performance Studies international #25 in Calgary (2019) as part of the HTDTPWP long table session. There I held a small projector in my hand while taking part in the discussion, showing the video compilation projected on the adjacent wall in a deliberately haphazard manner.

The video compilation *Remembering the Year of the Tiger* (32 min. 36 sec.) consists of the videos *Year of the Tiger 1–4* (à 28 min. 19 sec.) inserted in the recording of a revisit, on 17<sup>th</sup> June 2019, to the site

644 Kantonen 2017.

645 Corrigan 2011.

646 *Remembering the Year of the Tiger* <https://vimeo.com/390190537>

647 *Remembering the Round of the Tiger* <https://vimeo.com/390261984>

where those videos were performed weekly between 14<sup>th</sup> February 2010 and 31<sup>st</sup> January 2011 on Harakka Island in Helsinki, Finland. In part 1 I lie in the north-eastern corner of the remains of the stone base of a building, in part 2 in the south-eastern corner, in part 3 in the southwestern corner and part 4 in the north-western corner, with the camera on a tripod in the east, south, west, and north respectively. The framing of the image during the revisit approximates the image in the first part with the camera facing west but is not exactly the same due to changes in vegetation.

The video compilation *Remembering the Round of the Tiger* (10 min. 5 sec.) consists of the video *Round of the Tiger* (23 min. 11 sec.) cut into four parts<sup>648</sup> and inserted in the same recording of the revisit to the site. In the original video, the four actions and perspectives comprising one session are combined one after the other to show the full performance during one visit, that is, how the work was done, which cannot be seen from the video installation. There I am not only lying down in the corners (the parts used in the main installation) but walking around the stone base until the corner with a mat, lying down on the mat, getting up and walking another round, taking up the mat and carrying it to the next corner, changing the place of the camera, walking once more around the stone base until the corner with the mat, lying down on the mat and so on.<sup>649</sup> At the time of performing these rounds, I planned to edit several videos, consisting of several parts of the action, like walking repeatedly past the camera on the stone base, recorded from four directions. In fact, I edited only the four versions with the human figure lying down in

648 I had to cut up the edited video because the original material is no longer accessible.

649 For Tutke Spring Days in 2011 (organized by Performing Arts Research Centre at the Theatre Academy) I made a recorded presentation using the material for *Round of the Tiger* as a basis and added a voice-over in Finnish, where I present the footage as raw material.

the corner of the stone base and forgot about most of the material. Both videos, the four-channel installation and “the making of” video were shown in Gallery Jangva in 2012.<sup>650</sup>

In *Remembering the Year of the Tiger*, the four-channel video installation is inserted as a row of images in the real-time image, while the human figure is lying on the stone base, emerging as some kind of memories, covering the figure completely. The contemporary background image is visible and rather dominating. When the installation ends and the inserted images disappear, the figure is still lying on the stone base behind them, gets up and leaves; an artificial time-lapse trick is thus used also in the compilation. In *Remembering the Round of the Tiger*, the relationship with the recording of the revisit and the original footage is straightforward, first the revisit is shown, then the four video clips are shown simultaneously covering the whole image space; being of slightly varying duration they are ending one after the other.

Considering how to do things with performance it seems obvious that my way of doing things with performance is first of all by repetition and variation, by repeating an action in the same place once a week for a year, with the changing seasons providing the variation, and then returning to that site several years later, trying to repeat the same framing (not really possible, because the shrubs had grown) and the same action (not really possible because the shrubs on the other sides had grown, too). Unlike during some other revisits, such as revisiting the site of the year of the goat, or the year of the rooster, I did not repeat the whole action, nor did I repeat all the four camera positions. Rather, I chose an approximation of the first camera position and performed only lying down in the corner of the stone base. This was partly due to laziness – the stone base was so overgrown that walking the full round was unpleasant (I tried it

650 The exhibition in Gallery Jangva 11.–29.1.2012 was called Year of the Tiger.

once) – and partly because I planned to use only the main installation with lying down in the compilation. For this year it could have been interesting to try out whether I really remembered the sequence of actions, which seems rather complicated when described and really was more complicated than the sequence of actions or non-actions during other years. I guess I would have remembered it, though, because the actions follow logically from the previous ones. In a similar manner to actors and performers, who can remember complicated sequences by remembering only the following action in each moment these actions were quite straightforward when executed one after the other.

My understanding of performance is obviously elastic here, a performance could mean a series of actions or a process and does not necessarily involve a specific accomplishment or even an audience, although the camera on a tripod serves as a witness of sorts. The act of lying on the ground could be seen as a minimum of a performance, even a non-performance, but of course, there is a series of performances surrounding it, as is evident in the other video, *Remembering the Round of the Tiger*, which records the actions involved in one session, on one particular day, almost in real-time, unlike the main video installation, which consists of four series of brief fragments of my lying on the ground during a year. A broad understanding of performance makes it possible for all kinds of entities to perform, to appear, and for humans to perform with them, like I do with the old stone base and the surrounding vegetation in this case.

In the first video, *Remembering the Year of the Tiger*, there is only one action, the basic pattern is repetition. When repeated in the four corners and recorded from four sides of the old stone base, the gesture of lying down on a mat does change. It is no longer a repetition in the sense of a copy, a reflection, but a reverberating variation that resembles waves of interference or diffraction. The

repetitions over time, once a week, approximately, create some form of ripples of the first action, and showed together they mix, and then entwine with the more contemporary visit to the site. Such revisiting could be understood as a form of reflection or self-reflection, although something changes with the multiple reverberations, which resembles diffraction, a notion proposed by Karen Barad, following Donna Haraway, to replace reflection.<sup>651</sup>

What does “doing things” entail in this context? We can perhaps understand context as a form of apparatus, which does things; “given a particular measuring apparatus, certain properties become determinate, while others are specifically excluded”.<sup>652</sup> The shift of context between the performances on site and the performances of showing the video could be thought of in terms of representation (what does it suggest or depict) and in terms of effects, or performativity (what does it lead to or produce). The contexts on Harakka Island in 2010 and 2019 allowed different actions and produced different effects. While revisiting the site in June 2019 the main problem of doing things was how to negotiate the vegetation and the birds. When I showed the video as part of the long table in Calgary the negotiation took place with the other participants and the light conditions, and perhaps also with other approaches to doing things with performance present in the room. Why look at a video in that moment? And why show it in that way with a handheld projector, as a distorted image on the wall? In that context, I was interested in whether there would be a point in doing less, and what happens when that “less” is multiplied and distorted? In the context of this text, the question of memory in relation to image and site is more relevant.

651 Barad 2007, 88–89.

652 Barad 2007, 19.

### **Documenting the liveness of site**

At the time of creating the original work, in 2010–2011, I was interested in other questions. In a paper presented at the Performance Studies international #17 conference in Utrecht in 2011, called “Mementos of a Landscape”, I discussed issues of documentation in relation to the live and the non-live, the animate and the inanimate. At the time I was focused on the issue of “liveness”. In discussions on performance documentation and on the changing notions of the live and the mediated, questions of the organically alive, the animate and the inanimate are rarely in focus. Nor is the importance of a living environment emphasized when the live encounter between performer and spectator is stressed. According to Teresa Brennan (2000), however, we should take seriously the indissolubility of individual and environment. The tendency to assume that humans are the subjects in a world of objects is intensified in a manmade environment. For Brennan commodities function like fantasies, making the subject more likely to see what it has made, rather than feel itself connected with, or part of, what has made it.

The theme of the conference – Camillo 2.0: Technology, Memory, Experience – did fit my practice exceptionally well. Performing for camera, or “direct to documentation”, is a way of using technology to create objects out of experiences. “Performing landscape” is a technique for documenting and remembering performances and for producing artworks or “souvenirs” of changes taking place in the environment, thus combining technology (the camera) and experience (the site, the repetition) with an attempt at producing artworks that remain, memorabilia of sorts. Moreover, the site of the repeated performance, the old, deteriorating, and overgrown stone base of a building, more or less visible in some of the images, brought associations to the past, to potential memories of what once was there and is now detectable only as enigmatic remains, as desolate-looking ruins.

By returning repeatedly to the same place for one year, using the same action, camera position and framing of the video image and then editing the takes, the slow processes in nature can be condensed and speeded up. In this case, the vegetal growth in spring is almost exaggeratedly suggesting that nature is recovering after a human intrusion, covering the traces of what remains of a house. However, this way of creating mementoes of moments in a landscape also means producing more inanimate objects, turning experiences of the living environment into one kind of commodities, video works. Like any form of recording, this mode of working not only preserves specific moments but also actively excludes others, and everything outside the frame, like the actual experience of the performer of this peculiar type of meditative practice. What the performer senses and what the camera on tripod records do not have much in common. In terms of vision only, a camera on a meter-high tripod and a human lying on the ground have divergent perspectives, where the camera sticks to the framing of the image, unlike human peripheral vision which is sensitive to any movement occurring in the vicinity. Add the focusing capacity of the human ear compared to the microphone of the camera which records every sound with equal precision, not to mention touch, temperature, smell, and the whole selective human sensorium.

In the old explanation from 2011 I can read what my memory has discarded as insignificant, such as the fact that during 2010 I used the yellowish woollen blanket of a Berber woman (the rough prickly texture I can remember) and a whitish rag rug to lie on, while I walked on the old stone base of a building, the remains of a small house or shed in the south-eastern part of the island, resembling the memory of a home. In wintertime, it is hardly visible due to the snow, in summertime due to vegetation, but in spring and fall, the square on the ground is sometimes clearly distinguishable in the images. I was interested in showing the same site from four different

viewpoints, in producing four different views of the same landscape and chose the place of the camera and the framing of the images to have the stone base follow the baseline of the image. To the east and the south of the stone base, this was easy since the land was open. In the west, a swamp with shrubs formed an obstacle. In the north, a group of alder bushes blocked the view. In wintertime, you could see through them but in summertime, the bushes grew surprisingly fast and finally filled the image completely. At some point, I stopped walking the fourth round and thought I could just as well video film only the shrubs, but soon realised that there was no point in that. Either I performed my action or then not. If I only wanted to create an impression for the viewer I could do it in Photoshop or by drawing, for instance. Thus, I continued my walking, literally in the bushes. In terms of documentation, to show my action I should have changed the camera position. But then the whole project with four repeated views would be ruined. The absurdity of documenting an action you cannot see, creating evidence of something in a manner that does not function as evidence – except for the camera being there, was soon obvious. In terms of liveness, this case exemplifies the unforeseen occurrences that must be counted in when you work with the literally live. In this case, I received what I wanted, more literally than I expected, that is, mementoes of a landscape, of moments in it.

This decision and dilemma I discuss in the only published text using *Year of the Tiger* as an example, “Performing Landscape: Live and Alive”.<sup>653</sup> There I take up the question of impact, in response to Barbara Bolt, and focus on the various understandings of liveness, the animate and the inanimate, referencing the ideas of Teresa Brennan and Philip Auslander. Those topics I did discuss in other texts at

653 “Performing Landscape: Live and Alive”. *Total Art Journal* Vol. 2. 2012. <http://totalartjournal.com/archives/3201/annette-arlander/> (Arlander 2012e).

the time, too, including my contribution, in Finnish, to the fifth year-book of the Finnish Society for Theatre Research focusing on theatre and the media (2014), titled “Elävä esitys” [Live Performance],<sup>654</sup> although there related to site-specific sound installations. In the former article from 2012, I describe the making of *Year of the Tiger* in quite some detail. According to the text, I explored how changing the point of view can influence how a landscape is perceived, by video recording the same site from four different directions for a year and thus producing four different views of the same landscape. The work edited from all these recordings is a four-channel video installation which shows four versions of the landscape with me lying on the ground while the seasons change around me.<sup>655</sup> In spring and autumn, the old stone base is sometimes clearly distinguishable in the images, while lying down in the open on the ruins of a house may suggest homelessness or human helplessness in nature. The work tries to bring attention to the changes taking place in the landscape due to the shifting seasons, weather, and climate, and in that way show the passing of time. And it also indicates how a change in perspective may change the meaning of a landscape.

The single-channel video work called *Round of the Tiger*<sup>656</sup> documents only one session, in wintertime<sup>657</sup>, and reveals how the work was made. It consists of four images and shows a human being walking in a square, wrapped in an off-white scarf, moving a whitish rag rug from one corner to the next, lying down and getting up again, struggling in the snow. As mentioned before, the following actions

654 Arlander 2014c.

655 *Year of the Tiger* installation (28 min. 19 sec.) <http://www.av-arkki.fi/en/works/year-of-the-tiger/>.

656 *Round of the Tiger* documentary (23 min. 11 sec.) <https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/round-of-the-tiger/>.

657 The actual date is somewhat unclear but based on my notes and the look of the image, it was probably recorded on 27 March 2010.

formed one round: I picked up the blanket or shawl and wrapped it around me, walked in a square on the remains of the stone base until I came to the rug or mat in one corner, lied down on the rug for a while, then continued walking one more round until the rug, picked up the rug and moved it to the next corner, left the blanket in the following corner and thus finished the round. Then, after moving the camera and tripod to the next side of the stone base, I repeated the actions. In this manner, I recorded the same sequence of actions four times, from four different directions with the camera on the tripod: first with the camera in the east facing west, then in the south facing north, then in the west facing east, and finally in the north facing south. Each session thus consisted of repeating the same series of actions four times to create four images. These sessions were repeated approximately once a week for a year. The video shows only one of them.

A third variation, called *Day and Night of the Tiger – in the Year of the Rabbit*, was performed at midsummer 2011 for 24 hours with three-hour intervals, on the ruins of a smaller building near the stone base for the year.<sup>658</sup> This time I repeated the action only once each time and video recorded it from one side only – all in all, only twelve times. The changes in light provide the main action; during midsummer in Helsinki, it is dark only for a few hours. In the single-channel version, I walk, wrapped in a white shawl, on the remains of the stone base of a small shed on Harakka Island for a day and night with three-hour intervals between 24th June 2011 at 5 pm and 25th June 2011 at 5 pm. The installation version *Day and Night of the Tiger 1–2*<sup>659</sup> consists of two parts. In the first part, I

658 *Day and Night of the Tiger* (9 min. 44 sec.)

<https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/day-and-night-of-the-tiger/>.

659 *Day and Night of the Tiger 1–2* (7 min. 43 sec.) <https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/day-and-night-of-the-tiger-1-2/>.

lie, wrapped in a white shawl, on the remains of the stone base, as mentioned above. And in the second part, I describe the weather conditions with a few words in Finnish and English, behind the camera on the same occasions.

These mementoes, or souvenirs comprised of digital material, turned my experiences of being immersed in or struggling with a living environment into objects that can be endlessly copied but are not easily biodegradable or able to participate in the reproduction of life. The ethical dilemma of making dead objects of something that is alive, of trying to inspire people to enjoy the endless changeability of the living environment with the help of inert objects, prompted me to reconsider the ideas of Teresa Brennan regarding our relationship to the environment.

### **The indissolubility of individual and environment**

In her work *Exhausting Modernity: Grounds for a New Economy* (2000) Teresa Brennan analyses what she sees as the exhaustion that pervades modern capitalism in psychic, social and environmental terms. Brennan shows how capitalism turns biodegradable life into dead objects and disturbs an ecological balance by “binding more and more life in a form in which it cannot reproduce life.”<sup>660</sup> The production of commodities binds nature to forms, “incapable of re-entering the lifecycles via the reproduction of their own kind or their organic decay.”<sup>661</sup> She draws on Marx but criticizes him for a subject-centred perspective, which made him unaware of the fact that “nature as well as labour is a source of value, and of the energy drawn on in turning living nature into commodities and money.”<sup>662</sup> Interesting

660 Brennan, Teresa. 2000. *Exhausting Modernity: Grounds for a New Economy*. New York: Routledge, 2.

661 Brennan 2000, 5.

662 Brennan 2000, 11.

in Brennan's work is precisely the way in which she combines the psychological, social and economic-environmental, somewhat reminiscent of the three ecologies proposed by Félix Guattari.<sup>663</sup>

According to Brennan, pre-modern people conceived of themselves as energetically and psychically connected with their environment and to others in it, whereas modern subject/object thinking automatically separates the subject from the environment. The pre-eminence of the subject is threatened by the idea of an energetic connection between the subject, others, and the environment. Brennan suggests we are influenced by our surroundings, by the "subjective if not subliminal sensing of what is animate or inanimate in the surrounding environment."<sup>664</sup> According to her, the less animate the environment is, the greater the ego's need to speed things up, "its need for control, its 'cutting up' in its urge to know, its spoiling of living nature, and its general aggression towards the other."<sup>665</sup> Living in a predominantly man-made world distorts our relationship to our surroundings and other living beings. Our physical environment alters our sense of connection with the world. Commodities function like fantasies, Brennan claims, closing the subject off from the movement of life. They create a phantasmatic world which makes the subject more aware of what it has made, rather than connected with, or part of, what has made it.<sup>666</sup> According to Brennan, we respond energetically to our environment, consciously or not. And the energetic connection between individuals and the environment has consequences both ways; psychical and contemplative resistance will also have effects. If we take seriously the indissolubility

663 Guattari 2000.

664 Brennan 2000, 174.

665 Ibid.

666 Brennan 2000, 175–176.

of the individual and the environment, then every action and every thought necessarily will have an effect, she claims.<sup>667</sup>

Although Brennan's ideas make sense on an experiential level and in terms of perception, her strong distinction between animate and inanimate on an ontological level, based on the capacity to reproduce or decay, could be criticized from a new materialist perspective influenced by Karen Barad's agential realism. Barad's post-humanist account in *Meeting the Universe Halfway. Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning* (2007) "does not fix the boundary between 'human' and 'nonhuman' before the analysis ever gets off the ground but rather enables (indeed demands) a genealogical analysis of the discursive emergence of the 'human.'"<sup>668</sup> In a similar manner, we cannot suppose a fixed boundary between what is animate and what is inanimate; rather we should look at how the distinction is produced in each instance. Barad explicitly states: "Matter, like meaning, is not an individually articulated or static entity. Matter is not little bits of nature, or a blank slate, surface, or site passively awaiting signification"<sup>669</sup>, matter is not inanimate in the way we usually assume. "It does not require the mark of an external force like culture or history to complete it. Matter is always already an ongoing historicity".<sup>670</sup> Barad further explains how boundary-making practices are "implicated in the dynamics of intra-activity through which phenomena come to matter", how "material phenomena are inseparable from the apparatuses of bodily production" and how "matter emerges out of and includes as part of its being the ongoing reconfiguring of boundaries."<sup>671</sup> And this is, of course, true for boundaries between animate and inanimate as well.

667 Brennan 2000, 187.

668 Barad 2003, 821.

669 Ibid.

670 Ibid.

671 Barad 2003, 822.

For Barad, the split into subject and object, rather than being something given, is enacted in each case, through various ‘intra-actions’, a neologism she has created as an alternative to interaction, which “signifies the mutual constitution of entangled agencies”, that is, “distinct agencies do not precede but rather emerge through, their intra-action.”<sup>672</sup> Both subjects and objects are constituted through specific intra-actions.<sup>673</sup> And this concerns our usual understanding of the environment as something given, as well as the relationship of subject and environment. Referencing studies on colonies of slime mould, Barad exclaims: “How can we expect the notion of an organism understood as an individual that is situated in a container we call the environment to begin to speak to the complexity of the intra-active reconfiguring of bodily boundaries that defines the slime mould’s astonishing material existence?”<sup>674</sup> And presumably such complexity characterises human existence as well. Brennan’s “indissolubility of individual and environment” could be understood also in Baradian terms.

A contemporary understanding of our interconnectedness with the environment that is congenial with Barad’s agential realism is provided by feminist and environmental scholar Stacy Alaimo (2010) through her notion trans-corporeality. She understands “human corporeality as trans-corporeality, in which the human is always intermeshed with the more-than-human world” and stresses the fact that “the substance of the human is ultimately inseparable from ‘the environment’.”<sup>675</sup> Trans-corporeality emphasizes “movement across human corporeality and nonhuman nature”, and the need for “complex modes of analysis that travel through the entangled

672 Ibid.

673 Barad 2007, 339.

674 Barad 2012, 77.

675 Alaimo 2010, 2.

territories of material and discursive, natural and cultural, biological and textual.”<sup>676</sup> Trans-corporeality focuses on “movement across bodies”, “reveals the interchanges and interconnections between various bodily natures” and takes into account “the often unpredictable or unwanted actions of human bodies, nonhuman creatures, ecological systems, chemical agents, and other actors.”<sup>677</sup> Stressing “the material interconnections of human corporeality with the more-than-human world” enables “ethical and political positions that can contend with ... [contemporary] realities in which ‘human’ and ‘environment’ can by no means be considered as separate”.<sup>678</sup> Moreover, “to cultivate a tangible sense of connection to the material world” is a way to counteract “the pervasive sense of disconnection that casts ‘environmental issues’ as containable, eccentric, dismissible topics.”<sup>679</sup>

When thinking in terms of trans-corporeality we do not need to assume an absolute division between the animate and the inanimate. Our bodies are constantly exchanging various forms of chemicals, microbes, molecules, radiation, and what not with everything around us, whether animate, inanimate or something in-between. The microplastics accumulating in human and animal tissues is only one example. Thus, the slowly deteriorating concrete of the old stone base of a house, the vegetal and synthetic fibres of the rag rug, the animal wool of the shawl and the microbes on my skin, all the minuscule particles in the air from surrounding vegetation as well as everything else carried by the wind from the sea and the city, are exchanged trans-corporeally while I am lying on the ground performing for the camera. And if I really would be lying there for a year, over the seasons in snow and rain (rather than visiting weekly), this

676 Alaimo 2010, 3.

677 Ibid.

678 Ibid.

679 Alaimo 2010, 16.

exchange would become visible for the human eye and the camera as mould and rot, moss and fungi, dead leaves and bird droppings, insects and more.

### **Temporalizing or trivializing?**

The issue of time or temporality, although evident in all the *Animal Years*, emerges as a central topic especially clearly in the *Year of the Tiger*, perhaps partly due to the barely visible ruin of a house, and partly because of the human figure lying down as if sleeping or dead. Besides the construction of four very different images of the same landscape based on the placement and direction of the camera, discussed previously, two very different corporeal and trans-corporeal relationships to the site and to time emerge in the version where I lie seemingly motionless on the stone base for a year with the help of time-lapse video and the version where I walk around the stone base in deep snow more or less in real-time.

In the introduction to the anthology *Performance and Temporalisation. Time Happens* (2015), the editors Stuart Grant, Jodie McNeilly and Maeva Veerapen note how “questions of durational performance, narrative structures, historicity, seriality, tradition, perception, repetition, timing and iteration”<sup>680</sup> are central to performance. While time is a fundamental question of philosophy, it remains riddled with paradox, irresolvable, regardless of the philosophical tradition exploring it – the analytic, the phenomenological, the poststructuralist and the messianic.<sup>681</sup> The editors do not take time as a given, but rather understand it as “the product of processes of temporalization”, such as “perception, measure, experience and worlding”.<sup>682</sup> In these examples all four aspects – the perception of time passing,

680 Grant et al. 2015, 3.

681 Grant et al. 2015, 6.

682 Grant et al. 2015, 3.

the measured time of the video clips, the experience of changes in the environment and the memories, fantasies and stories evoked – come into play on some level. This often happens in one manner for the performer and in another manner for the viewer or spectator of the video works, due to differences in preparatory actions, duration, temperature, and framing, to name only a few aspects.

The main process of temporalization in the original videos is the use of the time-lapse technique which involves repetition and seriality (repeating the same images again and again), and an artificially produced impression of duration, through editing (omitting the movements of the human entering into and exiting the image). Another important aspect is the use of planetary cycles like a year and a day and a night, as a response to the loop structure of common video presentation techniques. In the compilations where the old video works are inserted into the recording of a contemporary revisit, another process of temporalization comes into play, a kind of narrativity or historicity of sorts. Juxtaposing two separate times in the same place, “then at that time” (2010–2011) and “now at this time” (2019) stresses temporality in another way. Rather than the action or process of time passing, as in the time-lapse videos, inserting images of “then” into images of “now” shows time that has passed, time as miniaturized and turned into a story.

In terms of Barad’s agential realism, time is only one aspect of space-time-mattering that is rethought in her “lively new ontology” where “the world’s radical aliveness comes to light” in a manner that “reworks the nature of both relationality and aliveness (vitality, dynamism, agency)”, and “entails a reconceptualization of other core concepts such as space, time, matter” and more.<sup>683</sup> For Barad, “[t]emporality is constituted through the world’s iterative intra-activity”, it is “produced through the iterative enfolding of phenomena

683 Barad 2007, 33.

marking the sedimenting historicity of differential patterns of mattering”.<sup>684</sup> Moreover, “time is an operator, not a parameter”.<sup>685</sup> She uses the metaphor of tree rings while warning that it is a simplification because “time has a history”, but it is not “a succession of evenly spaced moments” or “an external parameter that tracks the motion of matter”.<sup>686</sup> According to Barad, the temporality of intra-action does not mean that “the values of particular properties change in time; rather, which property comes to matter is re(con)figured in the very making/marking of time.”<sup>687</sup>

The seemingly orderly space-time-mattering that is performed in these video compilations, based on combining and inserting time-lapse videos into a real-time recording, in fact hides most of the messy entanglements involved and makes the temporalization and spatialization of this personal archival material look straightforward. Probably many forms of material-discursive practices dealing with archives necessarily do that on some level, that is, reduce complexity, at least from the point of view of the embodied memories involved. As the time-lapse videos are the results of specific intra-actions, recording only a few moments based on an approximate schedule, and excluding all the rest of the time, the edited videos are the result of further intra-actions, and involve discarding most of the recorded material. The compilations discussed here are based only on those edited videos; the recorded material is no longer accessible. There is a reduction of complexity at each stage of the process. Moreover, when miniaturizing the original videos, inserting them into one frame, they are not only literally made smaller but also in some sense belittled, trivialized.

684 Barad 2007, 180.

685 Barad 2007, 438.

686 Barad 2007, 180.

687 Ibid.

Do images, memories, and sites necessary become smaller, or more trivial when made to fit into preformatted narratives? In what other ways could this material have been reorganized and reactivated? Is there a way I could retrieve the recorded material despite the obsolete technology? Should I go back to that material and re-edit a video work based on walking rather than lying down? Or should I perhaps look at other material created during that year?<sup>688</sup> One experiment of further “densifying” the video material at hand, re-introducing some complexity, is *Remembering the Round of the Tiger (with text)*, a version of the video compilation with an added voice-over text and some subtitles. I invite the reader to explore whether listening to and viewing that video will change your understanding of what has been described and argued so far.<sup>689</sup> What follows is the transcript of the voice-over narration in that video.<sup>690</sup>

### **Remembering the Round of the Tiger (with text)**

On 17th June 2019 I returned to the old stone base on the eastern shore of Harakka Island, to see what I could remember of a performance for camera I did there during the year 2010, the year of the tiger in the Chinese calendar, visiting the site approximately once a week between February 2010 and January 2011. Unlike the white outfit and the off-white woollen blanket that I used to wear during my repeated visits to the site, I was now dressed in a pale, yellow outfit. And instead of a white rag rug to lie down on, I had a small

688 For example the videos made on Harakka Island that were shown in the same exhibition in gallery Jangva, *On the Bird's Rock* 2011 (8 min. 20 sec.) <https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/on-the-birds-rock/> and *On the Birds' Shore* 2011 (4 min. 58 sec.) <https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/on-the-birds-shore/>

689 *Remembering the Round of the Tiger (with text)* (10 min. 5 sec.) <https://vimeo.com/452770231>

690 The video was added as an appendix to the published article Arlander, Annette 2020e. “Remembering the Year of the Tiger – Image, Memory, Site.” <https://journal.fi/teats/article/view/122815>

orange-brown mat with me. And this time I carried a bow rake to ward off geese, seagulls, and other birds – it was still nesting season – to bend off the grass and to help me keep my balance if needed, in the part where the fall from the stone base was steeper. I had a camera on a tripod with me this time as well, albeit a completely different one than the camera I used ten years ago. Partly due to the change in camera objective, partly because of changes in vegetation, I was not able to repeat the same framing of the image as in the first of the four images that I used to repeat in 2010. I tried to fit the length of the side of the stone base into the image, parallel to the base of the image frame, but could not find the same angle due to some shrubs that had grown on the spot where the tripod used to stand. All other trees had grown as well, and perhaps therefore the new image shows no trace of the huge spruce in the background, which dominates the first image of the original work, and which still grows there, as much a landmark as before.

Rather than repeat the whole sequence of actions I did during my weekly visits in 2010 – taking the blanket, walking around the base to the mat, lying on the mat, walking around the base back to the mat, picking it up and placing it in the following corner, leaving the blanket in the following corner, walking around the base and then exiting the image in order to move the camera to the next place – I now walked only once around the stone base, without blanket and with the bow rake (it was difficult enough due to the shrubs and grasses) and then lied down on the mat for a while. After getting up and exiting the image I recorded enough material of the “empty” view (which is in fact full of life) to use as a background for a compilation of the 28-minute four-channel video installation *Year of the Tiger*. The video *Remembering the Round of the Tiger* uses the same recording of this revisit as its base. The video contains the *Round of the Tiger*, a kind of “the making of” story, which shows the repeated action behind the time-lapse videos of the installation *Year of the*

*Tiger*, where I lie immobile on the ground. Here the four images of the *Round of the Tiger*, originally shown one after the other, are condensed into four parts shown together in the same frame. I could not access the original recordings but had to cut the edited version into four parts. The four sequences of action shown here simultaneously were recorded from four different directions and where repeated each time, that is, approximately once a week between 14 February 2010 and 31 January 2011. The session used in the *Round of the Tiger*, which was shown in the same exhibition as the main work, in Gallery Jangva in 2012, was (probably) recorded in March 2010. Probably, based on the look of the image, the fog, the order of the images in the installation and my diary notes. The brief note I wrote about the session on 27 March 2010, likely the one inserted here as four images, reads as follows, translated into English:

Fog, temperature around zero, packing snow – they have promised rain for tonight. The ice is still strong enough to walk on, and on the island the snowbanks are deep, although the streets in the city centre are mostly bare. It is no longer cold, the weather is soft and mild, but the crust of the snow is unpredictable, and the snow is wet...

I cannot remember why I chose exactly that session for making *The Round of the Tiger*, and for the still images describing the installation. Usually, I have taken the still images from the first session of the year. Perhaps the blandness of the grey fog and the wet snow made the image more uniform and more graphic, compared with the sunny winter landscape in the first images. If the idea was to make me blend in with the environment, the effect is almost the opposite. The warm off-white yellowish colour of the woollen blanket I am wearing really stands out in contrast to the cool grey landscape of wet snow. Or perhaps I chose this session to emphasize the struggle in the making of the seemingly peaceful work, where I

am only “sleeping in the snow”, because in this session you can see me repeatedly missing the stone base or sinking deep through the crust of the snow. Unfortunately, we cannot compare, because this is the only session available – the rest of the material is inaccessible due to obsolete technology, and the installation shows only the immobile part.

Finding the diary notes from 2010 I realized, it might be interesting to translate them all, and add them to the video compilation with the “sleeping” images, either as a spoken voice-over text in Finnish, with the English translation as subtitles, or as subtitles only. I chose to experiment with adding a voice over and some subtitles on this video, rather than the main installation, however, mainly because it is briefer, and its purpose is to explain and expose. On the one hand the contrast between the contemporary image and the old video is here amplified by the difference in season, grey images of snow and fog covering lush summer vegetation. On the other hand, inserting the four images as a square, which covers the whole image space, prevents the juxtaposition of two images of the same place with a distance in time. To put it simply, this compilation is perhaps less aesthetically interesting or pleasing and more informative – and thus suitable for experiments of further “densification” with added explanations and subtitles.

The contexts for these revisits, their aim and some related thoughts are discussed in a separate text called “Remembering the Year of the Tiger – Image, Memory, Site”, which this video is supposed to support, and which includes links to the other video as well. And regardless of these images and memories, the site, the old stone base on the eastern shore of Harakka island, is still there, open for the public to visit, depending on the season by ferry boat or walking across the ice.

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**To summarize**

With the hope that they could have some relevance for current concerns, I have tried in this text and the project it describes – the act of physically returning to the site of a performance for camera almost ten years later and combining video images from two different times with texts and ideas relevant to the work then and now – to bring these experiences related to memory, image and site into the discussion on working with archives.



Figure 24. *Year of the Rabbit* (2012)

# 10. Revisiting the Year of the Rabbit

During the year of the rabbit (2011-2012) I decided to try to keep a specific schedule, Sundays at 3 pm, to be able to invite people to witness my performance with a juniper in the southern part of the island. To announce possible changes, and to invite people to contribute by taking photos, I also started a blog<sup>691</sup>, which turned out to be the beginning of a practice I have continued ever since. Another significant novelty was wearing the green woollen scarf over my head in such a way that my figure turned into a juniper-like form and made me feel protected in a cocoon of sorts. Two works were performed next to each other, *Year of the Rabbit – With a Juniper* and *Year of the Rabbit – by the Bird shed*<sup>692</sup> and as usual, a *Day and Night of the Rabbit*<sup>693</sup> was recorded as well, albeit the following spring. I have written about my experience of blogging,<sup>694</sup> as well as of the experience of performing with the juniper<sup>695</sup>, which I liked very much.

691 A bilingual blog for the year of the juniper <http://aa-katajankansa.blogspot.com>

692 *Year of the Rabbit – with a Juniper* (2012) <https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/year-of-the-rabbit-with-a-juniper/>

*Year of the Rabbit – by the Bird Shed* (2012) <https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/year-of-the-rabbit-by-the-bird-shed/>

693 *Day and Night of the Rabbit – In the Year of the Dragon 1&2* (2012) <https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/day-and-night-of-the-rabbit-in-the-year-of-the-dragon-1-2/>

694 “Immediate Mediation – On the Performativity of Blogging (Arlander 2013b) and “Blogin pitämisen performatiivisuus” [The performativity of blogging] (Arlander 2015d).

695 “Becoming Juniper – Performing Landscape as Artistic Research” (Arlander 2015b) <https://nivel.teak.fi/becoming-juniper/becoming-juniper-performing-landscape-as-artistic-research-annette-arlander/>

Holding hands with Junipers<sup>696</sup> or becoming juniper<sup>697</sup>, even looking for a juniper<sup>698</sup>, was something I did wherever I travelled.

I revisited the juniper on 1 August 2019 and the recording was used in the compilation *Revisiting the Juniper*<sup>699</sup>, which was presented as part of the performance “HTDTWP presents: The Transformative Potential of Performance”<sup>700</sup> at the CARPA 6 colloquium on the 29th August 2019 in Kiasma Theatre in Helsinki. In the text written for a voice-over narration to the video compilation I address the Juniper that I had performed with directly, and the text is in that sense semi-fictional. While the video compilation was shown as a large projection with sound, including the recorded narration, I was standing in front of the projection by the podium covered by the same green shawl that I used in the original performances. The video essay was not published but added only as a link to our joint contribution to the conference proceedings: “HTDTWP presents: The Transformative Potential of Performance.”<sup>701</sup> The following ver-

- 696 *Holding Hands with Junipers – Ibiza* (2012) <https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/holding-hands-with-junipers-ibiza/>, *Holding Hands with a Juniper – Osaka* (2012) <https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/holding-hands-with-a-juniper-osaka/> and *Holding Hands with a Juniper – Seili* (2012) <https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/holding-hands-with-a-juniper-seili/>
- 697 *Becoming Juniper – Kalvola* (2012) <https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/becoming-juniper-kalvola/>, *Becoming Juniper – Kökar* (2012) <https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/becoming-juniper-kokar/>, *Becoming Juniper – Rovaniemi* (2012) <https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/becoming-juniper-rovaniemi/> and so on.
- 698 *Looking for a Juniper – Clare Island* <https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/looking-for-a-juniper-clare-island/>
- 699 *Revisiting the Juniper* (21 min. 50 sec.) <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/profile/show-work?work=662339>
- 700 See documentation of “HTDTWP presents: The Transformative Potential of Performance” in the HTDTWP archive <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/281037/281038/7581/3069>
- 701 Arlander et.al. 2018. “HTDTWP presents: The Transformative Potential of Performance.” In Leena Rouhiainen (ed.) *Proceedings of CARPA 6 Artistic Research Performs and Transforms: Bridging Practices, Contexts, Traditions & Futures* Nivel 13, 2020. <https://nivel.teak.fi/carpa6/>

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sion of the text includes some sections that were cut out from the shorter version used in the performance due to time constraints.

## 10.1. Revisiting the Juniper



Figure 25. *Revisiting the Juniper* (2019)

Dear Juniper,

It was nice to see you again four weeks ago, on the first of August, there on the eastern shore of Harakka Island, and to see that you are healthy and strong. The old guy that used to grow to the west from you, leaning heavily, had completely disappeared. When I looked among the shrubs I saw some pieces of dry wood – all that remained. But on the eastern side (to the left in the image,) a large fresh juniper was now growing strong; your offspring I assume. The birch behind you was not looking good, however, obviously suffering from drought; there is not much water on the cliffs if there is no rain.

To remember our time together in 2011 I have inserted some videos in the recording of the revisit this year. On the left is *Year of the Rabbit - By the Bird Shed*, and in the centre *Year of the Rabbit - With a Juniper*, both performed weekly for a year on Sundays at 3 pm between February 6, 2011, and January 22, 2012 (with some breaks due to travels, though). On the right is *Day and Night of the*

*Rabbit - In the Year of the Dragon*, which was performed for a day and night from 16 June 2012 at 1 pm to 17 June at 1 pm every three hours.

As part of the research project *How to Do Things with Performance?* I have returned to the sites where the series *Animal Years* was performed and recorded on the island, as my colleagues and many of those who have followed our work well know by now. Now was the turn of the site of the juniper, your site, which I visited during the year of the rabbit, in 2011. Visiting you was one of my favourite years – no, I am not saying this to be polite, it is absolutely true, because I continued visiting junipers and juniper-like shrubs even during the following year, when I was supposed to call for dragons. I really liked holding hands with you, or other junipers, too, holding on to your trunk or a branch, and I loved covering myself with the scarf, hiding there, breathing slowly, and feeling protected, “sticking my head into the bush” as the saying goes in Finnish. And with you I wrote my first blog, which has turned into an activity I often engage with. I have used our performances together as an example when writing about the performativity of blogging<sup>702</sup>, of becoming juniper as artistic research<sup>703</sup> and even when discussing authorship<sup>704</sup>. I am now working on another research project, too, called *Performing with Plants*, which somehow began with you, or

702 “Immediate Mediation – On the Performativity of Blogging”. In Bruce Barton, Melanie Dreyer-Lude & Anna Birch (cur/eds.) *Experiments and Intensities Vol 3 Mediating Practices(s) Performance as research and – in – through – mediation* (Arlander 2013b, no longer available online).

703 “Becoming Juniper – Performing Landscape as Artistic Research”. In Nivel No 5 2015, The Publication Series of the Theatre Academy Helsinki Nivel (Arlander 2015b) <http://nivel.teak.fi/becoming-juniper/becoming-juniper-performing-landscape-as-artistic-research-annette-arlander/>

704 “Mitä tekijä voi tehdä?” [What can an author do?] In Annette Arlander, Laura Gröndahl ja Marja Silde (eds.) *Tekijä – teos, esitys ja yhteiskunta*. [Author – work, performance and society] Näyttämö ja Tutkimus 6. Teatterintutkimuksen seura Helsinki, 12-37. (Arlander 2016b) <https://journal.fi/teats/issue/view/8695>

perhaps even earlier, with a pine tree, but anyway I became more conscious of the possibilities through my contact with you. Thus, revisiting you seemed special and important.

In preparation I checked the length of the original video, 20 minutes, and put my phone to warn me after 25 minutes. Only when standing next to you did I realize that 25 minutes would be too long. And then I remembered that my camera would stop by itself after 21 minutes – how can I always forget that! I started counting my breaths to get approximately twenty minutes and when I returned to the camera it had stopped. So, I recorded another session, slightly shorter, to be able to include the exit as well. Anyway, it was easy to spend time with you, you were somehow open to my holding on to you and there was a place to stand among the heather next to you. Only while looking at the material, did I realize that I am hardly distinguishable behind your branches. Funny, because I was worried that my lemon outfit would be too domineering..

I realize that speaking to you here like this, is slightly absurd in many ways, first because you are not here, and many people listening to me would be familiar with the principle “nothing about us, without us” or *nihil de nobis, sine nobis*, if you prefer Latin. That means officially that, “no policy should be decided by any representative without the full and direct participation of members of the group(s) affected by that policy”. Well, we are not deciding any policy here, but for the sake of principle... There have been attempts at dealing with the problem for example by Bruno Latour and his idea of the parliament of things<sup>705</sup> and other related endeavours. Coming from performance art I tend to distrust all kinds of representational strategies, somebody speaking as somebody else or on behalf of somebody else, and so on. Although I don’t know for

705 Bruno Latour, The Parliament of Things, lecture on 23 November 2020. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zZF9gbQ7iCs>

sure, I have a hunch that you would distrust them, too. Since we are on stage right now, we can perhaps rely on a little bit of willing suspension of disbelief, as it is called by theatre people, and allow me to speak with you, or to you, without you being here with us, except in the form of a representation. I realize I also risk being accused of mansplaining, or ‘woman-splaining’ – it cannot really be called ‘plant-splaining’ I guess, because I am the one explaining in a potentially condescending or patronizing manner.

Nevertheless, you might be delighted to hear that in recent years there has been a great increase in the scientific study of plant learning, plant memory, plant thinking and some scientists, but not all, are now even willing to speak of plant intelligence<sup>706</sup>. There is also something called critical plant studies, which according to the description of the lead editor of a book series with the same name, Michael Marder, has as its goal “to initiate an interdisciplinary dialogue, whereby philosophy and literature would learn from each other to think about, imagine, and describe, vegetal life with critical awareness, conceptual rigor, and ethical sensitivity.”<sup>707</sup> Well, we are not dealing with philosophy or literature in a strict sense, here, but rather something called artistic research, but it is nice to know that there is a wider context, isn’t it?

### **Jangva exhibition**

When I looked for material from the time of our regular meetings, I found a text I had written for the exhibition where these works were shown for the first time, in January 2013 in the now no longer existing Gallery Jangva.

706 Mancuso et.al. 2015; Gagliano 2018.

707 See introduction to critical plant studies by Brill [https://brill.com/view/serial/CPST?qt-qt\\_serial\\_details=1](https://brill.com/view/serial/CPST?qt-qt_serial_details=1)

How to perform landscape, not only represent it? Can you have a meaningful relationship with a singular element in the landscape? How can you relate to a living being that you do not easily recognize as your kind? A plant is hard to see as a partner in interaction although plants are our collaborators with regard to production of oxygen and carbon dioxide. Plants are our allies, since they, via their photosynthesis, produce the basic ingredients of our food. They are the true creators of our world. There is a kind of symbiotic relationship between plants and animals, in this case a shrub and a human being. Most plants are stationary, reliable to be there for us. A plant knows what it means to be site-specific. A certain shrub in a particular place is an entity with a distinguishable individuality, something to relate to and to visit.

During the year of the rabbit 2011 I chose a juniper growing in the south-eastern part of Harakka Island to acquaint myself with and as my partner within the project “Year of the Rabbit with a Juniper”. A juniper seemed to me a strange creature comparable with the hare in Arto Paasilinna’s novel, together with whom I could search for a new contact with the environment. I ended up visiting the juniper once a week and “holding hands” with it wrapped in a green scarf. I invited passers-by and colleagues to witness my performance and wrote a blog about the project.<sup>708</sup> While travelling I encountered other junipers to make acquaintance with. In the Turku archipelago and in South Häme I found handsome junipers and later I looked for them in Ireland, Sardinia, and Ibiza. In the year 2012 I have spent time with junipers as well. Am I perhaps “becoming juniper”?<sup>709</sup>

708 Link to blog <http://aa-katajankanssa.blogspot.com/>

709 Press info for the exhibition Year of the Rabbit, Gallery Jangva 9.-27.1.2013.

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## Emergency Index

In a publication called *Emergency Index vol 2*, which documents performances that took place in 2011, I described the work in a slightly different manner.

This performance for camera is the tenth in a series of twelve year-long performance projects, which I call performing landscape, on Harakka Island off Helsinki, named after the Chinese Calendar, and concerned with the question: how to perform landscape today.

I try to record and document changes in the landscape by video filming the same action in the same place, from the same point with the same framing of the image, once a week for a year. These documentations are then edited to form video installations. This way of working means for me to link myself to the traditions of performance art, video art and environmental art, and to work in the areas between them. For the year of the rabbit, 2011, I wanted to find a new relationship to the environment and chose to visit a juniper in the southern part of the island. It grows in an area reserved for nesting birds, but I received permission to enter it for this project and left the camera on tripod on the other side of the dividing rope not to encourage visitors to follow me. After some experiments I ended up holding hands with the juniper and covering myself with a dark green shawl.

Unlike the projects undertaken in the previous years I decided to make this action a public performance, to invite spectators to witness my performing for camera, and to repeat it at an exact time, that is, Sundays at 3 pm. To be able to inform potential visitors quickly about possible changes in schedule due to bad weather or my other duties, I decided to start a blog. This blog soon evolved into a crucial part of the performance. Not many visitors showed up, ... so I invited colleagues or occasional passers-by to function as witnesses and to take a photo. Soon I suggested that they take a

picture of something they find interesting in the surroundings and decided that every collaborator could participate only once. This added a dialogical dimension to the project.

Thus, two kinds of documentation of changes in the landscape are produced by this project – one of the actual performances, which are recorded on video, and another in the blog, including my notes and the images of the shifting participants, who often focus on details I would never have thought of. The blog also adds another temporal dimension to the performance. The previous years were performed first for the camera and for occasional passers-by and then, one year later, in edited form for gallery visitors and on the web. This year, however, the blog made the project instantly public, and enabled a more process-oriented approach, including notes from various places I have travelled to and tried to find a juniper to visit.<sup>710</sup>

So far so good, but what about the question I promised to discuss, and which should be of some interest for you, too, dear juniper: Could expanding the idea of who or what performs assist in decolonizing our relationship to the environment, to everything else around us? The possibility to understand performing as appearing, as “esiintyä” rather than “esittää”, to use the intransitive and transitive forms in Finnish, I have addressed elsewhere.<sup>711</sup> So, let us begin with ‘decolonizing’ instead.

710 This text, “Year of the Rabbit – With a Juniper” published in Yelena Gluzman, Matvei Yankelevich (eds.) *Emergency Index* Ugly duckling presse, New York 2012, 64-65, (Arlander 2012f) is not included in the voice-over narration of the video essay.

711 Arlander 2020a; 2019c.

## **Decolonizing relationships with nature**

In one of her last texts, “Decolonizing relationships with nature” in 2003 environmental philosopher and ecofeminist activist Val Plumwood analyses the logical structure of colonial, anthropocentric and Eurocentric relationships. She describes the Eurocentric colonial system as “one of hegemony – a system of power relations in which the interests of the dominant party were disguised as universal and mutual, but in which the colonizer actually prospered at the expense of the colonized”.<sup>712</sup> She draws on her experience from both sides of the colonizing relationships and notes that “many of us experience them from both sides and that they can mislead, distort and impoverish both the colonized and the centre – not just the obvious losers.”<sup>713</sup> This is something I can relate to as a Finn, a Finnish Swede and a European, and not only in relationship to you, dear Juniper.

Plumwood notes that “the concept of colonization can be applied directly to non-human nature itself, and that the relationship between [certain groups of] humans ... and the more-than-human world might be ... characterized as one of colonization.”<sup>714</sup> She reminds us how “the sphere of ‘nature’ has, in the past, been taken to include what are thought of as less ideal more primitive forms of the human.”<sup>715</sup> Progress has meant “the progressive overcoming, or control of, this ‘barbarian’ non-human or semi-human sphere by the rational sphere of European culture and ‘modernity’.”<sup>716</sup> According to her the “Eurocentric form of anthropocentrism draws upon and parallels Eurocentric imperialism in its logical structure” such as

712 Plumwood 2003, 51.

713 Plumwood 2003, 52.

714 Ibid.

715 Ibid.

716 Plumwood 2003, 52-53.

a “moral dualism, involving a major gulf between the ‘One’ and the ‘Other’ that cannot be bridged or crossed”.<sup>717</sup>

Plumwood provides an account of some of the mechanisms that characterize both colonial and anthropocentric approaches to the other, which include a strong focus on dualism, exaggerating differences and denying commonality as well as homogenizing the other. One mechanism is hyper-separation or radical exclusion: “The function of hyper-separation is to mark out the Other for separate and inferior treatment”<sup>718</sup>, she writes. Moreover, “from an anthropocentric standpoint, nature is a hyper-separate lower order, lacking any real continuity with the human” and such a view “stresses heavily those features that make humans different from nature and animals, rather than those we share with them,”<sup>719</sup> she adds. Another mechanism is homogenization or stereotyping, seeing in the Other “not an individual, but a member of a class stereotyped as interchangeable, replaceable, all alike – that is, as homogenous.”<sup>720</sup> Consequently, “[a]nthropocentric culture conceives of nature and animals as all alike in their lack of consciousness, which is assumed to be exclusive to the human”.<sup>721</sup>

Plumwood summarizes: “These two features of human/nature dualism – radical exclusion and homogenization – work together to produce, in anthropocentric culture, a polarized understanding” where “the human and non-human spheres correspond to two quite different substances or orders of being in the world.”<sup>722</sup> She proposes remedies as well. “To counter the first dynamic of ‘us-them’ polarization, it is necessary to acknowledge and reclaim continuity and

717 Plumwood 2003, 53.

718 Plumwood 2003, 54.

719 Ibid.

720 Plumwood 2003, 55.

721 Ibid.

722 Ibid.

overlap between the polarized groups”, and to admit the “internal diversity within them.”<sup>723</sup> While “countering the second dynamic of denial, assimilation and instrumentalization requires”, according to her, “recognition of the Other’s difference, independence and agency.”<sup>724</sup> This means “a double movement or gesture of affirming kinship and also affirming the Other’s difference”, respecting the other “as an independent presence to be engaged with on its own terms”.<sup>725</sup> Importantly, she maintains that a “re-conception of nature in agentic terms” is “perhaps the most important aspect of moving to an alternative ethical framework”.<sup>726</sup> To counteract “backgrounding and denial” activists try to puncture the contemporary illusion of human independence. However, “countering a hegemonic dualism, such as between nature and culture presents many traps”, such as a mere value reversal, where one is idealizing ‘pure nature’ or ‘wilderness’, she explains, which actually leaves the dichotomy in place.<sup>727</sup>

So, even though I stand next to you, dear Juniper, and hold on to you and intellectually know that I depend on you and your kind, I am to some extent the result of the material-discursive practices of a colonial legacy, which sees humans as the only rational species, the only real subjectivities and agents in the world, whereas you, and everything else is ‘nature’, a background that is there to be exploited, to provide me with a healthy ‘forest-bathing experience’, material for gin or jenever, or perhaps stuff for fairy tales. – Not so good...

### **On decoloniality**

In the book *On Decoloniality: Concepts, Analytics, Praxis*, by Walter D. Mignolo and Catherine Walsh (2018), Mignolo presents the idea of

723 Plumwood 2003, 60.

724 Ibid.

725 Ibid.

726 Ibid.

727 Ibid.

nature as one of the three pillars of the colonial matrix, together with racism and sexism. According to Mignolo “Western imperial subjects secured themselves and their descendants as the superior subspecies” and “invented ...the idea of *nature* to separate their bodies from all living ... organisms on the planet.”<sup>728</sup> Thus, “the invention of *nature* and the degradation of life” is “one more facet in the procedural constitution of the human”<sup>729</sup>, he writes. “Nature doesn’t exist, or it exists as an ontological fiction”.<sup>730</sup> That is, in many non-western languages there is “no conceptualization corresponding to what Europeans understood as nature.”<sup>731</sup> “In indigenous cosmologies”, Mignolo writes, “there is no such divide between *nature* and *culture*, a misleading formula, for nature is a cultural concept”.<sup>732</sup> For him “current urgencies among Western scholars and intellectuals of moving ‘beyond nature and culture’ is a regional and provincial Western urgency. It is welcome of course” he adds, “but it is not universal.”<sup>733</sup> According to Mignolo “nature and culture are two Western fictions /.../ How to get out of them is a decolonial question.”<sup>734</sup> For him “[d]ecolonial thinking is akin to nonmodern ways of thinking” which are “grounded on cosmologies of *complementary dualities* (and/and) rather than *dichotomies* or *contradictory dualities* (either/or)”.<sup>735</sup> In Andean philosophy, for example, there is an understanding of duality as complementarity, resembling the Chinese yin and yang, he explains; “the acknowledgement that there cannot be A without its

728 Mignolo in Mignolo and Walsh 2018, 153-154.

729 Mignolo in Mignolo and Walsh 2018, 158.

730 Ibid.

731 Mignolo in Mignolo and Walsh 2018, 159.

732 Mignolo in Mignolo and Walsh 2018, 164.

733 Ibid.

734 Mignolo in Mignolo and Walsh 2018, 160.

735 Mignolo in Mignolo and Walsh 2018, 155.

opposite B". When you accept "that these entities are inseparable ... you have at least two options"<sup>736</sup>, he writes.

If you try to eliminate and control the opposite, you enter the realm of war; if you seek harmony and balance, you enter the realm of struggle, weaving relations (Convivencia, vincularidad) with all that exists: rocks and mountains; spirits and plants; plants and mountains that are spirits; animals who do not speak Kechua, Hebrew, Latin or any other of the known languages; and animals who do speak one or more languages.<sup>737</sup>

Admittedly, dear Juniper, it would be a struggle if we would try to really understand each other. By standing next to you and holding on to you I am not communicating with you in any detailed way... but I am trying to establish a relation, some form of 'vincularidad', perhaps. I am not thinking of you as a spirit or power, as my ancestors might have done, although in Finnish and Nordic folklore people respect junipers mostly because some kind of 'haltija', or little people would live under the juniper, and later also because your branches or berries could be used for protection against evil spirits. – Perhaps I am disrespectful and colonizing when forcing you to perform with me like this, and to contribute to my artwork without any recompense?

### **Decolonizing nature**

In another study, *Decolonizing Nature. Contemporary Art and the Politics of Ecology*. (2017) T.J. Demos brings art into the debate. He writes: "I'm convinced that there is nothing more important, timely and urgent to consider as our present ecological crises, and in this

736 Mignolo in Mignolo and Walsh 2018, 168.

737 Ibid.

regard, we can only do so by starting from our bases in our respective fields”<sup>738</sup>, which for him means art history. “Under current forms of governance”, he notes, “our relation to the environment threatens our coming existence, where not only nature is colonized but also our very future, a colonization that we must all struggle to resist.”<sup>739</sup>

Demos explains: “To decolonize nature represents a doubtlessly ambitious and manifold project, with artists, activists, and creative practitioners (in addition to scientists, policy makers, and politicians) involved at every stage”.<sup>740</sup> Moreover, “[b]eyond the critical analysis of corporate practice and the international framework of trade policies that privilege economy over environment”, he adds, “we also need to decolonize our conceptualization of nature in properly political ways”.<sup>741</sup> He admits that the conventional definition of nature, “positioned as an a-historic monolith in a separate realm apart from the human” appears “faulty for its basis in ontological objectification and dualistic thinking” and serves as “the conceptual platform for extractivist practice”.<sup>742</sup> “Yet”, for Demos “rejecting the term nature is not an option”, even while he agrees “with efforts geared towards its conceptual reorientation”.<sup>743</sup> Demos agrees that “decolonizing nature entails transcending human-centered exceptionalism, no longer placing ourselves at the center of the universe and viewing nature as a source of endless bounty.”<sup>744</sup> He notes how current intellectual efforts like “speculative realism, new materialism, ecosophical activism, object-oriented ontology, elementary politics, and posthumanism” despite at times being conflictual,

738 Demos 2017, 29.

739 Ibid.

740 Demos 2017, 16.

741 Demos 2017, 18.

742 Demos 2017, 20.

743 Ibid.

744 Demos 2017, 19.

represent “a paradigm shift in the humanities, constitutionally preoccupied in the past with the human.”<sup>745</sup> However, for him “it is necessary to bring these formations into relation with key accounts of political and social ecology” for them to “gain critical use value.”<sup>746</sup>

Demos maintains that “art figures as a central platform... linking with further philosophical inquiry and conceptual experimentation” exploring, for instance “what ‘zoe-egalitarianism’ would mean.”<sup>747</sup> He wants to focus on “what Madhav Gadgil and Ramachandra Guha call ‘the environmentalism of the poor’” and to “avoid continuing the Global North’s legacy of provincialism, prejudice, and privilege regarding ecology”, what they call “an ‘environmentalism of affluence’”.<sup>748</sup> This includes acknowledging the views of Indigenous traditions, because “[p]ost-anthropocentric philosophy is not a recent discovery, but rather connects – whether intentionally or not – to long-standing Indigenous views of nature as a pluriverse of agents”<sup>749</sup>, he adds. Demos notes the need for “new methodologies to acknowledge the voices of historically oppressed peoples” and “to strengthen the basis of ethico-political solidarity around ecological concerns by joining with current struggles for cultural and environmental survival against corporate globalization.”<sup>750</sup> Interestingly, he seems to have great confidence in the transformative power of art: “I am convinced that art, given its long histories of experimentation, imaginative invention, and radical thinking, can play a central transformative role here”<sup>751</sup>, he writes. “In its most ambitious and far-ranging sense, art holds the promise of initiating” perceptual

745 Ibid.

746 Demos 2017, 21.

747 Demos 2017, 20.

748 Demos 2017, 22.

749 Demos 2017, 23.

750 Demos 2017, 23-24.

751 Demos 2017, 18-19.

“and philosophical shifts, offering new ways of comprehending ourselves and our relation to the world differently than the destructive traditions of colonizing nature.”<sup>752</sup>

Well, I wish I could be equally confident. But we must try. And, thinking of resisting the colonization of the future and doing so by starting from our bases in our respective fields, I must say, dear Juniper, that you are doing it quite well.





Figure 26. *Calling the Dragon (North, East, South, West)* (2013)

# 11. Revisiting the Year of the Dragon

During the year of the dragon (2012-2013) I was calling a dragon in four directions from the rooftop of a bunker with a small bell, first with my right hand and then with my left hand<sup>753</sup>, and then from behind the camera with the sound of the bell without the human visible<sup>754</sup>. And I made a small video of the bunker, located in the southern part of Harakka Island as well.<sup>755</sup> The scarf was the same green scarf as in the previous year of the rabbit and the action repeated four times in four directions was a complement to the four directions in the year of the tiger. Another way to call for a dragon was by waving a green ribbon from the roof of the bunker towards the panorama hill and from the panorama hill towards the bunker, a performance barely visible on video.<sup>756</sup> The day and night recorded in February was a mixture of these actions, ringing a bell on the panorama hill every three hours.<sup>757</sup> A tri-lingual blog complemented the year.<sup>758</sup>

The revisit to the roof of the by then completely rebuilt bunker took place on 10 September 2019 and resulted in the compilation

753 *Calling the Dragon (North, East, South & West)* (2013) <https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/calling-the-dragon-north-east-south-west/>

754 *Calling the Dragon 1-4 (Bell)* (2013) <https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/calling-the-dragon-1-4-bell/>

755 *The Bunker* (2013) <https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/the-bunker/>

756 *Calling the Dragon - Waving (A&B)* (2013) <https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/year-of-the-dragon-waving-a-b/>

757 *Day and Night of the Dragon (1-3)* (2013) <https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/day-and-night-of-the-dragon-1-3/>

758 Calling the Dragon blog <http://aa-callingthedragon.blogspot.com>

*Calling the Dragon Again*<sup>759</sup>, which was presented as part of a panel by the HTDTWP research group called “The Human in Performance” in November 2019.<sup>760</sup> The revisit was later reworked into an article “Calling for Zoe as a Utopian Gesture”<sup>761</sup>. Calling for something is a future-oriented action. As a prologue to that text, or as a historical flashback, I include here an older text “Calling the dragon – the five avant-gardes today?”<sup>762</sup> At the time the question of the contemporary avant-garde was discussed by the Finnish Avant-garde and Modernism Network (FAM 2017)<sup>763</sup>. This prompted me to return to a paper “Calling the Dragon – avant-garde or not?” presented at a conference with the all-encompassing theme Avant-Garde, Tradition, Community.<sup>764</sup>

759 *Calling the Dragon Again* (2019) <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/profile/show-work?work=723869>

760 PARSE conference The Human, University of Gothenburg 13-15.11.2019. See documentation on the RC <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/281037/281038/9558/2987>

761 “Calling for Zoe as a Utopian Gesture”. *Ruukku – studies in artistic research* #17 (Arlander 2021b) <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/1112890/1112891> in <http://ruukku-journal.fi/en/issues/17>

762 “Calling the Dragon – The five avant-gardes today?” in *Research in Arts & Education* 3/2017, 1-12 (Arlander 2017d) <https://journal.fi/rae/article/view/118828>

763 Hautamäki 2017.

764 “Calling the Dragon – avant-garde or not?” paper at Performance Studies International PSI #20 Avant-Garde, Tradition, Community at Shanghai Theatre Academy, China 4-8.7.2014.

## 11.1. Calling the Dragon - Five Avant-gardes Today?



Figure 27. *Year of the Dragon - Waving A & B* (2013)

One may ask whether the term avant-garde is at all meaningful today beyond its historical use? Can it be used as an analytical tool in some way? In “The five avant-gardes or... Or none?” theatre director and performance theorist Richard Schechner (1993) suggested that

we distinguish a historical avant-garde, a constantly changing current avant-garde, a future oriented avant-garde, a tradition seeking avant-garde and an intercultural avant-garde. Are these distinctions valid beyond theatre and performing arts, the concerns of Schechner? Are they useful in understanding practices within contemporary art? To respond to those questions, I will use as an example the project *Calling the Dragon* from 2012, which was part of a series of works performing landscape for camera, in the border zone between performance art, environmental art, and media art. By looking at this practice as (if it was) avant-garde this paper explores these five ways of understanding the term in a contemporary context. First, I will briefly explain the case used as an example, then I present the by now classic text by Schechner and try to look at the practice considering the various types of avant-garde proposed in that text and finally make some comments on the avant-garde today.

### **Calling the Dragon**

During the year of the dragon 2012 I was calling the dragon (or a dragon) once a week from the roof of a bunker built after the Second World War for dismantling mines on Harakka Island in Helsinki, Finland. The roof would be a good landing platform for a small dragon, but too narrow for a creature the size of a helicopter. I was calling the dragon by ringing a small green ceramic bell bought outside a temple in Kyoto, Japan, recorded the performance on video and made notes in a blog in three languages every week. The beginning was planned for the Chinese New Year on January 23 2012, but the first performance was delayed due to thaw season with bad ice, which prevented me from getting to the island, so the first performance took place only on the 4 February.

*Calling the Dragon* was one part in a series of twelve one-year projects performed for camera on the same island. The series, *Animal Years*, which began in 2002 and finished in 2014, was based on

the Chinese calendar and its cycle of twelve years, with each year named after a specific animal. The project utilized the traditions of performance art, video art and environmental art, moving in the borderland between them. Every year I looked for a new perspective on the landscape, a new aspect of the environment and a new kind of relationship between the human body and the place. During the year of the dragon in 2012 the sound, the barely audible tinkle of the small bell, was important. The dragon is the only mythical creature among the animals of the calendar, representing creative power, success, and good fortune. In European fairy tales, legends and romances the dragon is a horrible monster, something the hero must face in combat to win his princess. A dragon can also mean the border between the known and the unknown, as in the expression: “Here be dragons”, which, although an anachronism, refers to the supposed dragons on medieval maps denoting the end of the known world. That is why I felt a dragon was something I could only call. Approximately once a week I repeated the following action: Wrapped in a green scarf I climbed up on the roof of the bunker, placed my video camera on a tripod in the centre, and called the dragon by ringing the small bell in four directions, beginning by facing north; I continued facing east, then south and finally west and the open sea. In each image, I rang the bell first from the left, then from the right and lastly from behind the camera. The same sequence of actions was repeated every time. And nothing even remotely resembling a dragon did respond to my calls, I must add.

### **The Five avant-gardes... or none?**

In his text “The five avant-gardes or... Or none?”, originally an introduction to *The Future of Ritual*, in 1993, but since then republished in, for example, the *Twentieth Century Performance Reader*<sup>765</sup>, where

765 Schechner 1996 (1993).

I first encountered it, Richard Schechner suggested that we could distinguish various forms of the avant-garde. Besides the idea of several understandings of the term existing in parallel, the fact that a lot of what was then termed avant-garde, especially in the theatre, was very much looking back, investigating past traditions, was interesting, even paradoxical, since the avant-garde is usually linked with a movement forward, towards the future.

My understanding of the term avant-garde comes mainly through the Russian futurists, after working, at the end of the eighties, on a reconstruction of the Krucheny-Malevitsh-Matjushin collaboration *Victory over the Sun*<sup>766</sup>, and with some Italian Futurist and Dadaist provocations. The distinction made by Michael Kirby in his text “Avant-garde Theatre”<sup>767</sup> between an ‘antagonistic’ avant-garde that tries to ‘épater la bourgeoisie’ (or startle the middle class) and a ‘hermetic’ avant-garde that looks for something new behind closed doors, in a self-contained manner, was useful at the time. The most well-known theoretical analyses of the avant-garde probably come from Peter Bürger, who in his *Theory of the Avant-Garde* (originally published in 1974, in English 1984) claimed the main aim of the avant-garde to be the demolition of the difference between art and life, on one hand attacking the institution of art and on the other attempting the transformation of everyday life. He made a distinction between the aims of elitist modernism and the avant-garde as a critical and political phenomenon. While working in the performance group Homo \$ in the eighties the main distinction we used in practical parlance, was between AG and UG, avant-garde and under-ground. Sometimes our collective performances or actions would turn out to be more under-ground and sometimes more avant-garde, we thought, and in that context, avant-garde stood for high art. Let us

766 Arlander & Koskenniemi 1989.

767 Kirby 1987.

return to the five (theatrical) avant-gardes listed by Schechner and see how they sound or feel today: a historical avant-garde, a constantly changing current avant-garde, a future oriented avant-garde, a tradition seeking avant-garde and an intercultural avant-garde. And since he suggests that a single work can belong to several of these categories<sup>768</sup>, we can look for aspects of *Calling the Dragon* to be linked to them.

### **The historical avant-garde**

The first great avant-garde movement, naturalism, at the end of the nineteenth century, soon spread around the world, Schechner tells us, and was followed by familiar movements like symbolism, futurism, dadaism and surrealism. The term avant-garde refers to the directionality of art with an advanced guard and a rear guard, and, according to Kirby quoted by Schechner, to some artists' "attempt to alter, expand or escape from the stylistic aesthetic rules passed on to them by culture", and to the "impulse to redefine, to contradict, to continue the sensed directionality of art".<sup>769</sup> Schechner summarises this as a wish "to make something new ... in opposition to prevailing values" and traces the impulse back to the Romantics' idea of life lived in terms of one's art; and their affection for radical thought, rhetoric and action<sup>770</sup>, which from a bourgeois perspective meant that artists were seen as neurotic, savage, or irresponsible. With the Russian revolution, the connection between art and revolutionary thought grew stronger. The task for art, as for philosophy, was not to describe the world but to change it, to create a new art for the new man, for the new masses. Schechner mentions Meyerhold but could equally well have listed Mayakovski, Hlebnikov, constructivism,

768 Schechner 1996, 342.

769 Schechner 1996, 344.

770 Ibid.

personal performances on the streets and so on. The historical avant-garde is a crucial part of the history of art, perhaps less so of the theatre; arthistorian RoseLee Goldberg (2011, first edition 1979) focused attention on the avant-garde movements as precursors of performance art.

Looking at *Calling the Dragon* in relationship to the historical avant-garde we can find some connections to this legacy by interpreting the action symbolically: Calling the dragon could mean calling the ruling powers into combat or calling the creative revolutionary forces to build alternatives for the future. Or even to summon the power of a folk myth like a dragon as a counterforce to current commercialized trends. Calling for something means taking action; calling a dragon is perhaps a poetic action. Calling for something that perhaps does not exist could be understood as calling for something that does not yet exist, like a people to come. The traditional mark of the historical avant-garde, opposition to prevailing values, seems nevertheless far from this kind of private exercise. There is nothing that would “startle the middle class” in the act of ringing a bell on a rooftop once a week. But, as a contrast to contemporary culture, however, it is a) a private action instead of media event that b) involves duration instead of an efficient use of time, is based on c) repetition instead of novelty, d) focuses on the documentation of the everyday environment, rather than spectacular vistas and, for better or worse, e) engages with a fantasy creature instead of actual problems. What the “prevailing values” are depends on one’s perspective. The romantic legacy of the historical avant-garde is easy to recognise in the attempted fusion of art and life; by repeating the same action regularly, it turns into a life practice.

### **The constantly changing current avant-garde**

The current avant-garde is not the same as the one in 1993. Schechner describes the established theatrical avant-garde in New York,

of which he himself was a part at the time, as engaged in a virtuosic, masterly use of former experimental techniques. He writes: “Like naturalism before it, ‘avant-garde’ has become a style, a way of working rather than a bellwether.... not ‘mainstream’ ... but ‘a menu of options drained from their original impulses’”.<sup>771</sup> Interestingly, he mentions performance art as an exception: “What innovation comes from the current avant-garde, is mostly emanating from performance art, where people are exploring such things as explicit sexual art and the combining of the extremely personal with the political.”<sup>772</sup> Activist political theatre in the wake of 1960’s guerrilla and street theatre is included into this group as well. According Schechner activists use “sudden, often disruptive, and dramatic means” as a double strategy, “to get their message across graphically to the general public” and “to instil solidarity among their members... [by] collectively taking action in an atmosphere of risk.”<sup>773</sup> For Schechner the current avant-garde (in 1993) is a compilation of simultaneous alternative styles and non-naturalistic forms, and inevitably also deteriorates into a pursuit of anything that seems ‘hot’ at the moment.<sup>774</sup> What has changed in terms of the current (theatrical) avant-garde? Should we perhaps think of it in a broader perspective than New York. Personally, I remember the Norwegian performance group “Baktruppen”, literally the rear guard, from the eighties and nineties, who consciously played with recycling former experimental strategies.<sup>775</sup> If we think of contemporary art today (festival art and biennale art in general) we would probably not speak of the avant-garde, but simply contemporary art. And if it were not ‘current’ or ‘contemporary’ enough, it would not be classified as contemporary art.

771 Schechner 1996, 345.

772 Schechner 1996, 346.

773 Ibid.

774 Schechner 1996, 346-47.

775 Arntzen 2009.

In what way could *Calling the Dragon* be related to the idea of a current avant-garde? We can recognise the use of techniques of the historical AG (or performance art in the 1960s and 1970s), as an available aesthetic strategy, which is well known, rather than new, such as a) long duration, a year, (compare with original works of Linda Montano or Techieng Hsieh), b) static camera on tripod and long images (compare the early films by Andy Warhol), c) working outside (compare Robert Smithson's site and non-site, or Denis Oppenheim's experiments on the Canadian border, to mention just a few), d) the use of the artists' body as performer (compare feminist art in the 1970's) and lastly e) repetition, perhaps the most widely used device in all kinds of experimental work... Rather than using these historical strategies in a virtuosic or ironical way, the rough and documentary style of performing for camera recycles the raw aesthetic of early video art when the technology was emerging.

### **The future oriented avant-garde**

The division into a historical avant-garde and its contemporary remains, something like the current avant-garde, makes probably sense in many fields. Schechner's main observation, however, consists in noting the paradoxical situation within experimental theatre: a division into a future oriented and a tradition seeking avant-garde. The importance of the tradition seeking avant-garde in the latter half of the twentieth century is probably specific for the theatre. Similar movements in poetry, visual art, or music would not have the same weight as the various roots –movements in performing arts. Continuing in the tradition of the historical avant-garde, the future oriented avant-garde celebrates artistic innovation and originality, Schechner notes, and is looking for new techniques and technologies, virtual spaces, interactive telecommunication, and the like. Perhaps symptomatically for the theatre he has little to say about this category. Technology is nevertheless the area where the notion, if not

the term, *avant-garde* is still used and useful. Technical experiments can be at the forefront of innovations, and they are *avant-garde* before they are accomplished and adopted. I remember listening to a presentation on experiments with so called intelligent textiles where the speaker exclaimed: "If it works it is no longer cutting edge..."

*Calling the Dragon* is hard to place in this group, in terms of technological innovation, since it uses low-tech tools, simple editing techniques without aftereffects, 100 % sound recordings and so on. The exhibition technology for the final video installations could of course be as high-tech as you wish. We could, however, understand low-tech explorations as part of an ecologically minded and thus future oriented *avant-garde*, preparing for a world without fossil fuels, although more advanced experiments in that line abound. Another future-oriented dimension would be to claim radically context-dependent, site- and situation-oriented work as rehearsing developments for the future.

### **The tradition seeking *avant-garde***

Schechner gives much space to various 'roots' movements in theatre with Grotowski as a leading example, followed by Eugenio Barba, and linked to phenomena like the "theatre of roots" in India and Butoh, or ancient dance, in Japan. The tradition seeking *avant-garde* "rejects fancy technology and cybernetics, preferring 'the wisdom of the ages', most often found in non-western cultures,"<sup>776</sup> he writes. Even after "leaving the theatre" Grotowski continued his research in "the theatre of sources" looking for techniques of producing primary energy in ancient rituals. His work was both in the vanguard of experimental performance and profoundly traditional<sup>777</sup>, Schechner notes.

<sup>776</sup> Schechner 1996, 347.

<sup>777</sup> Ibid.

*Calling the dragon* could, at least superficially, easily be linked to the tradition seeking avant-garde: leaving the stage for the roof of a bunker, the audience for birds and occasional blog readers, language for a simple physical action, representation for a ritual practice. In terms of aims, however, there is not much in common. In ringing a bell my aim was not to look for a ‘primordial’ action, and the act of calling the dragon was not a re-enactment of a traditional ritual. Some elements of the performance resemble elements in traditional rituals, though: a) calling an animal with a sound, b) using a specific scarf, c) repeating the same action in the four directions, and d) for the duration of a seasonal cycle (a year) could occur in various rituals. There was nothing explicitly avant-garde in the use of these formal elements, however, nor any deeper exploration related to their efficacy.

### **The intercultural avant-garde**

The fifth form Schechner calls the intercultural avant-garde, which seems closest to his heart: “There is no area,” he writes, “which does not have artists actively trying to use, appropriate, reconcile, come to terms with, exploit, understand ... the relationships between local cultures ... and [their] increasingly complex and multiple contacts and interactions”<sup>778</sup> on a regional and global scale. “Fitfully, unevenly and with plenty of cruelty, a planetary human culture is emerging which is aware of, if not yet acting responsibly toward, the whole geobiocultural system.”<sup>779</sup> Artists are producing works “on or across various political, geographical, personal, generic, and conceptual borders”<sup>780</sup>, he notes. As an example, he mentions the Mexican American Guillermo Gómez-Peña who states: “I physically

778 Schechner 1996, 352.

779 Ibid.

780 Ibid.

live between two cultures and two epochs” and notes the uneasiness that often follows from “subscribing to contradictory values, conflicting aesthetic canons.”<sup>781</sup> Not all intercultural performances are avant-garde, Schechner observes. Only when not skirting over cultural and racial conflicts, “when the performance does not try to heal over rifts or fractures but further opens these for exploration”, is he willing to call it avant-garde.<sup>782</sup>

*Calling the dragon* utilises intercultural elements, like the dragon or the Chinese calendar, and appropriates them without exploring cultural differences in depth. To call for an unspecified and thus ‘universal’ dragon following the time of the Chinese calendar, with a Japanese temple bell manufactured for tourists, on a rooftop of a bunker in Helsinki could be seen as an example of the hybridized global culture today. The intercultural elements do not make the work avant-garde, though, nor is the work an intercultural performance in the customary sense of performers from different cultural traditions collaborating. The intercultural elements were chosen because of their functionality, not their origin: The Chinese Calendar was used because of its cycle of twelve years (in fact 64, as I later learnt) in order to have a loop beyond one year (a decade is not a cycle) and partly because of the names of animals, which hint at other than human experiences of time and space. This kind of appropriation could be criticized, and we could also say that it is rather foolhardy to call for something you do not really know exists.

### **Or none?**

Speaking of five different avant-gardes, even though they often overlap, “reminds of how complex, how multiple, the avant-garde

781 Quoted in Schechner 1996, 352-53.

782 Schechner 1996, 353.

has become”<sup>783</sup>, Schechner argues. The term does not serve a useful purpose any longer, it does not mean anything today, he writes, and should thus be used to refer to the historical avant-garde only. Events today are recorded, replayed, ritualized, and recycled. In a way that speaks to current concerns, he notes: “The limitless horizons of expectations that marked the modern epoch and called into existence endless newness have been transformed into a global hothouse, a closed environment.”<sup>784</sup> Schechner calls our time conservative, because of “the need to save, recycle, use resources parsimoniously”,<sup>785</sup> an aspect that is still relevant today. He links this to ritualizing and writes: “To recycle, reuse, archive and recall, to perform in order to be included in an archive”, as he suggests many performance artists are doing, “to seek roots, explore and maybe even plunder religious experiences, expressions, practices, and liturgies to make art”, as he suggests Grotowski among others was doing, “is to ritualize”.<sup>786</sup> He notes that “only a small number of artworks relate creatively and critically to the worlds around them. These are what used to be called the avant-garde, but which today... barely owns its name.”<sup>787</sup> Clearly, for Schechner the term avant-garde consists of a relationship to the surroundings and involves a value statement of sorts, avant-garde is something good.

What about *Calling the Dragon*? Certainly, the project could be understood through recycling, reusing, and archiving. Yes, I am performing to be included in an archive, even creating an archive, of the changes in the landscape in that region in those years. And yes, I am inevitably ‘plundering’ some cultural features like ‘the dragon’. What about the relationship to the environment? There is

783 Ibid.

784 Schechner 1996, 354.

785 Ibid.

786 Schechner 1996, 355.

787 Ibid.

a clear focus on “the world around it”, but how creative or critical is the engagement? In contemporary art, we expect artworks to focus attention on specific problems in society and address very particular circumstances, and *Calling the Dragon* is not doing that explicitly. Its focus on changes in the environment is ambiguous...

### **The five avant-gardes today?**

As most contemporary artists would probably do, I agree with Schechner that the avant-garde is not a very useful term to designate current developments in art, being too tied to progress and an idea of linear development. It is nevertheless fascinating to think of various simultaneously existing approaches. The tendencies of 1) using the legacy of the historical avant-garde in terms of attitude, 2) searching for the ‘hottest’ new trend right now, the current fashion and 3) experimenting with new technologies that do not really work yet – these three forms of the avant-garde do still exist and flourish without necessarily being called with that name. But what about the two other forms, the tradition seeking one and the intercultural one? Are they still relevant for performances today? I guess few would consider tradition seeking or intercultural forms of performing arts avant-garde today. On the contrary, they seem to form the mainstream. Most theatre and dance festivals show intercultural works. What other trends have emerged to replace them?

One important strategy within contemporary art, although not at all present in *Calling the Dragon*, consists of various forms of socially engaged art or social practice. They are not avant-garde in the sense of ‘startling the middle class’, unless the middle class is startled by not recognising the outputs of such projects as high-quality art. On the contrary, they try to engage and empower the working or workless class, or at least create some possibilities for participation. Another strategy, which *Calling the Dragon* is closer to, is the expansion of our consciousness and sensitivity to include the non-human,

or more-than-human actors, which has concrete consequences for artistic practices. Neither of these strategies would probably be called avant-garde in ordinary parlance, and one could claim that they already constitute the mainstream in the world of contemporary art, but they do fit Schechner's definition of what used to be called the avant-garde – artworks that relate creatively and critically to the worlds around them.

Rather than in terms of the avant-garde we can think of the relationship of art and the future in terms of speculative or utopian thinking. The following text was presented at a conference with the human as theme<sup>788</sup> and further developed for an issue of *Ruukku* on everyday utopias<sup>789</sup>.

788 PARSE conference The Human, University of Gothenburg 13-15.11.2019. See <https://parsejournal.com/event/human/>

789 *Ruukku – studies in artistic research* #17 <http://ruukku-journal.fi/en/issues/17>

## 11.2. Calling for Zoe as a Utopian Gesture



Figure 28. *Calling the Dragon Again* (2019)

The challenges posed by posthuman performativity, as formulated by Karen Barad (2003), which suggest that the category of human cannot be taken as given, and by *zoe*-centered egalitarianism, as proposed by Rosi Braidotti (2017), which demands us to broaden our view from *bios*, or human life, to encompass the wider *zoe*, or animal and nonhuman life, necessarily affect the way we make art and artistic research as well. Expanding our considerations beyond the human to consider all forms of life might seem like a utopian endeavour in a situation with increasing inequality among humans, although at the same time necessary for developing a sustainable way of living on this “damaged planet”<sup>790</sup>, not only for other beings threatened by the current mass extinction but indeed for humans as well. Braidotti’s use of the terms *bios* and *zoe* could be regarded

790 Tsing, Anna Lowenhaupt, Swanson, Heather, Gan, Elaine and Bubandt, Nils (eds.) 2017. *Arts of Living on a Damaged Planet: Ghosts of the Anthropocene*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

as somewhat simplified and the suggestion to replace the idea of life understood as *bios* or human life with *zoe*, or all forms of life, not to mention her notion “*zoe*-centred egalitarianism” seem challenging, if not utterly utopian, amid the current pandemic. Who would like to defend the rights of the virus to consume human lives, or question the rights of doctors to kill the virus in their patients? It is nevertheless a relevant starting point for considering ways of living together with other life forms that we are completely entangled with and dependent on. In the following I will approach the notion through the action of calling for *zoe*, for a creative force beyond the human, for a future to come, by using as an example a performance of calling the dragon.<sup>791</sup>

Looking at the question from an artist’s practical perspective, beginning with the action rather than the notion, we could first ask, what is utopian in climbing up on the roof of a bunker once a week for a year to record on video the calling for a dragon with a small bell in the four cardinal directions? Some utopian aspects are obvious, like calling for a dragon, an imaginary creature, that is not very likely to respond to or even recognise the call, and the repetition of that action, which makes it an everyday ritual or hopeful routine. While calling for an imaginary or perhaps non-existent creature is utopian in the sense of wishful thinking, the act of revisiting the documentation of such repeated calling is utopian, in the meaning of being overly optimistic, in hoping to extract some new understanding from old experiments. The dimension that is the most relevant, however, is the utopian dimension in the act of calling, calling for something to come. In evoking or calling or summoning something one is trying to bring forth the future; the future is created in the act of calling

791 The text is developed from a paper presented as part of the panel “The Human in Performance?” with the How to Do Things with Performance? project at the PARSE conference 13-15.11.2019.

for it. We could even understand the role of art, and by extension artistic research, as engaged in exactly such a calling for a liveable future, a possible way of living to come.

Concerning the term utopia, I use it here in its everyday sense, as something idealised or wished for but beyond reach, bordering on the impossible. To reconsider my understanding of the term, I returned to a lecture at the opening of the seminar “On Utopias” in Theatre Academy in May 2002. After asking “Why deal with utopias, why not discuss the reality around us today?” and referring to a friend’s comment that we can discuss utopias only with concepts taken from reality, I rephrased the question as “What is the task of the artist in society?” Or more precisely: “What is my task as an artist in this society today?”<sup>792</sup> Instead of trying to reply for myself I presented an example from the Russian tradition, which demands the artist or poet to be a visionary, a prophet, and discussed an artistic utopia by the futurist poet Velimir Khlebnikov, his text “The radio of the future” as well as his idea of the supersaga.<sup>793</sup> According to him the artist’s building block is no longer the word, but the first-order narrative. I took it to mean that an artist could or should start with what is there and found it significant that Khlebnikov used an architectural metaphor. If you envision yourself as building something, questions of representation, self-expression or communication are not the immediate and pressing ones, because the basic task is to make a composition, which can stand on its own, in some way. His idea of the independence and freedom of the parts, I found beautiful and utopian, because in an artwork or performance everything tends to be interdependent and influenced by the context.

792 Arlander, Annette. Lecture “Velimir Khlebnikov and the Radio of the Future” at the seminar “On Utopias”, Theatre Academy, Helsinki 28.5.2002.

793 Khlebnikov, Velimir. 1985. *The King of Time – Selected Writings of Velimir Khlebnikov*. Cambridge & London: Harvard University Press.

Nevertheless, I recommended that idea as a motto for anybody working together. Utopian or not, and perhaps rather anarchistic, in some sense I still might recommend the idea, despite our growing understanding of our deep interdependence with everything that exists.

Thomas Moore's famous Utopia was an island, a perfect imaginary world, and serves as a blueprint for all ideal model societies. The literal meaning of u-topia or no-place is traditionally linked to eu-topia or a good place, and to dystopia, a bad place, with the striving for eutopias often resulting in dystopias. The idea of utopias has been challenged by other approaches, like Michel Foucault's heterotopias or counter sites, real places that form a spatial or temporal break within ordinary space, like prisons, hospitals, theatres, libraries, museums, brothels, gardens or even a ship.<sup>794</sup> Many feminists have emphasized the importance of imagining alternative worlds. It is easy to agree with Donna Haraway when she writes of science fiction and string figures, noting how "[s]cience fact and speculative fabulation need each other, and both need speculative feminism".<sup>795</sup> And with Elisabeth Grosz when she celebrates the power of art: "In making sensations live, each [artwork] evokes a people and an earth to come, each summons up and pays homage to imperceptible cosmic forces, each participates in the (political) overcoming of the present and helps bring a new, rich and resonating future into being."<sup>796</sup> I will return to the idea of calling for a future at the end of this text. It is important to add, however, that the practice I will describe was not consciously conceived as a utopian gesture. The utopian dimension is something I have associated

794 Foucault, Michel. 1986. "Of other Spaces." *Diacritics* Vol.16., No. 1 (Spring) 1986, 22-27.

795 Haraway 2016, 3.

796 Grosz, Elisabeth. 2008. *Chaos, Territory, Art: Deleuze and the Framing of the Earth*. New York: Columbia University Press, 103.

with the work when reflecting on it afterwards, especially via the challenging notion of *zoe*-centered egalitarianism.

The online version<sup>797</sup> of this text consists of an introductory page with the main essay, augmented with three pages presenting video compilations: two versions of a video depicting a revisit in 2019 to the site where *Calling the Dragon* was performed in 2012,<sup>798</sup> surrounded by the original videos, and a page with some other videos from 2012 related to those works<sup>799</sup>, providing some context. This essay is describing the performances, revisiting some texts written about them, presenting Braidotti's notion *zoe* or nonhuman life, looking at the dragon as an example of *zoe*, and ending with some notes of an experiment with collective calling and its utopian potential.

### Calling the Dragon Again

Recently my interest has been to explore how to perform together with entities unlike us, and especially plants. Therefore, it would be tempting to use as example one of my previous works of performing landscape, such as *Year of the Rabbit – With a Juniper* (2012), which involves plants. I so much liked performing with junipers that I continued performing with junipers during the year I was supposed to be focused on calling the dragon. I have used a video depicting my revisit to the Juniper as an example elsewhere<sup>800</sup> and will here focus on

797 The text was published as an exposition “Calling for Zoe as a Utopian Gesture” in *Ruukku – studies in artistic research* #17 (Arlander 2021b), <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/1112890/1112891>

798 See “Calling the Dragon Again (Bell)” <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/1112890/1112929> and “Calling the Dragon Again (North, East, South, West)” <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/1112890/1113043>

799 “Calling the Dragon – other videos” <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/1112890/1157860>

800 See chapter 10.1. The video essay *Revisiting the Juniper* was part of “HTDTWP presents: The Transformative Power of Performance” at the CARPA 6 colloquium and is available in Leena Rouhiainen (ed.) Proceedings of CARPA

the next year in the same series, performed in the lunar year of the dragon (2012-2013). Indeed, compared to a juniper, a dragon might provide even more of a challenge when trying to expand beyond the human in performance. And calling a dragon might suggest an even more utopian gesture than holding hands with a shrub. Compared with the problems involved in performing with other than human beings, like plants, the dragon is problematic in another sense. We could even say it is all too human, a product of human imagination. Or then not; perhaps there have been dragons at some point in time, and they are now extinct, probably.

The year of the dragon was the next to last in the series of *Animal Years* (2002-2014) created on Harakka Island in Helsinki and named after the Chinese calendar, using its recurring twelve-year cycle as a structuring device. The year of the dragon is exceptional compared to the other works in the series in the sense that the dragon is the only mythic animal of the twelve animals of the Chinese zodiac like the rat, the ox, the tiger, the rabbit and so on. During the year of the dragon (between February 4, 2012, and February 3, 2013), I chose to call the dragon by ringing a small bell from the rooftop of an old bunker in the southern part of Harakka Island in Helsinki, and to repeat the action in four directions, first with the left hand, then with the right hand, and then behind the camera. The idea of recording the view in four directions with the camera at the centre was as an echo of my action during the year of the tiger (2010), when I moved the camera around the square structure of an old stone base of a building to create four perspectives to the same place.

On 10th September 2019 I revisited the site of my weekly visits, the roof of the old bunker again. The construction had undergone a total remake into a bird watching platform, with a staircase along

one of its walls and rails all around the roof. Now recording the view in all four directions is no longer possible. What I recorded during the revisit was the view to the south and recreated only that part of the action. The video compilation titled *Calling the Dragon Again (bells)*<sup>801</sup> is an excerpt of the recording of this recent revisit to the site where I performed *Calling the Dragon* once a week during the year of the dragon (2012-2013). Into this contemporary video I have inserted the four-channel installation *Calling the Dragon (Bell)*, which shows the view from the roof of the bunker, recorded in the four directions. In this version you cannot see my body in the image, but only hear me ringing the bell. In another, longer version based on the same revisit, *Calling the Dragon Again*<sup>802</sup>, I have inserted the full-length work *Calling the Dragon (North, East, South, West)*, where the action of calling is visible, too. There I am ringing the bell with my right hand to the left of the image, then with my left hand to the right of the frame. Although the human body is not dominating the image, human presence is emphasized. For an entry into the *Emergency Index* catalogue, which includes performances made during the year 2012 I described the performances as follows:

During the year of the dragon 2012 I am calling the dragon once a week from the roof of a bunker built after the Second World War for dismantling mines on Harakka Island in Helsinki. The roof would be a good landing platform for a small dragon, not for a creature the size of a helicopter. I am calling the dragon by ringing a small green ceramic bell bought outside a temple in Kyoto, Japan. I record the performance on video and make notes in a blog in three languages.

801 *Calling the Dragon Again (bells)* (8 min. 55 sec.) <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/profile/show-work?work=723869>

802 *Calling the Dragon Again (North, East, South, West)* (28 min.) <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/profile/show-work?work=723869>

I planned to begin at the Chinese New Year on January 23, but the first performance was delayed due to thaw season with bad ice.

Calling the Dragon is one part in a series of twelve one-year projects performed for camera on the same island. The series, which I began in 2002, is based on the Chinese calendar and its cycle of twelve years, with each year named after a specific animal. Every year I have looked for a new perspective on landscape, a new aspect of the environment and a new kind of relationship between the human body and the place. My working method utilizes the traditions of performance art, video art and environmental art, moving in the borderland between them.

The dragon is the only mythical creature among the animals of the calendar, representing creative (masculine) power or good luck. In European mythology the dragon is a horrible monster, something the hero must face in combat in order to win his princess. A dragon can also mean the border between the known and the unknown, as in old maps: "Here be dragons". That is why I feel a dragon is something I can only call.

Approximately once a week I repeat the following action: Wrapped in a green scarf I climb up on the roof of the bunker and call the dragon by ringing the small bell in four directions, beginning by facing north; I continue facing east, then south and finally west and the open sea. In each image I ring the bell first from the left, then from the right and lastly from behind the camera on tripod in the centre. So far nothing resembling a dragon has responded to my calls, although the helicopters frequently flying over the island seem to appear in response to the sound of the tiny bell.<sup>803</sup>

### **Here or somewhere-nowhere?**

The difference between holding on to a juniper, right there, and calling for an imaginary dragon from somewhere, perhaps nowhere, relates to our relationship to utopias, to the future and to what is unknown. In an article about transpositions<sup>804</sup> I compared calling the dragon with the action of holding on to a juniper the previous year and wondered why some practices are easily re-routed or re-sited, while others are hard to transpose? Visiting a specific juniper weekly in a specific place in 2011 was easily extended to other junipers in other places or even transformed into looking for junipers in places without such shrubs. Calling the dragon from the rooftop of a bunker, on the contrary, was not easily re-sited, although no specific rootedness was preventing transposition. Despite repeated attempts I never succeeded in calling the dragon anywhere else. Simply ringing the bell in various places did not seem to be enough; it was too easy, an empty gesture. Perhaps the idea of calling the dragon was too abstract, although one could expect that an abstract idea would be easy to transpose. Relating to and holding on to something that was there, like the juniper, was easier than calling for something somewhere, possibly existing, or perhaps non-existent, from nowhere, like a dragon.

The junipers I performed with and “held hands with” were concrete shrubs, tangible, very much existing and alive, whereas the dragon I called was an idea, a fantastic animal, a fictional creature. While ringing the bell on the rooftop I concentrated on listening to the sound of the bell and to potential responses, and on vision, since from the rooftop I could see far and wide. The dragon I called was something I tried to imagine or just forgot, while being immersed in the view and the wind. Whereas every juniper I met was both a partner and a place, something to encounter and engage with, the dragon was a slightly scary idea, nothing that I really

managed to visualize in a productive way, a utopian idea, possibly even dystopian in some manner.

Calling for something that might or might not exist rather than encountering and engaging with something that is growing there next to you, explains the difference in my experience during these two projects to some extent. As the juniper is a living creature, performing with it differs from ringing a ceramic bell to call for an imaginary being. If one of our tasks in creating a liveable future is to overcome the ubiquitous mind–matter dualism or its common extension animate–inanimate dualism, plants seem to be easier partners to rehearse with than fantasy figures. It would be tempting to think of the difference with the help of other dichotomies like the contrast between approaches in documentary film and fiction film, or the differences between traditional performance art, focused on presentation or ‘the real’ and theatre, concerned with representation and fiction. These dichotomies do not explain, however, why the imaginary, fantastic and seemingly more immaterial practice of calling the dragon was harder to transpose and relocate than the concrete and at least superficially more material and site-specific practice of holding on to a juniper. Is that a general human predicament, to prefer what is here and tangible to what is possible, perhaps imaginary, or utopian, unknown, and therefore potentially dystopian as well?

Perhaps only my limited sensory apparatus or my restricted imagination, or my understanding of these two faculties as mutually excluding, prevents me from seeing the bell or the dragon as alive in the same manner as the juniper. For queer theorist and physicist Karen Barad they would all be part of the performance of the universe. For her meaning or intelligibility are not restricted to humans. She consequently refuses to separate discourse and materiality and prefers to speak of material-discursive practices. “Discursive practices are the material conditions for making meaning ... [and]

meaning is an ongoing performance of the world in its differential intelligibility”.<sup>805</sup>

Already in her seminal article “Posthumanist performativity – toward an understanding of how matter comes to matter” in 2003 Barad proposed “a specifically posthumanist notion of performativity – one that incorporates important material and discursive, social and scientific, human and nonhuman, and natural and cultural factors.”<sup>806</sup> She suggested that a posthumanist account must question “the givenness of the differential categories of ‘human’ and ‘nonhuman’, examining the practices through which these differential boundaries are stabilized and destabilized.”<sup>807</sup> In the same text she explicitly states: “All bodies, not merely ‘human’ bodies, come to matter through the world’s iterative intra-activity – its performativity.”<sup>808</sup> And further: “Bodies are not objects with inherent boundaries and properties; they are material-discursive phenomena. ‘Human’ bodies are not inherently different from ‘nonhuman’ ones.”<sup>809</sup> Thus, “[w]hat constitutes the ‘human’ (and the ‘nonhuman’) is not a fixed or pregiven notion, but nor is it a free-floating ideality.”<sup>810</sup> Moreover, “theories that focus exclusively on the materialization of ‘human’ bodies miss the crucial point”, she writes, “that the very practices by which the differential boundaries of the ‘human’ and the ‘nonhuman’ are drawn are always already implicated in particular materializations.”<sup>811</sup> Inspired by Barad, we could perhaps investigate how dragons and non-dragons are mutually constituted. Here, let us rather look at the notion mentioned in the beginning, *zoe*.

805 Barad 2007, 335.

806 Barad 2003, 808.

807 Ibid.

808 Barad 2003, 823.

809 Ibid.

810 Ibid.

811 Barad 2003, 824.

### **Zoe-centered egalitarianism?**

Rosi Braidotti has in her article “Four theses on Posthuman Feminism” in 2017 proposed *zoe* or non-human life – as opposed to the human *bios* – to be regarded as the ruling principle to be adopted.<sup>812</sup> Moreover, she has introduced the notion “*zoe*-centered egalitarianism” to designate our relationship with other life-forms. In her “vitalist approach to living matter” she “displaces the boundary between the portion of life – both organic and discursive – that has traditionally been reserved for Anthropos” or (hu)man “that is to say *bios*, and the wider scope of animal and nonhuman life also known as *zoe*.”<sup>813</sup> For Braidotti the “dynamic, self-organising structure of life as *zoe* stands for generative vitality.”<sup>814</sup>

Braidotti argues “for an activist embrace of *zoe*” or nonhuman life, a *zoe*-centered rather than human-centred approach. She also notes, however, that becoming *zoe*-centered means “a radical break from established patterns of thought” and introducing such a “radically immanent relational dimension” can be “emotionally demanding at the level of identity” and can be expected to “involve a sense of loss and pain.”<sup>815</sup> Besides the difficulty of acknowledging our dependence of other forms of life and of realizing our misguided conception of our position in the world as humans, there are other risks involved with this change of attitude. “The biogenetic structure of contemporary capitalism involves investments in ‘life’ as an informational system”<sup>816</sup>, and is thus already *zoe*-centered in some sense. Moreover, “stem cell research and biotechnological intervention upon humans, animals, seeds, cells, and plants pave the way for

812 Braidotti, Rosi. 2017. “Four Theses on Posthuman Feminism.” In Richard Grusin (ed.) *Anthropocene Feminism*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 21-48.

813 Braidotti 2017, 32.

814 Ibid.

815 Braidotti 2017, 30.

816 Braidotti 2017, 31.

scientific and economic control and the commodification of all that lives.”<sup>817</sup> Today, “what constitutes capital value is the informational power of living matter itself”<sup>818</sup>, she adds.

The notion *zoe*-centred egalitarianisms is intended to counteract this situation. In response to the system of commodification of life, Braidotti proposes “species egalitarianism, which opens up productive possibilities of relations, alliances, and mutual specification”.<sup>819</sup> She takes as her starting point “the pragmatic fact that, as embodied and embedded entities, we are all part of something we used to call ‘nature’, despite transcendental claims made for human consciousness.”<sup>820</sup> Her thinking is based “on a monistic ontology “, a “neo-Spinozist vital materialist philosophy”, and on that ground she proposes “cross-species alliances with the productive and immanent force of *zoe*, or life in its non-human aspect.”<sup>821</sup> She further explains her position by stating that “a Spinozist monistic allows us to move toward a dynamic, nonessentialist, and relational brand of materialist vitalism” which “results in the dislocation of difference from binaries to rhizomatics, from sex-gender or nature-culture to processes of differing that take life itself, or the vitality of matter, as the main subject.”<sup>822</sup>

Braidotti’s “relational ontology is *zoe*-centered and hence non-anthropocentric, but it does not deny the anthropologically bound structure of the human.”<sup>823</sup> Importantly, she distinguishes anthropomorphism from anthropocentrism. For her anthropomorphism is “our specific embodied and embedded location, and acknowledging

817 Ibid.

818 Ibid.

819 Braidotti 2017, 32.

820 Ibid.

821 Braidotti 2017, 31.

822 Braidotti 2017, 34.

823 Braidotti 2017, 32.

its situated nature is the first step toward antiantropocentrism.”<sup>824</sup> There is no way of denying our partial perspective, our human sensorium and the specific capacities of our bodies. We must accept being human, which is not to say that we should not value other forms of life. We need to acknowledge “a life that is not ours – it is *zoe* driven and geocentered.”<sup>825</sup> For humans, however, “it will always be anthropomorphic, that is to say, embedded and embodied, enfolded, affective, relational.”<sup>826</sup> According to Braidotti it is only “by embracing resiliently our anthropomorphic frame and the limits and possibilities it entails that we can become creatively *zoe*-centered, opening up to possible actualization of virtual forces.”<sup>827</sup> She underscores how the “relational capacity of the posthuman subject is not confined within our species, but it includes all nonanthropomorphic elements, starting from the air we breathe.”<sup>828</sup> While “[l]iving matter – including embodied human flesh – is intelligent and self-organizing”, she writes, “it is so precisely because it is not disconnected from the rest of organic life.”<sup>829</sup>

Braidotti explicitly writes: “*Zoe*-centered egalitarianism is, for me, the core of the postanthropocentric turn”, because “it is a materialist, secular, grounded, and unsentimental response to the opportunistic transspecies commodification of life that is the logic of advanced capitalism.”<sup>830</sup> Although she stresses the grounded, situated and embodied aspects the notion is nevertheless also easily dismissed as utopian or idealistic, as notions of egalitarianism tend to be. What could *zoe*-centered egalitarianism mean in practice, for this practice?

824 Ibid.

825 Braidotti 2017, 34.

826 Braidotti 2017, 35.

827 Ibid.

828 Braidotti 2017, 33.

829 Ibid.

830 Braidotti 2017, 32.

### **Utopian potential?**

Rather than asking, inspired by Braidotti, whether dragons should be included in *zoe*, or not – and why wouldn't they, if they exist, and regardless of in what way they exist – we could rather think of the act of calling the dragon. Perhaps calling the dragon could be seen as an act of calling for *zoe*, calling for the generative life force, which our planet and many humans clearly need to recover from the results of human destruction. A force not necessarily in the masculine as in Chinese mythology, or, not necessarily monstrous, as in European mythology, but of course possibly so.

What would it mean if the dragon responded? Is it possible for humans to even consider *zoe*-centred egalitarianism, for example equal rights or equal value for all forms of life, or is such a notion much too utopian in current circumstances, with an increasing inequality among humans because of the climate crises, extractivist policies and environmental degradation that demands our attention? Perhaps we could take one further step and think of the act of calling as a tool for utopian thinking. What do we want to call for with regards to the future? Is calling for the dragon, for a vital life force or vitality enough?

If we think of the tools of art in the service of everyday utopias and as tools for developing our social imaginary, there are at least two dimensions that could be further developed. The first aspect involves intention and choice of focus; what are we calling for, what kind of creature (like a dragon) or force (like the vitality of *zoe*) are we calling for? And the second aspect is the ritual dimension, the repeated action of returning to a specific site with specific props, perhaps even at a specific time. Where are we repeating our act of calling (like the rooftop of a bunker) and in what manner (like ringing a bell)? The imaginary and ambiguous dimension is significant and one of the aspects that art can bring to the equation; what is called for is at least partly fictional or fantastic, and ambivalent. The

ritual dimension, repetition as an embodied action, is the specific contribution that performance can bring.

In his provocative text *The Disappearance of Rituals*<sup>831</sup> Han, Byung-Chul notes: “Rituals are symbolic acts. They represent, and pass on, the values and orders on which a community is based. They bring forth a *community without communication*; today, however, *communication without community* prevails.”<sup>832</sup> He also observes how “[t]he neoliberal imperative of optimization and performance does not allow for any completion. Everything is provisional and incomplete; nothing is final and conclusive.”<sup>833</sup> Utopian aspects are included in most forms of political thinking ranging from apocalyptic or messianic visions to practical tools for imagining and creating a future. The notion everyday utopias might seem like a contradiction in terms – utopia is usually understood as what is not here, or anywhere, and at least not part of the everyday. As Davina Cooper (2014) has shown, however, a wide range of social experiments or alternative spaces can be understood as everyday utopias, from Summerhill school to Hyde Park corner or nudist bathing.<sup>834</sup> Such attempts at being part of the solution rather than part of the problem, as the old slogan suggested, trying to live now in a way you would like to live in your future utopia, have sometimes been dismissed by “real” revolutionaries as idealistic nonsense, or the pastime of ladies with flower hats. They could nevertheless be understood as a prefigurative politics of sorts, which has gained in importance today, when the TINA (There Is No Alternative) doctrine is challenged by various groups exploring post-capitalist alternatives, and diverse experiments in sustaining life in the remaining ruins.

831 Han, Byung-Chul. 2020. *The Disappearance of Rituals*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.

832 Han 2020, 1.

833 Han 2020, 28.

834 Cooper, Davina. 2014. *Everyday Utopias. The Conceptual Life of promising Spaces*. Durham and London: Duke University Press.

The creation of rituals could be undertaken as a prefigurative politics of sorts. Common rituals can be dangerous tools, however, as many extremist movements and religious sects have shown. If we approach rituals as everyday actions, shared habits for learning rather than sanctified ceremonies of inclusion and exclusion, they might nevertheless be useful. This is something that many indigenous societies could teach us more about, although there too, we need to proceed with caution, both in terms of not idealising a past folk knowledge, which can include elements of superstition and misconceptions, too, and in terms of appropriating piecemeal elements of worldviews without understanding the full context they belong to. Calling the dragon can be hazardous in many ways.

As always, a core challenge is how to do it together without assuming togetherness as given. At the end of my proposal<sup>835</sup> for a conference in Barcelona in 2013 I wrote: “I would also like to conduct an experiment of collectively calling the dragon with the working group in Barcelona.” And this we did, following the tradition of the working group to engage in various types of collaborative and participatory exercises and workshops related to our papers. I had brought with me small bells and distributed them among the participants, inviting them to call for the dragon with the instruction that only one bell should be heard at a time. If two people began ringing their bells at the same time both should stop, which meant that people really had to listen to each other. And this worked surprisingly well as a tuning in exercise, making us all sensitive to each other and to what was happening in the room. The sound of the cheap bells I had brought with me was not very beautiful, and one of the

835 “Re-routing a Performance Practice - Visiting a Juniper, Calling the Dragon”, a presentation for the meeting of the Performance as Research Working Group of the IFTR, International Federation for Theatre Research at the conference in Barcelona 2013.

participants exclaimed that it was significant that the black (in fact dark green) ceramic bell that I initiated the calling with had such a beautiful sound. This gesture of calling the dragon as a collective action I remembered only now, while thinking about the act of calling for something as a technique of imagining the future, as a tool for bringing forth a utopian idea. If we want to develop the action of calling for something as a tool for social imagination, we might invite the participants to propose what kind of being or becoming – rather than a dragon – we should call for together...

My proposal, today, would be to call for *zoe*, and yes, *zoe*-centered egalitarianism, not in the shape of a dragon, but perhaps rather a tree – or better still, a forest of trees, with plants, animals and alfs, fairies, fungi and microbes, molecules and more – a forest that could help us in imagining a livable future and in learning how to participate in *zoe*.





Figure 29. *Year of the Snake – Swinging (installation)* (2014)

## 12. Revisiting the Year of the Snake

The last year in the series *Animal Years* was the year of the snake (2013–2014) because I began in the year of the horse. The Chinese calendar usually begins with the rat and ends with the pig. For the last site on Harakka island I chose the remains of a former sauna on the western shore with an aspen tree growing on the rocks. When I arrived on the island, in 1997, they were two, and I used to place a hammock between them. Now the other aspen tree was dead with only part of its trunk lying on the rocks and a swing was the only option. *Year of the Snake* consisted of several actions, sitting in the swing<sup>836</sup>, sitting by the swing<sup>837</sup>, sitting on a pile of rocks nearby<sup>838</sup>, and colleagues and visitors sitting in the swing<sup>839</sup>. These four main actions were combined into an installation.<sup>840</sup> Lying horizontally in the swing was made into a separate work, *Year of the Snake – In the*

836 A brief version of *Year of the Snake – Swinging (mini)* (2014) on Vimeo <https://vimeo.com/88325298>

837 *Year of the Snake – By the Swing* (2014) <https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/year-of-the-snake-by-the-swing/>

838 *Year of the Snake – Watching the Harbour* (2014) <https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/year-of-the-snake-watching-the-harbour/>

839 *Year of the Snake – Swinging Along* (2014) <https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/year-of-the-snake-swinging-along/> and *Year of the Snake – Swinging Along (mix)* (2014) <https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/year-the-snake-swinging-along-mix/>

840 *Year of the Snake – Swinging (installation)* (2014) <https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/year-of-the-snake-swinging-installation/>

*Swing*<sup>841</sup>. The day and night <sup>842</sup> was recorded in October, when the leaves of the aspen were golden, and of course, there was a blog for the year as well.<sup>843</sup> During the year I attached the same small blue swing to many other trees<sup>844</sup> and I have later used it in several other situations as well. The text “Process as Performance or Variations of Swinging”<sup>845</sup> describes many of them. It is relevant in this context as it discusses performing as a process, which is central for the whole series *Animal Years*. I used *Year of the Snake* as an example when trying to understand Karen Barad’s thinking, in a text in 2014 called “From interaction to intra-action in performing landscape”<sup>846</sup>, which is included here as well. At the time of the revisit to the site it felt current enough, so I never had the urge to revisit or rewrite that text.

The revisit to the aspen tree took place on 4 February 2020 without the swing. The video compilation *Revisiting the Aspen Tree* was made in two versions, one with the installation and the day and night inserted into the revisit, and a shorter one with only the lying video inserted. The compilations were made for the final presentation of the HTDTWP (How to Do Things with Performance?) project in

841 *Year of the Snake – In the Swing* (2014) <https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/year-of-the-snake-in-the-swing/>

842 *Day and Night of the Snake* (2014) <https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/day-and-night-of-the-snake-swinging/>

843 Year of the Snake Swinging blog <http://aa-yearofthesnake.blogspot.com>

844 *Swinging in Mugoni* (2014) <https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/swinging-in-mugoni/>, *Swinging in Porches* (2014) <https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/swinging-in-porches/>, *Swinging in Split* (2014) <https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/swinging-in-split/>, *Swinging in Tiburon* (2014) <https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/swinging-in-tiburon/> even *Swinging in Silhouette 1-2* (2014) <https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/swinging-in-silhouette-1-2/>

845 Arlander, Annette. 2018g. “Process as Performance or Variations of Swinging.” In Hetty Blades and Emma Meehan (eds.) *Performing Process: Sharing Dance and Choreographic Practice*. Intellect Books, 99-118.

846 Arlander, Annette 2014b. “From interaction to intra-action in performing landscape”. *Artnodes*. No. 14, 26-34. <https://raco.cat/index.php/Artnodes/article/view/n14-arlander>

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the spring.<sup>847</sup> The longer version of “Revisiting the Aspen Tree” was later published in *Screenworks*<sup>848</sup>, which foregrounds media contributions and uses a specific format for the auxiliary text. In this case there is no voice-over narration, and the accompanying text is rather brief and formulaic, summarising the research project almost like a research proposal. It seems funny at the end of the project but better late than never. First, however, some theory to acknowledge Barad, who has been an important influence during the whole period of revisiting, then some descriptions of swinging as process and finally the research summary.

847 The event was cancelled due to Covid and turned into an online installation. See documentation on the RC <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/281037/831561/1461/247>

848 “Revisiting the Aspen Tree” *Screenworks* January 2023 (Arlander 2023) <https://www.screenworks.org.uk/archive/volume-13-1/revisiting-the-aspen-tree>

## 12.1. From Interaction to Intra-action in Performing Landscape



Figure 30. *Year of the Snake – In the Swing* (2014)

When trying to articulate the artistic practice that I call performing landscape, it is helpful to understand various (f)actors, such as, for instance, the wind, the tripod, the scarf, the body, and so on, as interacting collaborators within an assemblage of various materialities. Prompted by Rosi Braidotti's (2013) overview of the discussions around the posthuman, however, we could ask whether it is possible to understand the interaction more like an "intra-action"<sup>849</sup>, where the entanglement of the various components is a pre-condition, rather than a result, of the action. Perhaps the split of the artist into a performer in front of the camera and a witness behind it could be understood as an agential cut of sorts? In the case of another practice – performing with plants – intra-action is intuitively easier to assume, due to the symbiotic interdependence of animals

849 Barad 2007, 33.

and plants in their exchange of oxygen and carbon dioxide. But could we understand performing for the camera, with a small swing attached to a tree, as an intra-action as well? And if so, what would be the methodological advantages of pursuing such an understanding? This case study set within the field of performance as research and artistic research is related to the mattering of the digital, since the practice itself is largely digital, although the focus of the text is on methodological questions.

### **Introduction**

In *Year of the Snake Swinging* (2014), performed for the camera once a week for a year on the same island, an aspen tree growing on the western shore of Harakka Island in Helsinki provided the setting and support for a small swing and served as a figure showing the shifting seasons and the weather. This was the last part in a series of twelve one-year projects, which I began in 2002 and finished in 2014, called *Animal Years*, based on the Chinese calendar and its cycle of twelve years, with each year named after a specific animal. The project explored the question of how to perform landscape today based on the traditions of performance art, video art and environmental art, and moving in the borderland between them. The most obvious layer of the work during the year of the snake was the movement of the swing, attached to other trees on other shores as well and explored by both visiting performers and myself.

Jane Bennett, in her popular book *Vibrant Matter, a political ecology of things* (2010) asserts the agency of assemblages. She tries to develop a distributive agency based on Spinoza's "affective" bodies and Deleuze and Guattari's "assemblages". Assemblages are, for her "ad hoc groupings of diverse elements, of vibrant materials of all sorts",<sup>850</sup> power is not distributed equally across their surface,

850 Bennett, Jane 2010. *Vibrant Matter, A Political Ecology of Things*. Durham and

nor does a central head govern them. The effects generated by an assemblage are emergent properties, with an ability to make something happen. Besides the vital force of each member there is efficacy proper to the grouping: an agency *of* the assemblage, she explains. An assemblage is never a solid block but an open-ended collective, a “non-totalizable sum” with a history of formation and a finite lifespan<sup>851</sup>, she notes.

The tree clearly has some agency in the assemblage of wood, rope and branch that forms a swing. And in this case, we could add other (f)actors – like the sea, the wind, the cliffs, a human being, a scarf, a video camera on a tripod and more – as interacting collaborators in the assemblage. The agency of technology is evident; if the battery of the camera runs out, the productive capacity of the whole assemblage is affected – hence, no video. But the agency of the aspen is even more palpable – no tree, no branch, no place to fasten the swing. The strange form to the right on the shore in the image (see Figure 30) is the stub of another aspen that used to grow there, but died a few years ago, perhaps because of too much seawater at its roots. By growing next to each other they afforded the fastening of a hammock between them. Now the other one still provides support for a swing. Acknowledging the agency of the tree suggests further questions. How could we expand our understanding of agency in performance as research? What would that mean in terms of methodology?

### **Intra-action**

Thinking of the swing in terms of entanglement means that the inter-action of the elements that form the swing (the small plank, the ropes, the branch of the tree) could better be conceived of as an

London: Duke University Press, 23-24.

851 Bennett 2010, 23-24.

intra-action, following Karen Barad, since the combination of those elements is a precondition for, rather than the result of, the action. For Karen Barad, intra-action is a key element of her agential realist framework. It “signifies the mutual constitution of entangled agencies” and, unlike the ordinary term interaction, it “recognizes that distinct agencies do not precede, but rather emerge through, their intra-action”<sup>852</sup>. Moreover, they are distinct only in a relational sense: “*agencies are only distinct in relation to their mutual entanglement; they don’t exist as individual elements*”<sup>853</sup>. In Barad’s account, phenomena (rather than independent objects) are “the basic units of existence”.<sup>854</sup> They do not simply mark the inseparability of observer and observed; rather, “phenomena are the ontological inseparability/entanglement of intra-acting ‘agencies’”<sup>855</sup>. In short, “*phenomena are ontological entanglements*”<sup>856</sup>. Phenomena are produced through intra-actions; as Barad specifies, “it is through specific agential intra-actions that the boundaries and properties of the ‘components’ of phenomena become determinate and the particular material articulations in the world become meaningful”<sup>857</sup>. Thus, “*apparatuses are not mere observing instruments but boundary drawing practices – specific material reconfigurings of the world – which come to matter*”<sup>858</sup>. The differential boundaries between humans and nonhumans, culture and nature, science and the social are constituted through causal intra-actions.<sup>859</sup> Entangled practices are productive and who and

852 Barad 2007, 33.

853 Ibid. Italics in original.

854 Barad 2007, 333.

855 Barad 2007, 139.

856 Barad 2007, 333. Italics in original.

857 Ibid.

858 Barad 2007, 140. Italics in original.

859 Barad 2007, Ibid.

what are excluded through them matters; different intra-actions produce different phenomena<sup>860</sup>, she notes.

According to Barad, determinate entities emerge from their intra-action; the term intra-action refers to their ontological inseparability; this contrasts with interaction, which relies on the metaphysics of individualism. Thus, we should understand phenomena as specific intra-actions, not as objects-in-themselves. "A phenomenon is a specific intra-action of an 'object' and the 'measuring agencies'; the object and the measuring agencies emerge from, rather than precede, the intra-action that produces them."<sup>861</sup> Phenomena for Barad are physical-conceptual (material-discursive) intra-actions, and the term intra-action signifies "the mutual constitution of objects and agencies of observation within phenomena"<sup>862</sup>. She summarizes her point: "Different material intra-actions produce different materializations of the world."<sup>863</sup>

What does this mean regarding our example of the swing? The swing emerges from the entanglement of rope, wood, and tree – but do these things not exist as individual elements before being combined into a swing? Following Barad, they do not, because they are all part of the world intra-acting with itself. Through the notion of intra-activity "a lively new ontology emerges"<sup>864</sup>, which is based on fundamental inseparability. Instead of looking at a swing as an assemblage of pre-existing elements like rope and wood and tree, should we understand the phenomenon of a swing as producing those elements? Perhaps the parts of the swing are parts of a swing only after the swing has come into being. Or, on a more material level, the plank has been part of another tree before being formed into a

860 Barad 2007, 58.

861 Ibid.

862 Barad 2007, 197.

863 Barad 2007, 380.

864 Barad 2007, 33.

plank and painted blue. The plastic rope is made of oil, the remains of a forest millions of years ago. These seemingly individual elements are the result of previous intra-actions. The notion of intra-action changes our understanding of our relationship to the environment. Bodies are not simply situated or located in environments, Barad explains; rather, environments and bodies are intra-actively co-constituted. “Bodies (‘human’, ‘environmental’ or otherwise) are integral ‘parts’ of, or dynamic reconfigurings of, what is”.<sup>865</sup>

The relationship between “bodies” and “environment” becomes obvious when working with video imagery. The idea of intra-action as constitutive is understandable because the elements in the image are produced by the intra-action of “measuring agencies” such as the camera, the tripod, the framing of the image, and “objects” such as the cliff, the sea, the tree, the stub, the swing, and the performer. In the image the swing and the tree form an environment around the human figure, whereas the swing moving on its own becomes a body, that is surrounded by an environment. And without the swing the tree and the nearby stub form the main bodies with the sea, the sky, and the cliffs as their environment.

### **Agential cut**

Barad’s notion “agential cut” is useful in this context; according to her, the split into subject and object is not given but rather enacted in each case. “Intra-actions include the larger material arrangement (i.e., a set of material practices) that effect an *agential cut* between ‘subject’ and ‘object’ (in contrast to the more familiar Cartesian cut which takes this distinction for granted).”<sup>866</sup> Thus, “the agential cut enacts a resolution *within* the phenomenon of the inherent

865 Barad 2007, 70.

866 Barad 2007, 139-140.

ontological or semantic indeterminacy”.<sup>867</sup> Barad explains how the boundaries and properties of the parts of the phenomenon become determinate only in the enactment of an agential cut that delineates the “measured object” from the “measuring agent”. Thus “a correlation between the “causal agency” (cause) and “measuring agency” (effect) is marked by the intra-action of one part of the phenomenon with another”.<sup>868</sup> And this is not restricted to human activities. “If a measurement is the intra-active marking of one part of a phenomenon by another, where phenomena are specific ontological entanglements, that is, specific material configurations of the world”, she writes, “then there is nothing inherent in the nature of a measurement that makes it irreducibly human centered”.<sup>869</sup>

In a simplified manner we can understand this through video practice. The camera produces the image by framing it, by creating a cut between what is within and what is outside the frame, between what is part of the image and what is not. This division does not pre-exist in the landscape but emerges through the action of video recording. And this intra-action involves material-discursive practices like the properties of the lens of the camera or my pre-conceptions of what constitutes a good view and so on. And these, too, are created through the intra-actions. Hence the notion of an agential cut could be useful in describing the practice of performing for a camera on a tripod. The split of the artist into a performer in front of the camera and a witness behind it is an agential cut of sorts. By placing the camera on a tripod, the same person can be split into photographer and performer. The camera can be put to record and to function as a witness and the performer can enter the image, engage in the action, and then return to behind the camera

867 Barad 2007, 140.

868 Barad 2007, 337.

869 Barad 2007, 338.

to control the result. Unlike with a still camera, the right moments can be chosen later while editing. And unlike with a film camera, the results can be seen at once and the material reused, with a possibility to correct mistakes and therefore improvise.

Yet another kind of agential cut, or rather, measuring agency, is involved in the choice of time schedule. A temporal cut, or temporal framing, takes place when repeating the action once a week, picking “slices of time” in the landscape at one-week intervals. Another temporal framing, like returning to the same place once a month, would produce another view of the changes in the landscape. Everything between the recorded moments is excluded from the video, a consequence of the cut or jump created by the schedule or the measuring apparatus. Removing slices of documentary material while editing produces an appearance of a new reality. In this case I use all takes in the order of recording, leaving out the sequences where the performer enters and exits the image. Thus, an illusion of continuity is created in the final work. If the performer sits or stands immobile in the landscape, an illusion of her being there while the seasons change is produced. In this example the rhythm of the swing strengthens the illusion of continuity.

Events during the video recording are not based only on human decision making. The light meter and white-balance calculator, automatic focus and other technologies included in the automatic functions of the camera are constantly reacting and readjusting to the changes in the environment caused by weather and wind, time of day and year, passers-by of all species and the actions of the performer. The editing process too – choosing what part of the images to use and what not to use and how to combine them – is interplay (or intra-action) between human choice and the affordances of technology.

The framing of the image, the division into performer and observer and the schedule when to perform are comparable to

agential cuts; they clearly make a difference. As Barad states: “Since different agential cuts materialize different phenomena – different marks on bodies – our intra-actions [...] contribute to the differential mattering of the world”.<sup>870</sup> She would not emphasize choice, however, since according to her “[c]uts are agentially enacted not by wilful individuals but by the larger material arrangement of which ‘we’ are a ‘part’.”<sup>871</sup> We are responsible for the cuts that we help enact, not because we choose or are being chosen, but rather “because we are an agential part of the material becoming of the universe”.<sup>872</sup> This also means that “‘others’ are never very far from ‘us’; ‘they’ and ‘we’ are co-constituted and entangled through the very cuts ‘we’ help to enact”<sup>873</sup>, she notes.

The tree and the swing are co-constituted and entangled in a way that changes over time. Is the branch of the tree that the swing is fastened around part of the swing? If the ropes were left around the branch, they would eventually be enveloped by the growing tree and be covered by lichen living on it. But how could the boundaries between the swing and the swinger change? However much I would feel at one with my surroundings, I am aware of what is part of the tree and what is part of me. How are we co-constituted and entangled, besides our constant exchange of oxygen and carbon dioxide? Perhaps this felt difference between us co-constitutes me as a person.

As Barad writes, “[a]gential intra-actions are specific causal material enactments that may or may not involve ‘humans’”<sup>874</sup>. The point is not only to incorporate “both humans and non-humans into the

870 Barad 2007, 178.

871 Barad 2007, *Ibid.*

872 Barad 2007, 179.

873 Barad 2007, 129.

874 Barad 2007, 171.

apparatus of bodily production”<sup>875</sup> because “[h]umans do not merely assemble different apparatuses for satisfying particular knowledge projects; they themselves are part of the ongoing reconfiguring of the world”.<sup>876</sup> Barad dismisses both humanist and anti-humanist accounts; human subjects do not exist prior to their involvement in natural-cultural practices, nor are they the effects of human-based discursive practices. Human subjects are neither outside observers of apparatuses nor independent subjects that intervene in the workings of apparatuses, she explains, nor are they the products of the social technologies that produce them.<sup>877</sup> For her “human bodies, like all other bodies, are not entities with inherent boundaries and properties but phenomena that acquire specific boundaries and properties through the open-ended dynamics of intra-activity”<sup>878</sup>.

What would this mean in terms of my material-discursive and natural-cultural practice of performing landscape? Does it mean that I too, like the swing or the tree or the sea, acquire specific boundaries and properties through the intra-actions involved? That I change the environment through my actions, like when I create a path in the moss on the cliffs by repeatedly placing the tripod in the same place? That the environment changes me, like when I get concretions in my hands by repeatedly clutching the knots in the rope of the swing? That my ideas of what is an enjoyable temperature or a beautiful view change over time? That I change and transform together with the environment? Yes, indeed.

For Barad, humans are emergent phenomena like all other physical systems: “Parts of the world are always intra-acting with other parts of the world”<sup>879</sup>, she writes, “and it is through specific

875 Barad 2007, Ibid.

876 Barad 2007, Ibid.

877 Barad 2007, Ibid.

878 Barad 2007, 172.

879 Barad 2007, 338.

intra-actions that a differential sense of being – with boundaries, properties, cause and effect – is enacted in the ongoing ebb and flow of agency.”<sup>880</sup> Thus, “to the extent that ‘humans’ emerge as having a role to play in the constitution of specific phenomena, they do so as part of the larger material configuration, or rather the ongoing reconfiguring, of the world”<sup>881</sup>. This does not diminish our responsibility, however, since possibilities for intra-action exist at every moment and “entail an ethical obligation to intra-act responsibly in the world’s becoming, to contest and rework what matters and what is excluded from mattering”<sup>882</sup>.

For an artistic practice this means, on one hand, responsibility in terms of what to focus on and what to point at, and also the requirement to consider the material, affective and discursive effects of the artwork, as Barbara Bolt (2008) has pointed out; but, on the other hand, it also means responsibility for the doing, for the process, i.e., attending to what takes place during the practice, including the unwelcome side-effects. For Barad agency is an enactment, not something one has nor an attribute of subjects or objects, and she encourages us “to consider agency as distributed over nonhuman as well as human forms”<sup>883</sup>. According to her, “[l]earning how to intra-act responsibly as part of the world means understanding that ‘we’ are not the only active beings – though this is never justification for deflecting our responsibility onto others”<sup>884</sup>. This distributed agency is evident in the practice of performing landscape. The swing, the swinger, the tree, the branch, the stub, the cliff, the sea, or clouds, snow, leaves, birds, and human visitors are all entangled parts of the same material becoming of the world in the image. And the agents

880 Ibid.

881 Ibid.

882 Barad 2007, 235.

883 Barad 2007, 214.

884 Barad 2007, 391.

only indirectly visible in the image – such as the camera, the tripod, even the boat I row to the island with – have agency, too. In the video imagery, the boundaries between who or what is performing can shift – the tree or the swing can turn into the main actor. In terms of agency, in creating the image, we all have our part in the intra-action.

Barad summarizes her agential realism: “The world is intra-activity in its differential mattering [...] the primary ontological units are not ‘things’ but phenomena – dynamic topological reconfigurings/ entanglements/ relationalities/ (re)articulations of the world”.<sup>885</sup> Moreover, “the primary semantic units are not ‘words’ but material-discursive practices through which (ontic and semantic) boundaries are constituted.”<sup>886</sup> This dynamism *is* agency”, she writes. “Agency is not an attribute but the ongoing reconfiguring of the world. The universe is agential intra-activity in its becoming.”<sup>887</sup> She defines agency in the following way:

Agency is “doing” or “being” in its intra-activity. It is the enactment of iterative changes to particular practices – iterative reconfigurings of topological manifolds of spacetime-matter relations – through the dynamics of intra-activity. Agency is about changing possibilities of change entailed in reconfiguring material-discursive apparatuses of bodily production, including the boundary articulations and exclusions that are marked by those practices...<sup>888</sup>

Although this may seem much too complicated in terms of a relatively simple artistic practice, it could make sense. The repeated weekly visits to the same place, intra-acting with the same elements,

885 Barad 2007, 141.

886 Ibid.

887 Ibid.

888 Barad 2007, 178.

fastening the swing to the branch, placing the camera on the cliff, could all be understood as “iterative changes to particular practices”. Recording changes in the landscape over the year could be called the registering of “topological manifolds of spacetime-matter relations”. Through this practice of “reconfiguring material-discursive apparatuses of bodily production,” the changes in the landscape and the constant intra-action of the elements of the environment become evident for the observer-performer and later to other observers, albeit in an altered form.

According to Barad, we are responsible to others we are entangled with through the various ontological entanglements that materiality entails. What is on the other side of the agential cut is not separate from us, she claims; agential separability is not individuation. Ethics is not about the right response to a radically exterior/rized other, “but about responsibility and accountability for the lively relationalities of becoming of which we are a part”<sup>889</sup>. These relationalities are too numerous to keep count of in most cases. This is evident when thinking of the connections involved in this one example, which are not limited to my visiting the island and recording moments in the life of the landscape there but include all the relations the artworks might engender.

### **Agential separability and artistic research**

Barad’s idea of agential separability is interesting for artistic research in general, which often involves the entanglement of the subject and object of research. Barad tries to move beyond an epistemological conception of objectivity and replace it with an ontological one: “phenomena do not merely mark the inseparability of observer and observed; rather phenomena are the ontological

889 Barad 2007, 393.

inseparability of agentially intra-acting ‘components’<sup>890</sup>. Furthermore, “[i]ntra-action enacts agential separability – the condition of exteriority-within-phenomena. Separability is not inherent or absolute, but intra-actively enacted relative to a specific phenomenon”.<sup>891</sup> For Barad “observer” and “observed” are merely two physical systems intra-acting in the marking of the “effect” by the “cause”. Human observers are possible, but not necessary, and objectivity is a matter of “accountability to marks on bodies.”<sup>892</sup> She does not base objectivity on an inherent ontological separability but on an intra-actively enacted agential separability. Moreover, “[t]he reproducibility and unambiguous communication of laboratory results are possible because the agential cut enacts determinate boundaries, properties and meanings as well as the ‘measured object’ (‘cause’) within the phenomenon”.<sup>893</sup>

In artistic research, no “reproducibility and unambiguous communication of laboratory result” is strived for, although some kind of enacted agential separability could be helpful. The task for an artist-researcher would be, not only to acknowledge her subjectivity and entanglement with the object of research, but to enact some kind of separability with the phenomena at hand, perhaps even to split temporarily into observer and observed, as I do with the help of a camera on a tripod. But does this result in a situation often criticized,<sup>894</sup> where the artist first produces artworks and then becomes a scholar who studies those artworks as if she had not created them, meaning that artistic research would have nothing new or special to

890 Barad 2007, 308-309.

891 Barad 2007, 339.

892 Ibid.

893 Barad 2007, 340.

894 Hannula Mika, Suoranta Juha, Vadén Tere. 2005. *Artistic Research – theories, methods and practices*. Helsinki: Academy of Fine Arts and Gothenburg: Art Monitor / University of Gothenburg.

offer? Perhaps we could think of the enactment of agential separability as an ongoing process or as a choice of focus: to experiment with and reflect on one aspect of the practice as a method, while leaving other aspects unexamined and “free”.

According to Barad, both experimental and theoretical practices involve intra-acting. For her “experimenting and theorizing are dynamic practices that play a constitutive role in the production of objects and subjects and matter and meaning”; they “are not about intervening (from outside) but about intra-acting from within, and as part of the phenomena produced”.<sup>895</sup> The same could be said of many art practices, as is evident in this practice of performing landscape, where there is no possibility of “stepping outside” the environment (although that has historically been attempted by climbing up mountains to have an overview of the land). This is methodologically important for much artistic research, where the researcher is literally producing phenomena – artworks – and not only observing them. Or, in other words, the entanglement of the subject and object of study in artistic research is merely one obvious example of something that concerns all forms of research or all kinds of engagements with the environment.

“We are not outside observers of the world”, Barad points out. “Neither are we simply located at particular places in the world; rather we are part of the world in its ongoing intra-activity”<sup>896</sup>. She explicitly states: “We don’t obtain knowledge by standing outside the world; we know because we are of the world. We are part of the world in its differential becoming”<sup>897</sup>. Barad introduces the term *onto-epistem-ology* to describe the study of practices of knowing in

895 Barad 2007, 56.

896 Barad 2007, 184.

897 Barad 2007, 185.

being.<sup>898</sup> For her knowing is not about ideation nor is it the exclusive birth right of humans. Knowing is rather a physical practice of engagement.<sup>899</sup> She summarizes: “Scientific practices are specific forms of engagement that make specific phenomena manifest”<sup>900</sup>. And here we can add: Artistic practices are specific forms of engagement that make specific phenomena manifest.

The fact that apparatuses are productive of the phenomena they measure does not mean that reality is a product of human concepts, Barad maintains; rather, concepts are specific material arrangements.<sup>901</sup> For her, discourse is not a synonym for language and meaning or intelligibility are not a human-based notions. “Discursive practices are the material conditions for making meaning” and “meaning is an ongoing performance of the world in its differential intelligibility”<sup>902</sup>. That ongoing performance of the world, that process, I have tried to observe, record, participate in and intra-act with.

898 Ibid.

899 Barad 2007, 342.

900 Barad 2007, 336.

901 Barad 2007, 334.

902 Barad 2007, 335.

## 12.2. Process as Performance or Variations of Swinging



Figure 31. "Swinging in Moonlight", 9 August 2014.

Process as performance is a broad topic, which could be used as an umbrella term for several types of practice. Process can become part of the performance through improvisation or ongoing investigations, via online documentations, or through durational work, where time provides the transformations that an emphasis on process often entails. In process-based work, the context or environment is often a crucial shaping force, as it is in my case study, which involves performances for camera in various circumstances. The practice described is situated within a choreographic context in its broadest sense, in the border zone between movement practices, performance art, environmental art and contemporary (video) art. It is focused on the act of swinging and an actual object, a small blue swing, fastened on various trees. Process in this case involves both accumulative and participatory strategies as well as working with projections. In the following, the works that comprise this specific process are

described with some detail in the hope that the material could serve as a relevant example of process as performance in contemporary practice and as a source for articulating various approaches to process in a more nuanced manner. I suggest, based on these examples, that we to begin with distinguish between (1) depicting a process, (2) showing the production process of the work and (3) inviting the public to become involved in the production.

### **By Way of Context**

Since the 1960s, 'process' has been one of the magic words of contemporary art, with more and more works of art created, that transform and evolve through time. Various processes are an inseparable part of the practice of art and research. In performing arts, process is essential, as the performers' skill and understanding grows and accumulates in an embodied way over time. Articulating and opening artistic processes has been considered one of the main aims of artistic research.<sup>903</sup> We could ask whether process description is part of the broad mainstream of artistic research or a relevant instrument of knowledge production for the ambitious artist-researcher. Can process become the medium of research? And what kind of processes are we building around artistic research?

In the fourth issue of the journal *Ruukku – Studies in Artistic Research*<sup>904</sup>, which was devoted to process and artistic research, some writers presented short texts or 'opinions' related to process. Philosopher Juha Varto, who is critical of process descriptions,

903 Artistic research is used in continental Europe and in Scandinavia to refer to research undertaken by artists or in art institutions (Borgdorff 2012). See for instance *Journal for Artistic Research*. It resembles what in the United Kingdom is called practice as research (Nelson 2013) and in Australia creative arts research (Barrett and Bolt 2014) although often includes a stronger emphasis on the art component.

904 See "Process in Artistic Research" *Ruukku* #4 <http://ruukku-journal.fi/en/issues/4>

emphasized that the specificity of artistic research is not in the author but in the methods. Artistic research ought to be defined as the research of reality with methods that arise from artistic activity. Individual artistic processes are not interesting for research; shifting attention to the author's artistic process results in randomness born out of randomness, which may be interesting artistically but leads nowhere in terms of methods.<sup>905</sup> Unfortunately, this is the risk with the process description I am soon embarking on as well. Fortunately, professor of dance pedagogy Eeva Anttila notes, in the same issue, the changes in our understanding of process; we have moved from the phasing of processes to ensure quality control towards an understanding of emergence as a largely unpredictable chain of events.<sup>906</sup>

Meanwhile art historian Riikka Stewen discusses the centrality of process in contemporary art. 'Process Art' after 'Minimalism' emphasized continuous change and the temporal nature of experience. Starting from Allan Kaprow's thoughts on happenings, the simultaneity of art and non-art, and especially the notion of the definitely unfinished work inherited from Marcel Duchamp, she contends that the artwork is necessarily only an incomplete execution or a translation of an intuitive idea.<sup>907</sup> If we shift the focus to the process, however, assuming an intuitive idea that is to be executed or realized does not cover the whole story; the process could generate ideas beyond the initial intuitive starting point. From an artist's perspective, performance artist Pilvi Porkola offers six theses about

905 Varto, Juha. 2015. "Prosessi ja tutkimus" (Process and research). *Ruukku - Studies in Artistic Research #4*.

906 Anttila, Eeva. 2015. "Vaiheistamisesta kehkeytymiseen / Hyvä-paha prosessi" (From phasing to emergence / The good-bad process). *Ruukku - Studies in Artistic Research #4*

907 Stewen, Riikka. 2015. "Live in your head - And keep translating!". *Ruukku - Studies in Artistic Research #4*,

artistic process. According to her, (1) process signifies a chain of events, (2) process equals thinking, (3) not only the work of art, but the process, has a framework, (4) process is always in relation to time, (5) in a performance, the emphasis on process often means involving audience participation and (6) processes leave traces.<sup>908</sup> These observations are no doubt valid, although rather than looking for what is typical for all processes we could try to distinguish differences among them.

These voices from the Finnish context serve to remind us of the omnipresence of discourses around process. As another example, we read in the *Swedish Yearbook for Artistic Research*:

With the emergence of contemporary art after the Second World War, the role of the arts developed, becoming more focused on collaboration and process than was previously the case. As the concept of contemporary art became established and the role of the artist changed, the role of the practitioner in artistic spheres such as dance, theatre and music also changed. Despite this revolutionary shift, research into the artistic process of the practitioner, within dance and other artistic arenas, has remained almost non-existent.<sup>909</sup>

One of the benefits of a process-based approach is that it enables an understanding of one's exploration as an ongoing investigation, rather than a route towards a finished product or artwork. A process-oriented strategy can also be an integral part of the aesthetic concept of a performance. Moreover, documenting the process is an essential methodological tool in a performance-as-research or an

908 Porkola, Pilvi. 2015. "Mitä meistä jää" (What remains of us). *Ruukku - Studies in Artistic Research* #4

909 Roos, Cecilia. and Wikström, Josefine. 2014. "Movement, reflection, creation: The dancer and the artistic process". In Lind, Torbjörn. (ed.) *Method, Process, Reporting - Artistic Research Yearbook 2014*. Swedish Research Council, 104-111, 111.

artistic research project. If we think of process as opposed to product, one consequence is that you do not know the result in advance; there is no certainty concerning where the process might take you. The possibility of unexpected developments is of course even stronger in truly collaborative processes where all co-creators can influence the development of the work. In the cases I will describe, the participants were more like performers who participated within given parameters. Processes can be examined in relation to a starting point or a destination. We can describe the already past process of making an artwork, or the beginnings of a process as it happens, or attempt to understand the process from the midst of it, or from the side. In some cases, it is hard to distinguish or decide whether variations or versions are simply sketches, part of one overarching project or perhaps separate artworks, although they certainly are part of the same process. In this text, I am looking back at a process, including its starting points, without a specific destination or endpoint in sight.

Whether we consider performance to be a means of production or a means of consumption, that is, either a way of producing work or, as is perhaps more common, as a means of sharing work, this has relevance for how we understand process. In live performance, production and consumption are supposed to coincide, in some sense (which disregards all the preparation work). In performances for camera, the performer's experience differs from the viewers' experience of watching a video. An illusion of real time can be produced, but the experience for the viewer is unlike the shared experience in the real time aesthetics of live (durational) performance. Production and consumption do not coincide in performances for camera; a single occasion of production can be transformed into various occasions of consumption; the same performances for camera can be edited into various versions to be displayed as independent works or included in other performances. For example, inviting participants

to swing in a specific place, and documenting their movement on video is a way of producing a video work. Inviting passers-by to swing, documenting their swinging, and then projecting the edited video back on the site of its own making, with a performer swinging synchronized with the image, is a way of creating a performance. The same type of strategies can be used to create a performance, an artwork, a presentation or a workshop, or any type of combination of them, depending on the purpose and the situation. The multiple contexts for sharing the process of swinging in the cases I will describe included conference workshops, exhibition openings and performance art events.

One approach to process as performance (or the process of performance), is to choose a process, for instance the performance of the weather, as the topic of the work. Another approach is to show the process of making the work in the work. In this sense, my technique of performing landscape, which I will describe shortly, can serve as a basic example of both approaches. By including every performance for camera in the order they have been performed in the edited video work, the actual process of making the work is shown in the work itself. The several versions or variations of the same work, created with the same elements, form a series, and thus describe a process of sorts. By shifting one parameter, like the site, or the mode of editing such as the clip duration, one can produce a nearly endless set of variations.<sup>910</sup> One changing parameter, which proved relevant was changing the performer, that is, inviting other people to become part of the work, instead of performing myself. This leads to the second basic strategy for process as performance,

910 Guy Cools (2014) mentioned the strategy of changing one parameter in one's way of working in his presentation at the Colloquium on Artistic Research in Performing Arts, which prompted me to consider it in my own work during the year of the snake: to change the performer.

which involves participation, sharing the process with the public, not only the result. In short, we can distinguish between (1) depicting a process in the work, (2) showing the production process of the work as part of the work and (3) inviting the public to become involved in producing the work, not only to consuming it.

### **Animal Years**

As an example of the first and second strategy, depicting a process in the work and showing the production process of the work as part of the work, we can return to the series of twelve one-year projects, called *Animal Years*, videoed on Harakka Island, in Helsinki, which I began in the year of the horse (2002) and which has been discussed in the previous chapters. The series is based on the Chinese calendar and its 12-year cycle, with each year named after a specific animal. The main purpose of the work was to bring attention to changes in the landscape, due to the shifting seasons, weather, and climate. What the work really does, however, is to demonstrate time, the passing of time, by showing landscape as a process, as an event of place.<sup>911</sup> Performances for a static camera on tripod, repeated once a week for a year in the same place with the same framing of the image, were edited to form short videos or multichannel installations. They show landscape as a process by keeping space, place, and framing constant. The technique could be understood as a rough time-lapse technique – repeating the same image again and again.<sup>912</sup> Repetition is used to accumulate material, which is compiled chronologically. Various occurrences, as well as the changing seasons and the weather, produce changes around the basic structure of a few initial choices. While performing a simple action in front of a video

911 Massey 2005.

912 An example of a typical use of time-lapse technique is Neil Boynton's "The sonification of Morcambe Bay" (2012).

camera, the events taking place in the landscape can come to the forefront. By repeating this at regular intervals during long periods of time, and condensing the material by editing, the slow happenings, not discernible in real time, can be seen and shown. The changes in the weather and the seasons are the main source of visible change, on two levels: by influencing the experience of the performer and by producing changes in the landscape. The overall impression could be stasis although the aim is to emphasize constant change; no two moments in the landscape look exactly alike.

### **Swinging with the Snake**

The last of the years exemplifies the third strategy, involving the public in the production. During the year of the snake, the last part of *Animal Years*, beginning with the Chinese New Year on 10 February in 2013, I fastened a small blue swing onto an aspen that grows on the western shore of Harakka Island, next to the remains of the stone base of an old sauna. Approximately once a week, I videoed myself swinging, wearing a light blue scarf, while keeping the position of the camera on a tripod and the framing of the image as constant as possible. On the same occasions, I also sat next to the stub of another aspen that once grew nearby, and on a small pile of rocks looking at the expanding Helsinki harbour on the opposite shore. I experimented with sharing the experience of swinging and changing the performer in the image, by inviting colleagues from the island and temporary visitors to swing for a while. All these performances I documented on video and in a tri-lingual blog.<sup>913</sup> Thus, I tried to produce 'souvenirs' of what the landscape looked like during this year on the northern shore of the Gulf of Finland. Each year I had chosen a new perspective on the landscape, a new aspect of the environment and a new kind of relationship between my body and

913 Year of the Snake Swinging blog <http://aa-yearofthesnake.blogspot.com>

the place. This year I focused on the movement of a small swing, a manmade element added to the landscape. Although a swing can be an impressive sculptural element, as in the works of Monica Sand (2008), for instance, this swing was on a child's scale. The aspen on the shore is also small in stature. It carried without problems, however, the weight of all swingers. I chose the activity of swinging partly because I wanted to end the *Animal Years* series, with its focus on showing the passing of time, on a more light-hearted note, by sharing an activity reminiscent of childhood enjoyments.

As in previous years, I documented a day and night at the same site as well, with three-hour intervals, this time in the autumn, 13–14 October, when the leaves of the aspen turned golden.<sup>914</sup> I took the swing with me on my travels, too, and tied it to trees growing on various shores. This resulted in variations of swinging like *Swinging in Porches* (in Portugal), *Swinging in Tiburon* (in California), *Swinging in Split* (in Croatia), *Swinging in Mugoni* (in Sardinia) and *Swinging in Silhouette* (also in Croatia). There were other attempts, too, which never passed the critique into editing. Some of these variations were shown for the first time at an exhibition called *Year of the Snake Swinging* in Muu Gallery, Helsinki, in May 2014, as a compilation in addition to the main work, a four-channel installation. These 'other' works, made during most years, are by-products of the main work. In terms of the process, they are equally relevant investigations, in this case of the configuration or entanglement tree-swing-rope-swinger-camera-tripod.

Another tool for generating variations, besides changing the swinger or the site, was changing clip duration. For example, three versions of *Year of the Snake – Swinging* were edited of the same performances for camera: the first as part of the four-channel

914 *Day and Night of the Snake Swinging* (2014) <https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/day-and-night-of-the-snake-swinging/>

installation (36 min. 30 sec.),<sup>915</sup> the second as a single-channel version where I am leaning back in the swing (16 min. 8 sec.)<sup>916</sup> and the third a mini-version for screening with the image changing at every swing (3 min. 5 sec.).<sup>917</sup> The performances with invited participants were edited into several versions of *Year of the Snake – Swinging Along*, in a similar manner.

Some days there were no visitors on Harakka Island to be invited to swing, so some images of the empty swing were inserted, to synchronise the video with the other videos depicting the whole year in a four-screen installation (36 min. 30 sec.).<sup>918</sup> In a miniature version, *Year of the Snake – Swinging Along (mix)* (3 min. 40 sec.),<sup>919</sup> I added images of myself swinging for the occasions with no visitors, while *Year of the Snake – Swinging Along* (26 min. 30 sec.)<sup>920</sup> contains only the images of visitors swinging. In all versions, the movement of the swing is edited to form a continuous flow, with one person replacing another in a smooth succession of swingers. In this work, the actual people swinging never met each other. This gesture of inviting other people to participate in my work of documenting the landscape led me to experiment with various forms of collective swinging, not over long periods of time, but rather during shared events.

915 *Year of the Snake – Swinging (installation)* (2014) <https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/year-of-the-snake-swinging-installation/>

916 *Year of the Snake – In the Swing* (2014) <https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/year-of-the-snake-in-the-swing/>

917 *Year of the Snake Swinging (mini)* (2014) <https://vimeo.com/88325298>

918 *Year of the Snake – Swinging (installation)* (2014) <https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/year-of-the-snake-swinging-installation/>

919 *Year of the Snake – Swinging Along (mix)* (2014) <https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/year-the-snake-swinging-along-mix/>

920 *Year of the Snake – Swinging Along* (2014) <https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/year-of-the-snake-swinging-along/>

## Swinging Together in Workshops

Another part of the process involves academic work. I have used swinging as an example in a paper on performing with plants,<sup>921</sup> which highlights the neglected role of the tree in these works as an example of our hierarchical view of how performances are constituted. Ideas by the philosopher of plant thinking, Michael Marder (2013), were combined with a workshop of swinging described below. In another text (see chapter 12.1), I used the project of swinging as an example in discussing the notion ‘intra-action’ coined by physicist and queer theorist Karen Barad to replace the usual term interaction, which presumes that the interacting parts pre-exist the action.<sup>922</sup> Intra-action is a key term in her agential realist framework. As noted, it “signifies the mutual constitution of entangled agencies” and, unlike the ordinary term interaction, it “recognizes that distinct agencies do not precede, but rather emerge through, their intra-action”<sup>923</sup>. The entanglement of the elements that form the swing (the small plank, the ropes, the branch of the tree) could be conceived of as an intra-action, since the combination of those elements is a precondition for, rather than the result of, the action.

If we think of process and performativity with Barad, the whole world “is a dynamic process of intra-activity”, an “ongoing flow of

921 “Performing with plants – Challenges to traditional hierarchies?” was presented as a paper in the Performance as Research Working Group at the IFTR world Congress, University of Warwick 28 July–1 August 2014 and as a further developed version ‘Vegetal democracy and performance as research’ at the IFTR conference in Hyderabad 6–10 July 2015, which is publicly available in the proceedings (Arlander 2015c) <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/204690/279870>

922 The paper “From interaction to intra-action in performing landscape” was presented at V Annual Conference on New Materialisms, New Materialist Methodologies – Gender, Politics, The Digital in Barcelona 25–26 September 2014 and later published (Arlander 2014b).

923 Barad 2007, 33.

agency through which ‘part’ of the world makes itself differentially intelligible to another ‘part’ of the world and through which local causal structures, boundaries, and properties are stabilized and destabilized”.<sup>924</sup> For Barad “the world is an ongoing open process of mattering”, matter and meaning are produced in the same process. Moreover, for her “the primary ontological units are not ‘things’ but phenomena”, which are “dynamic topological reconfigurings / entanglements / relationalities / (re)articulations”. And “the primary semantic units are not ‘words’ but material-discursive practices through which boundaries are constituted”.<sup>925</sup> Discourse for Barad is not a synonym for language and meaning or intelligibility are not human-based notions. The processes of swinging, performing for camera or editing the video work are all material-discursive practices, as is the recounting of this process.

My first attempt at academic swinging took place already during the year of the snake, when I presented the project at the Porous Studio organized by the Artists’ Committee (today the Artistic Research Working Group) of P*S*i (Performance Studies international) at the conference P*S*i #19 at Stanford University in California in 2013.<sup>926</sup> I fastened the blue swing on a huge tree outside the studio space with the aim of sharing the experience of movement and of the tree, not in order to create an image; thus, the camera angle is strange and the image is haphazardly framed. A small video clip, “Swinging with the Snake in Stanford” was nevertheless shared among the participants. Another attempt at swinging together took

924 Barad 2003, 817.

925 Barad 2003, 818.

926 “Swinging with the Snake in Stanford” (52 sec.) <https://vimeo.com/69953101> The participants testing the swing on 27 June 2013 were Ray Langenbach, Johanna Householder, Angel Viator Smith, Jenni Kokkomäki, Pamela Davis Kivelson and Annette Arlander.

place in Warwick, UK, in 2014, as part of a workshop<sup>927</sup> at the meeting of the Performance as Research Working Group of the IFTR (International Federation for Theatre Research) during the annual conference.<sup>928</sup> The little blue swing was fastened to a giant oak tree on campus, and participants were invited to swing, and to perform for the camera. This material was edited into a short video “Swinging at Warwick”.<sup>929</sup> As part of the actual workshop some questions inspired by Michael Marder’s book *Plant-Thinking, A Philosophy of Vegetal Life* (2013) were presented to the swingers, to think about while swinging and to speak to the camera afterwards. This material was compiled into “PAR swinging 2014 – New”.<sup>930</sup> with questions and answers as subtitles. In this case, the swinging took on a much more performance-like character, since there were more people witnessing. These two workshops were conceived as experiential demonstrations; they used swinging for sharing a previous project in an embodied way. The idea of combining the act of swinging with questions to consider, engaging in reflection while swinging, I have not developed further, although that might be an interesting strand to pursue; the challenge is how to record the reflections. To be able to record speech during the swinging would be interesting, rather than using the traditional mode of speaking or writing afterwards.

927 The workshop on 29 July 2014 was prepared for the working group by Juan Manuel Aldape Munoz, Stephanie Bauerochse and Annette Arlander.

928 Theatre and Stratification, IFTR World Congress at University of Warwick 28 July–1 August 2014.

929 “Swinging at Warwick” (1 min. 29 sec.). <https://vimeo.com/104233709> The swingers are not listed in the credits, and they include at least (in the order of appearance): Annette Arlander, Nora Haakh, Pema Clark, Valentina Signore, Stephanie Bauerochse, Johnmichael Rossi, Myer Taub, Rakel Marin Ezpeleta, Jean Lee, Helen Richardsson, Manola Gayatri Kumarswamy, Anna Birch, unknown swinger.

930 “PAR Swinging 2014 – New” (4 min.). <https://vimeo.com/172296302> The swingers are Nora Haakh, Pema Clark, Valentina Signore, Stephanie Bauerochse, Johnmichael Rossi and Myer Taub.

## Swinging Together with Projections

Only after ending the 12-year project *Animal Years* did I consider developing swinging into a live performance. Combining live action (or inaction) with the projected image of that same action is something I had experimented with in *Tuulikaide – Wind Rail* in 2002, a performance at Kiasma Theatre in Helsinki<sup>931</sup> and in other related experiments,<sup>932</sup> but I had never projected a video onto the site where it had been recorded. Lorie Novak's projections on vegetation<sup>933</sup> were one of the inspirations for these first attempts. I made two experiments with performances in two parts in Helsinki during the summer 2014 and a third attempt in the autumn 2015. All three performances were based on documentation of participatory events of swinging projected back onto the sites of their making. I fastened the same blue swing on a tree, invited the public to swing, and documented their swinging on video. In the actual performance, the edited video was projected back onto the same site while I tried to swing synchronized with the movement in the image.

The first experiment began with a participatory pre-performance that took place at the “t0NiGHt” event in Suomenlinna the night between 23 and 24 May 2014. I fastened the swing on an ash tree growing on the slope next to gallery Augusta, invited the public to swing, just before sunrise, and documented their swinging on video. This ‘raw material’, the documentation of the swingers,

931 The performance is described in “Wind Rail – Sort of a Beginning” (Arlander 2013a).

932 Such performances with projections were *Wind Rail* (Tuulikaide), video and performance, Kiasma Theatre 12–13 October 2002; *Istum kivellä Muussa – Sitting on a Rock at Muu* (performance with video). Muumaanantai/live, Muu gallery 14 September 2003; *Kristallipallo* (The crystal ball) – Inauguration performance. Theatre Academy 7 November 2003; *Mene rantaan – Go to the Shore* (performance with video). Fluxee club, Tehdasteatteri Turku 27 November 2004. For details, see Arlander (2012a).

933 Described by Hirsch 2002, 248.

was edited into a video.<sup>934</sup> For the actual performance at the next “tONiGHt” event two months later during the night between 25 and 26 July, this video was projected onto the roof next to the tree, while I tried to swing synchronized with the projection for approximately 90 minutes. Only the first minute of the performance was recorded<sup>935</sup> although some still images remain. This first experiment was unsatisfactory; my performance was unprepared and confused, I tried to copy the actions of the swingers, changed direction in the swing and so on. The image, however, the combination of a live body and a projection, had some magic, due to the strange ‘shadow’ produced by the projection moving with a will of its own.

The second experiment began with a participatory pre-performance at the opening of the exhibition *Water Images* on Harakka Island, 29 May 2014. The swing was fastened to an old birch in the yard and visitors who came for the opening were invited to swing, and to write down their names so I could include them in the credits. The edited video<sup>936</sup> was projected onto the same birch in the actual performance, more than a month later at the Moonlight Party on 9 August 2014. The white trunk of the birch served as a rather good projection surface at night and the act of swinging combined with the projected image of swinging created a kind of temporal and visual double exposure. Part of my durational performance was recorded by a camera on a tripod and edited into a small video.<sup>937</sup> This performance was a much more satisfying experience, partly because of a more suitable tree, the relaxed nature of the event and probably learning from experience. I could use the durational form

934 “Swinging Tonight”, 23 May 2014 (15 min. 33 sec.). <https://vimeo.com/157896162>

935 “Swinging Tonight”, 25 July 2014 (1 min. 1 sec.). <https://vimeo.com/103069308>

936 “Swinging on Harakka”, 29 May 2014 (24 min. 46 sec.). <https://vimeo.com/157423805>

937 “Swinging in Moonlight”, 9 August 2014 (4 min. 11 sec.). <https://vimeo.com/103242549>

to let go of the internalized demand to maintain the attention of the audience. The projected image functioned as a light source and produced a 'magic' ambience entwined with the foliage.

A third experiment took place the following year, in the context of an environmental art exhibition *LARU Human Era 2015* in the southern part of Särkiniemi in Lauttasaari, Helsinki.<sup>938</sup> The only possible source of electricity, which was needed for the projector, was a small cottage in the park. Thus, I had to choose a young rowan nearby, not quite suitable for the swing. I planned to invite the artists participating in the exhibition to swing and to perform with their videoed swinging at the opening. This proved difficult, so on Friday afternoon 28 August, the day before the opening, I invited passers-by in the park to swing and recorded them swinging. The next morning, I edited the video<sup>939</sup> for the performance at the opening that same night. By now I knew that the important thing was to maintain the rhythm of the movement despite changes in tempo and extension in the swinging. At the opening, while we were waiting for the sun to set for the projection to work, I invited the audience to try the swing and to lean back and look up at the sky through the foliage. This experience of swinging in collaboration with the tree would probably have been enough of an event for the opening. I nevertheless performed my attempt at synchronized swinging at nightfall, as planned, for the duration of the video clip, for those who had patiently waited for the darkness with me. The concentrated attention of the small audience, as well as my effort at beginning and ending synchronized with the video made the performance more intense than the previous durational ones. It was recorded with the camera on tripod next to the projector, a little too close to the

938 For an idea of the context, see <http://www.laruart.com>.

939 "Swinging Together (Laru)", 28 August 2015 (21 min. 33 sec.). <https://vimeo.com/157428004>

tree and the swing.<sup>940</sup> The human figure filled the image space and turned into a projection screen, unlike the previous version, where the projection formed an independent shadow on the tree trunk next to the performer. Despite being too large in proportion to the tree, the human figure merges with the environment and the image of the swingers. I performed once more at the closing event on 4 October, and tried a slightly different angle for the documentation, without much difference.

In these three experiments, people participating in the pre-performances were not really swinging together. They were nevertheless able to witness each other swinging and to perform for each other. Some spectators found the act of swinging confusing as an artwork since they did not find any conceptual or critical dimension in it. Some accepted that the point was experiencing the tree and the movement. In the actual performances where I was swinging together with the projections, it was hard to distinguish who was swinging in the image; the movement was discernible, though, as a ghostly shadow with its own will. The projected image turned everybody into contributors in the same continuous swinging. The experience of performing with the projection could be described in terms of haptic visuality, related to the tradition of expanded cinema.<sup>941</sup> In all three experiments, the tree was a crucial performer or contributor – the ash tree on the grassy slope in Suomenlinna, the birch tree in the yard on Harakka Island and the young rowan in the park in Lauttasaari – as was the whole environment. These performances and most of my work could be placed in the tradition of ecological performance, with the collaboration of Eeo Stubblefield

940 “Swinging Together”, 29 August 2015 (21 min. 20 sec.). <https://vimeo.com/137770819>

941 See Arlander, Annette. 2016d. “Performing Landscape – Swinging Together or Playing with Projections.” *Body, Space, Technology Journal* vol.16. <https://www.bstjournal.com/articles/10.16995/bst.1/>

and the ageing Anna Halprin as a classic example of corporeal engagement with landscape.<sup>942</sup> I have been interested in “making tangible the co-extensiveness of humans and their environments” and in shifting “our values, our dance making and our everyday practices” as well as “our languaging, our attention and our points of view well beyond the human”.<sup>943</sup> This shift was particularly evident in the final performances where the projection was spreading its strange glow on the vegetation at night. Waiting for nightfall and witnessing the projected movement slowly become discernible against the foliage or the tree trunk was already a performance. So, what would happen if the swing would be placed indoors?

### Swinging without a Tree

I had declined the suggestion to move the swing indoors at a conference where no suitable tree was available nearby; swinging with the tree was the point, I thought. For the informal event called Tutke Spring Days at University of Arts Helsinki in April 2016, I nevertheless decided to give it a try. I invited people to swing in the morning, edited the video during the day and then projected the video back on the same site in the afternoon. And this time, I invited the participants to swing synchronized with the projection instead of performing myself. Finding a place for the swing was no problem in the lobby, an old factory hall with ceiling struts of iron, and there was (almost) enough space for the camera as well, but this time

942 Arden, Thomas. 2012 “Stillness in nature: Eeo Stubblefield’s still dance with Anna Halprin”. In Wendy Arons and Theresa J. May (eds.), *Readings in Performance and Ecology*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 113–24.

943 Kramer and Longley 2015. Kramer, Paula and Longley, Alice. 2015. “Moving, writing, living – Experimental documentary practices in site-specific dance research”. In *Expanding Notions – Dance, Practice, Research, Method. 12<sup>TH</sup> International NOFOD Conference Reykjavik, Iceland*, 28–31 May, <http://nofodrvk2015.akademia.is/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/NOFOD-Proceedings.pdf>.

daylight posed an unsolvable problem. Thus, the first part of the performance in the morning was quite successful, with an emphasis on movement and the shared action of swinging rather than the environment. This was further accentuated by the height of the swing, which provided a much larger scope for the movement than the low branches of trees in the previous experiments. The edited video “Tutke Spring Days 2016 part one”<sup>944</sup> was projected back onto the same site in the afternoon. Swinging synchronized with the projection was then more of a social exercise, and not aesthetically exciting because of the barely discernible projection in bright daylight but was nevertheless documented in “Tutke Spring Days 2016 (part two)”.<sup>945</sup> This version was less engaged with the environment and more attuned to the shared experience of the swingers. My role was simply facilitating the event, including video recording, editing, and projecting. A colleague mentioned that this would be a great exercise for workplaces to foster togetherness and collaboration. I was fascinated by the thought and realized how very far I had come from the first versions of swinging, where I invited people individually to enjoy a moment of swinging with the little aspen on the seashore.

944 “Tutke Spring Days 2016 part one” (11 min. 20 sec.) <https://vimeo.com/164881493> was edited of the material recorded at the beginning of Tutke Spring Days at the Performing Arts Research Centre at University of the Arts Helsinki Theatre Academy, 25 April 2016, to be projected back onto the same site later the same day. Swinging (in order of appearance): Annette Arlander, Mikko Orpana, Gabriele Goria, Outi Condit, Hanna Järvinen, Anu Koskinen, Annika Fredriksson, Kai Lehtikainen, Vincent Roumagnac, Stacey Sacks, Camilla Damkjær, Joa Hug, Teija Löytönen, Elina Raitasalo, Liisa Jaakonaho, Eeva Anttila, Sami Henrik Haapala, Katri Kauppala.

945 “Tutke Spring Days 2016 (part two)” (5 min. 49 sec.) <https://vimeo.com/164899427> documents the second part of Swinging Together at Tutke Spring Days 2016, in the afternoon, when some people tried to swing together with the projected image of those swinging on the same site that same morning. Swinging with the projection (in the order of appearance): Hanna Järvinen, Kai Lehtikainen, Stacey Sacks, unknown swinger, Anu Koskinen, Eeva Anttila, Elina Raitasalo, Annika Fredriksson.

What started as a practice of swinging on the western shore of Harakka Island in 2013 had by 2016 transformed into an event where people were trying to swing synchronized with the image of their colleagues. The process had included inviting other people to try the swing, fastening the swing to other trees in other places, recording people swinging and swinging synchronized with the projection of their movement in the same place. The focus had shifted from the tree that supported the swing to the movement of the swingers. What remained the same through the whole process, however, was the small blue swing. Although that element, too, could change. During the winter 2015–16, I spent some time in Stockholm and lived in an old summerhouse outside the city. There happened to be an old swing hanging in a tall pine tree in the overgrown garden. This seemed like an omen, so I decided to revisit my practice of swinging and to perform for the camera by sitting in the swing every morning that I spent in that house, besides recording three variations of the view. This material resulted in *Swinging at Solsidan*<sup>946</sup> and *Solsidan 1-4*<sup>947</sup>. That video will probably not be projected back onto the site of its making. Somewhere sometime, however, swinging will go on.<sup>948</sup>

946 *Swinging at Solsidan* (2016) <https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/swinging-at-solsidan/>

947 *Solsidan 1-4* (2016) was shown for the first time at Artfair Finland in Helsinki 25–28 May 2017. <https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/solsidan-1-4/> The practice is described in the text “Practising art – As a habit?” (Arlander 2017c).

948 Further experiments with the small swing have been a participatory performance “Audiences Swinging Together”, in Munkemose, Odense 1.9.2017 consisting of “Swinging Together in Munkemose” <https://vimeo.com/232254487> and “Swinging Together in Munkemose (night)” <https://vimeo.com/232291605>; “Swinging in a Pine in Hailuoto”, as part of Be-coming Tree Spring Event, online 24.4.2021 <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/761326/1219495/646/4718>; “Swinging in a pine (with people)”, a participatory performance 26.6.2021 <https://vimeo.com/568449064> and the continuation of it “Performance with a Pine” 2.9. 2021 <https://vimeo.com/597009047> as part of the Öres exhibition on Örö.

### By Way of Conclusion

In the beginning of this text, I suggested that we distinguish between (1) depicting a process in the work, (2) showing the production process of the work as part of the work and (3) inviting the public to become involved in producing the work, not only to consuming it. We could even claim that the second strategy, including a Brecht-influenced demand to show that you are showing,<sup>949</sup> dominated at the end of the twentieth century while the third one, with a focus on relationality and participation, has been the main trend in the beginning of the twenty-first century. Two recent examples from the Finnish context can serve as illustration. Tuula Närhinen (2016) can exemplify the first two approaches. She is depicting natural processes in her works, using a strategy she calls phenomenography to let the phenomena themselves write and she includes process descriptions as well as her apparatuses in her installations. Pekka Kantonen (2017) can exemplify the third approach. He has developed a method called generational filming, where he shows a clip to an audience and films the ensuing discussion, then shows the clip and the recorded discussion to the next audience, and so on.

Based on the experiments with swinging, we could further differentiate between sharing the production process either by 2a) including the process as a visible part of the finished work, revealing how the work was made in the work itself, as in the case of projecting an image on the site of its making or by 2b) showing multiple versions or variations of the work together, thus sharing the thought process involved, as in the exhibition *Year of the Snake Swinging* (2014) or in these notes on process. The third strategy, inviting the public as co-creator in some manner – almost a must

949 For an overview of the techniques of Brecht's epic theatre, see Anonymous: "Bertolt Brecht (1898–1956) Epic Theatre", <http://web.mit.edu/allanmc/www/brecht.pdf>.

in much contemporary performance work – has been harder to incorporate into my rather private way of performing landscape, except for these works of swinging together, where the process was shared by inviting the public to participate in the creation of the work. This strategy, too, can be further specified into 3a) turning the creation of the work into a preparatory performance, as in the first swinging together performances or into 3b) considering the participatory action and the public performing of it as the performance itself, as in the experiment at Tutke Spring Days. The participation of other swingers is a key element, which, unless consciously counteracted, easily brings focus back on humans and away from the tree and the environment.

Speaking of process as performance is almost a tautology; emphasizing performance and performativity means emphasizing process. Speaking of performance as process even more so, performances involve processes of some kind. What is evident from these attempts at distinguishing various approaches to sharing process in and as performance is that process is a complex term that needs specifications. Process can be used to indicate a form, something that emerges in series or sequences, or as an umbrella term for various perspectives on temporality and becoming. What is hopefully also evident through these examples of swinging is that materiality is neither given, nor is it the effect of human agency only; nature is neither a passive surface, nor the product of cultural performances only; rather “materiality is an active factor in processes of materialization”<sup>950</sup>. The intra-actively materialized examples of “the ongoing performance of the world in its differential intelligibility”<sup>951</sup> and of the process at hand as a part of it, include here, for instance, the swing, the rope, the tree, the swinger,

950 Barad 2003, 827.

951 Barad 2007, 335.

the camera, the tripod, the projector, the images, the movement, the repetition, the performance, the participants, the viewers – as well as these notes on process as performance.

## 12.3. Revisiting the Aspen Tree



Figure 32. *Revisiting the Aspen Tree* (2014)

On 4 February 2020 when I visited the aspen tree on the western shore of Harakka Island I brought with me my video camera on tripod, but I did not bring the little blue swing that I used to attach to the tree once a week during the Chinese year of the snake 2013-2014. It was easily available in my studio, but for some reason it felt unnecessary. I was tired of that small swing because I had used it in so many different circumstances for several years. The weather was fine, but it was cold, and I wanted to get the image done as soon as possible and get back to the mainland, preparing for a journey. I wanted to record the material, because on my return there would not be many days left before the final exhibition, where it was supposed to be shown. This was the last revisit to the last site of the last video in the series *Animal Years*, which was performed in various places on Harakka Island during the years 2002-2014. In the following I briefly summarize some of the research aspects of the project.

## Research questions

In the Academy of Finland funded four-year (2016-2020) research project called *How to Do Things with Performance?* (HTDTWP) together with Hanna Järvinen, Tero Nauha and Pilvi Porkola, one of my tasks was to see what could be done with that old video series today, how could it be reactivated or made relevant now. The research task for the project *How to Do Things with Performance?* was summarised in the application as follows:

In this project, we ask what can be done with performance – what actualises when a performance takes place, when it is documented, and when it is written about. Through these epistemological questions, we address the ontology of performance: in what ways can we understand ‘performance’ today, as a new materiality, as presence, and in the international, multilingual context where words, documents, and practices connote differently but are shared in online environments. We seek to update the theory of performativity vis à vis new materialist theories of agential realism and non-philosophy.<sup>952</sup>

The research question for the part of the project discussed here is formulated as follows:

Annette Arlander utilises her the twelve-year project “Performing Landscape” (2002-2014; Arlander 2014) and the resulting series of video works *Animal Years* as material for critical self-reflection. She asks what is the performative potential of those works when viewed as a series, and how the working method developed in this project could be understood as an intra-action with the environment, an everyday practice for non-artists that could increase our understanding of our interdependence with other forms of life and matter

952 Research application 296767 (Arlander 2016e).

on the planet. Together with the research team, she explores performative writing and performative documentation as material-discursive practices, but her particular focus lies in digital archiving and online publication.<sup>953</sup>

## Context

The HTDTWP project relates to the development of performance studies and artistic research and their connections in Finland. A more specific context for the part discussed here is the ongoing experimentation with digital online publishing of research outputs. There is much recent work done within that area, as exemplified by the journals where some of the video essays have been published (JER, BST, GPS, PARTake, RUUKKU), other online journals (JAR, VIS) and more. These revisits can also be placed in the context of my longstanding work with performing landscape on Harakka Island. Revisiting the sites of *Animal Years*, a twelve-year series of year-long video works based on weekly performances for camera, was a continuation of my returning to the site of the first year, *Year of the Horse* (recorded in 2002-2003) at the end of the series to create *Year of the Horse – Calendar* recorded (recorded in 2014–2015), once a month rather than once a week, though. Later I made revisits to the sites of all the years, not all sites though, because some years I performed on several sites.

The video *Revisiting the Aspen Tree* (40 min.) is the last one in the series of revisits, a compilation of the four-channel installation *Year of the Snake* (36 min. 30 sec.) and the video *Day and Night of the Snake* (6 min. 46 sec.) inserted into a revisit on 4 February 2020 to the site where those videos were performed and recorded in 2013-2014. The main text where I use that work as an example, “From interaction

953 Ibid.

to intra-action in performing landscape<sup>954</sup>, discusses the ideas of Karen Barad, and feels still largely relevant. Therefore, reconsidering the theoretical ideas then and now, as I have done in relation to most of the other revisits is not needed. What I did not consider at the time, however, was the crucial role of the aspen tree, which now, considering my recent project Meetings with Remarkable and Unremarkable Trees (2020-2021)<sup>955</sup> and the current flourishing of critical plant studies seems like a significant negligence. In the text on intra-action, I used the *Year of the Snake* as example, but did not really discuss the practice, except for a brief description.

That year was the only year where I invited other people to participate, to swing and perform for the camera. The participatory aspect was later developed into many variations of swinging together. The various experiments with swinging that followed were discussed, first in an article called “Performing Landscape – Swinging Together or Playing with Projections”<sup>956</sup>, and then in a chapter called “Process as Performance or Variations of Swinging”<sup>957</sup>, reprinted above. In none of these texts, do I focus on the aspen tree. In the text on intra-action, I do mention the tree briefly when discussing distributed agency and what acknowledging that might mean:

The tree clearly has some agency in the assemblage of wood, rope and branch that forms a swing. /--/ But the agency of the aspen is even more palpable – no tree, no branch, no place to fasten the swing.

954 See chapter 12.1. and *Artnodes*. No. 14, 26-34. (Arlander 2014b)

<https://raco.cat/index.php/Artnodes/article/view/303312>

955 See Meetings with Remarkable and Unremarkable Trees (2020-2021)

project blog <https://meetingswithtrees.com> and project archive <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/761326/761327>

956 Arlander 2016d.

957 Arlander 2018g.

The strange form to the right on the shore in the image ... is the stub of another aspen that used to grow there, but died a few years ago, perhaps because of too much seawater at its roots. By growing next to each other they afforded the fastening of a hammock between them. Now the other one still provides support for a swing. Acknowledging the agency of the tree suggests further questions. How could we expand our understanding of agency in performance as research? What would that mean in terms of methodology?<sup>958</sup>

These questions in 2014 were based on the work *Year of the Snake Swinging*. In relation to the work at hand, *Revisiting the Aspen Tree*, the question of methodology is in focus in another sense, as the method of revisiting and re-recording the site of a performance. In this new approach, however, the aspen tree again remains in the sidelines, as an almost invisible support, in a funny way accentuated by the lifebuoy now attached to it.

## Methods

In terms of methods the work draws on the traditions of performance art with its emphasis on embodied presence, documenting practices on video as performances for camera, and the moving image culture within fine art, beyond the cinematic, including multi-channel installations, as well as the tradition and critique of landscape depiction in its many forms. My main strategy has been to revisit the sites and see what I could remember of my original performances for camera, and to record approximately the same view from the same spot and with the same framing – approximately, because I now had another camera with another objective, and that was part of the point. Especially the first six years of the series were recorded in DV quality and TV format, which looks really outdated

958 Arlander 2014b, 1-2.

today. What I realized after a first try-out, revisiting the site of the second year, the Chinese year of the goat, was that I could insert the old videos as small images into the recording of the revisit. In that way I could not only show the old four-channel installation within one frame but also show how and if the landscape had changed. And I could revisit not only the site and the videos but also the texts that I had previously written based on those videos and see whether my thinking had changed and add those reflections as a voice-over to the video compilation. The first video essay made with this method was later reworked and peer-reviewed to be published in *JER*, *Journal for Embodied Research* as “The Shore Revisited” (2018a).

The method that can be extracted or distilled from my way of working, “revisit, recreate, reflect”, consists of several steps: to revisit the site, repeat parts of the performance, record a contemporary image of the same view and then insert the old video (or multi-channel installation) into that image in miniature, as well as to return to texts discussing that specific work and reconsider them from today’s perspective. This method of revisiting sites to recreate and recombine video recordings and texts into a reflective video essay, with or without text or spoken voice-over narration, could be adapted for other purposes. To return and repeat, to recycle and recombine, and to reflect and reconsider form a method that could be adapted to various types of practices, although it is especially convenient for lens-based digital practices, which can be easily reused.

## **Outcomes**

The video compilations have been shown at the final events of the HTDTWP project and published as individual video essays in peer reviewed online journals. All recorded revisits have been shown at the HTDTWP research days or as part of joint presentations at international conferences. Some of them have been reworked into peer-reviewed publications with the video as a crucial part, such as

“Return to the Site of the Year of the Rooster” (2019a), “The City Skyline Revisited – From networks to trans-corporeality” (2020b), “Revisiting the Rusty Ring – Ecofeminism Today?” (2020d), “The Rock Revisited – Self-Diffraction as a strategy” (2020c), “Remembering the Year of the Tiger – Image, Memory, Site” (2020e), “Calling for Zoe as a Utopian Gesture” (2021b), or then transformed into texts without video, like “Breathing and Growth – performing with plants” (2018b). Others are published as parts of joint presentations in conference proceedings, like “The Pine Revisited” (Arlander et al. 2018) or “Revisiting the Juniper” (Arlander et al. 2020). And some have only been presented live in conferences, like “The Cliff Revisited”, “The Pine on the Shore Revisited” and “The Spruce Revisited”. The main contribution of these video compilations or video essays is to serve as examples, as inspiration, something for others to develop further. A brief description of the method suggesting that other artists try revisiting, too, was also published in the Finnish artists’ magazine *Taide*<sup>959</sup> and a presentation of the method is published in Finnish, while “Revisiting as Method” is in review for *Ruukku*<sup>960</sup>.

## Impact

In terms of societal impact, huge results are not to be expected beyond the suggested inspirational function of the method. The video installation *Year of the Snake*, which forms the basis of this revisit was bought into the Finnish National Gallery collection, and thus has some potential for future impact. The documentation of the changes in the landscape on Harakka Island might have some value when looking at changes brought about by climate change and other forms of environmental destruction. In terms of future impact there is a version of *Animal Years* on Harakka Island with QR codes

959 Arlander 2021c.

960 Arlander 2024 and Arlander (forthcoming?)

placed on rails and on suitable sites linking to the videos recorded on those sites, as a “memory of the landscape”. This is described briefly in the epilogue, *An Afterthought*.





Figure 33. *Becoming Juniper* – Kalvola (2012)

## 13. In place of a Summary

I have made attempts to summarize the whole series of *Animal Years* in texts focusing on temporality, such as “Performing Landscape for Years” in *Performance Research: On Time*<sup>961</sup> or on the landscape, in Finnish, in “Maisema, Materia ja Muutos”<sup>962</sup> (Landscape, Matter and Change). Most of my recent publications have focused on working with trees.<sup>963</sup> “Calling the Dragon, Holding Hands with Junipers: Transpositions in Practice”, however, a text written for an anthology on transpositions<sup>964</sup>, contains a summary of the many variations surrounding my yearly performances on Harakka. In the following I have omitted the comparison between working with dragons and junipers and included only the general discussion, references to Karen Barad (once more) and the detailed summary of the series.

961 “Performing Landscape for Years”. In *Performance Research* Special issue: On Time. 19-3 2014a, 27-31.

962 Arlander, Annette. 2017e. “Maisema, materia ja muutos. Harakan saaren luontokulttuuria dokumentoimassa.” [Landscape, Matter and Change. Documenting the Natureculture of Harakka Island] In Mari Mäkiranta, Ulla Piela and Eija Timonen (eds.) Näkyväksi seipitetty maa. [The Land Narrated Visible] Kalevalaseuran vuosikirja 96. Helsinki: SKS, 23-39.

963 For example, *Performing and Thinking with Trees* (Arlander 2022b).

964 Arlander, Annette. 2018f. “Calling the Dragon, Holding Hands with Junipers: Transpositions in Practice.” In Schwab, Michael (ed.) *Transpositions - Aesthetico-Epistemic Operators in Artistic Research*. Orpheus Institute series, Leuven University Press, 41-58.

## 13.1. Transpositions in Practice



Figure 34. *Holding Hands with Junipers – Ibiza* (2012)

Is “transposition” a useful term to describe artistic practices that involve repetition with a difference? In this text I combine ideas by Karen Barad and a series of performances for camera called *Animal Years*, as a testing ground for exploring the notion of transposition in articulating artistic research in practice, albeit after the fact. After a summary of some of Barad’s theoretical ideas I will describe the artistic practice in question in concrete terms and end by suggesting that the term “transposition” can be understood and used in two ways, and that the notion of entanglement is helpful in understanding transpositions, at least in that context.

### **Entanglements, intra-actions, and agential cuts**

Following Karen Barad, we can understand entanglements of matter and meaning, of theorising and experimenting, and of the researcher and what is researched as a starting point for the processes involved in artistic research. Barad emphasises that practices of knowing and being are not isolable but mutually implicated and wants us to

study practices of knowing in being. “We don’t obtain knowledge by standing outside the world; we know because we are *of* the world. We are part of the world in its differential becoming”.<sup>965</sup> For her, separating epistemology from ontology is part of “a metaphysics that assumes an inherent difference between human and nonhuman, subject and object, mind and body, matter and discourse”.<sup>966</sup> We need “something like an *ethico-onto-epistem-ology* – an appreciation of the intertwining of ethics, knowing, and being – since each intra-action matters”.<sup>967</sup> “Intra-action” is a term coined by Barad to replace the usual term “inter-action,” which presumes that the interacting parts pre-exist the action.<sup>968</sup> Intra-action “*signifies the mutual constitution of entangled agencies*”.<sup>969</sup> According to her “distinct agencies do not precede, but rather emerge through, their intra-action” and, importantly, “*agencies are only distinct in relation to their mutual entanglement; they don’t exist as individual elements*”.<sup>970</sup> This is relevant for the transpositions I will describe later.

With entanglement, however, Barad does not mean “just any old kind of connection, interweaving or enmeshment in a complicated situation”.<sup>971</sup> Rather, for her the term is linked to the notion of quantum entanglement and to her agential realist ontology; “matter itself entails *entanglements*”.<sup>972</sup> The idea of quantum entanglement was developed by the 1930s but gained more attention from the 1990s onwards due to the potential for new technological applications in

965 Barad 2007, 185.

966 Ibid.

967 Ibid.

968 For an attempt at understanding the notion of intra-action with regard to performing landscape, see chapter 12.1. and Arlander 2014b.

969 Barad 2007, 33. Italics in original.

970 Ibid. Italics in original.

971 Barad 2007, 160.

972 Ibid.

computing, cryptography, and teleportation.<sup>973</sup> Barad explains how the entangled state of two systems (say A and B) cannot be understood as a composite system, or a mixture of two independent systems. Rather, the entangled state A and B should be understood as a single entity.<sup>974</sup> She further contrasts Schrödinger's notion of entanglement (with the famous cat that is either dead or alive depending on the behaviour of an electron), which is explicitly epistemic (what is entangled is our knowledge of events), and Bohr's understanding of entanglements in ontological terms (what is entangled are the "components" of phenomena).<sup>975</sup>

For the purposes of this text, we need not consider the mystery of quantum entanglements further. Suffice it to say that for Barad, following Bohr, phenomena are the ontological entanglement of objects and agencies of observation. She takes the primary ontological units to be phenomena, rather than independent objects with inherent boundaries and properties. In her thinking, "phenomena do not merely mark the epistemological inseparability of 'observer' and 'observed'; rather *phenomena are the ontological inseparability of intra-acting 'agencies.'*" That is, *phenomena are ontological entanglements*".<sup>976</sup> Following this, I propose to understand transpositions, as phenomena, to be ontological entanglements, too. For this, we must keep in mind that, according to Barad, entanglements are highly specific configurations, in part because they change with each intra-action, or, rather, space, time, and matter do not exist prior to the intra-actions that reconstitute the entanglements. To study entanglements, the apparatuses must be tuned to the particularities of the entanglements at hand.<sup>977</sup> The same might be

973 Barad 2007, 386.

974 Barad 2007, 271.

975 Barad 2007, 309.

976 Barad 2007, 333.

977 Barad 2007, 74.

true of transpositions; it does not make sense to speak of them in universal terms.

Not only are “things” produced through intra-actions; following Barad, the boundaries and properties of the parts of the phenomenon become determinate only in the enactment of an “agential cut” that delineates the “measured object” from the “measuring agent.” According to her, a set of material practices effect “an *agential cut* between ‘subject’ and ‘object,’ ... a resolution *within* the phenomenon of the inherent ontological (and semantic) indeterminacy”<sup>978</sup>; that is, the split into ‘subject’ and ‘object’ is not taken as given. There are no subjects and objects given in the world; rather, they are produced through specific intra-actions and cuts of exclusion and inclusion. For Barad “observer” and “observed” are merely two physical systems intra-acting in the marking of the “effect” by the “cause,” and objectivity is a matter of “accountability to marks on bodies.” This means that she does not base objectivity on an inherent ontological separation between subject and object, observer and observed, but on an intra-actively enacted agential separability produced by the apparatus in question. In other words, she tries to move beyond an epistemological conception of objectivity and replace it with an ontological one, which is possible because of her understanding of phenomena as ontological rather than merely epistemological. Separability between subject and object is not inherent or absolute, but is each time intra-actively enacted relative to a specific phenomenon.<sup>979</sup> Barad takes up Bohr’s view that concepts are physical arrangements<sup>980</sup> and claims that “Bohr’s point that apparatuses are productive of the phenomena they measure is not to be understood

978 Barad 2007, 140.

979 Barad 2007, 339.

980 Barad 2007, 54.

as some idealist claim that reality is a product of human concepts”<sup>981</sup>; nor as “a mysterious and unexplained linkage between human concepts and the physical phenomena produced in experiments”.<sup>982</sup> Rather, she proposes a shift from linguistic concepts to discursive practices with an emphasis on the dynamics of material practices, where “specific dynamic material configurations of the world, *causally* produce specific material phenomena”.<sup>983</sup> Although Barad’s attempt at developing Bohr’s thinking beyond his humanist bias is sometimes hard to follow, her understanding of an “agential cut” is relevant for artistic research, where the boundaries and properties of the subject and object of research can thus be enacted through specific arrangements in each case.

What is on the other side of the agential cut is not separate from us. Barad writes: “Cuts cut ‘things’ together and apart. Cuts are not enacted from the outside, nor are they ever enacted once and for all.”<sup>984</sup> Moreover, “[c]uts are . . . enacted not by wilful individuals but by the larger material arrangements of which ‘we’ are a ‘part’”.<sup>985</sup> Due to these cuts of inclusion and exclusion, ethics is not about the right response to a radically exteriorised other, but about responsibility and accountability for the relationalities of becoming of which we are a part.<sup>986</sup> We are responsible to others we are entangled with through the various ontological entanglements that materiality entails. What could this mean in the context of artistic research? That the artist is only one element in the entanglement of various material-discursive practices creating or constituting a work? That

981 Barad 2007, 334.

982 Barad 2007, 335.

983 Ibid.

984 Barad 2007, 179.

985 Barad 2007, 178.

986 Barad 2007, 393.

he or she is nevertheless responsible for the entanglements he or she does not even know of?

Knowing is not about ideation nor is it the exclusive birth right of humans, Barad claims; knowing is a distributed practice that includes the larger material arrangement, a practice where “a specific engagement of the world becomes differentially intelligible to another part of the world”.<sup>987</sup> Knowing is a physical practice of engagement. This probably sounds familiar to many artist-researchers, since knowing as a physical practice has been emphasised by scholars as diverse as Conquergood (1999), Bolt (2004), Riley and Hunter (2009), Johnson (2011), and Spatz (2015), to name a few. Barad further claims that “*experimenting and theorizing are dynamic practices that play a constitutive role in the production of objects and subjects and matter and meaning*”<sup>988</sup> They are “not about *intervening* (from outside) but about *intra-acting* from within, and as part of, the phenomena produced.”<sup>989</sup> The same could be said of many art practices, where the artist-researcher is literally producing phenomena – artworks or performances – and not only observing them. And indeed, also about a practice like performing landscape, which I will describe in the following, where there is no possibility of stepping outside the environment. If scientific practices are specific forms of engagement that make specific phenomena manifest<sup>990</sup> artistic practices, likewise, are specific forms of engagement that make specific phenomena manifest.

As Iris van der Tuin, one of the few theorists to have discussed Barad in the context of artistic or what she calls creative research, has pointed out, artistic research is perhaps not so different from

987 Barad 2007, 342.

988 Barad 2007, 56. Italics in original.

989 Ibid.

990 Barad 2007, 336.

other types of research. Understanding the onto-epistemological nature of all research practices foregrounds according to her the “how-question”: how are research practices enabling or constraining? “How do they open up or buy into the anthropocentric schema of the authoritative scientist objectifying a muted entity with the help of a mediating instrument in a neutral environment?”<sup>991</sup> For her a social-constructivist or what she terms linguisticist approach is equally anthropocentric, and she questions whether artistic research is so different, criticising the claim “that artists produce ‘other’ knowledges from their non-scientific studios”.<sup>992</sup> She also argues, however, that “the heightened attention to onto-epistemology, even if not labelled as such, in creative research teaches positivists and linguisticists alike something about their practices”<sup>993</sup>; for her, all research practices are “specific in the terms of the knowledge produced and generic in onto-epistemology”.<sup>994</sup> It seems that “how-questions” are particularly important in artistic research, since they can be addressed through practice, and through demonstrations, at least to some extent.

Concerning the term “artistic research,” a contested concept – and “practice-as-research”<sup>995</sup> or “creative arts research”<sup>996</sup> – for the purposes of this text it can be understood as research where the making of art forms an important part of the process. Artistic research can also be discussed as an interdisciplinary and speculative practice.<sup>997</sup> Here, however, the focus is on examples of one specific practice.

991 van der Tuin 2014, 260.

992 Ibid.

993 Ibid.

994 Ibid.

995 Nelson 2013.

996 Barrett and Bolt 2014.

997 Arlander 2016f.

### **And what about transpositions?**

In English the term “transposition” can refer to many things, such as the transfer of genetic material, or more generally to a change in the relative position, order, or sequence of something. A more familiar use of the term is in music, where it means playing music in a different key, for instance to make it higher or lower in pitch; since the intervals remain the same, the melody is recognisable, although the mood might change. The term can also mean to move, to transfer, or to shift over to another place, as with transposing the events in a novel to take place in another time and environment. This meaning of a change of place or location is especially relevant for the examples I will describe. In the following I use the term “transposition” in two different senses: on the one hand, to refer to an activity, a type of repetition with a difference, where an action, gesture, or entanglement, something resembling a “tune,” is transferred or relocated and transformed in that move; on the other hand, to refer to that something, the “tune,” which emerges in such moves.

At first glance the term “transposition” does not seem easily compatible with Barad’s ideas, if we assume that we have “something,” a “tune,” that is then transposed, rather than created in the transposition. What at first seems counterintuitive, combining the notion of transposition with intra-action and agential separability, is nevertheless possible. Transposition can be understood as a verb: to transpose something then presupposes pre-existing “tunes” that can be transferred to other circumstances and be transformed by them. Transposition can also be understood in Barad’s terms, as produced through intra-action, as something emerging through the act of transposing.

Following Barad, the boundaries and properties of the parts of a phenomenon are determined by an agential cut that delineates the “measured object” from the “measuring agent.” For instance, in my practice of performing landscape the “measuring agent,” the

framing apparatus of the camera, produces a split in the “measured object,” the landscape, between what is within and what is outside the frame, between what is part of the image and what is not – a division that did not previously exist in the landscape. This intra-action between equipment and environment involves material-discursive practices like the properties of the lens or my preconceptions of what constitutes a good view, or the light conditions on site that the camera reacts to, and so on. The “measuring agent” and the “measured object” are produced in each case; the observer can turn into a performer, the camera can be filmed, and so on. The same can be said of the “measuring agent” and the “measured object” in an act of transposition. Sometimes the shifting circumstances act as the “measuring agency” that marks and transforms the “measured object” (the combination of gestures and materials to be transposed). Sometimes “the tune” (the combination of gestures and materials to be transposed) serves as the “measuring agent” that enacts an agential cut in the environmental circumstances to produce “the measured object,” a transformed image.

In any case, we can say that the “something” that is transposed, the “tune,” is in fact produced through and in the intra-actions involved. What in the end is included in the “tune” and what is excluded from it, what the components to be transposed and transformed in the act of transposition are, is not given in advance but is enacted in each case. Moreover, the “tune” can be understood as an entanglement of sorts; its components are treated as a single unity and are transformed together. In most cases in my examples, what produces a change of action or gesture is relocation, a change of site, with all the material-discursive practices involved in the shift of circumstances. In the practice described in the following, the key questions are: What is to be transposed? What is repeated with a difference? What is supposed to remain recognisable, what will transform with the context?

## Animal Years

A series of twelve one-year projects, called *Animal Years*, video recorded on Harakka Island off the coast of Helsinki, Finland, which I began in the year of the horse (2002) and finished in the year of the horse (2014), was based on the Chinese calendar and its twelve-year cycle, with each year named after a specific animal. The key question explored was how to perform landscape today. The main purpose was to bring attention to changes in the landscape, consequent on the shifting seasons, weather, and climate, to focus on the environment and to document changes in it. Thus, returning to the same spot was important. While performing a still act or simple action in front of a video camera, the events taking place in the background, in the landscape, can come to the forefront. By repeating a performance at regular intervals over relatively long periods, and condensing the material by editing, the slow happenings not discernible in real time become visible. Thus, the project produced “souvenirs” of what the landscape looked like on the north coast of the Baltic Sea during these years at the beginning of the twenty-first century.

Over the years, the aim of *Animal Years* shifted more and more into making visible the passing of time, which initially was a side effect of the work.<sup>998</sup> The project focused on seasonal changes resulting from the cyclical nature of our planetary time, based on the movement of the Earth around the Sun and around its own axis. On another level it responded to the logic of a cyclic video loop in an installation context rather than the progressive storyline of a film, for instance. Performances for a static camera on a tripod, repeated once a week for a year in the same place with the same framing of the image, and then condensed by editing to form short videos or

998 In “Performing Landscape for Years” (Arlander 2014a), I discuss the project with regard to various time conceptions.

multichannel installations, show time passing in the landscape by keeping space, place, and framing constant. Repetition was used to generate material with variations, which could then be put together chronologically, using all the “slices of time” in the order they were created. The shifting conditions, or various accidental occurrences, produced changes around the basic structure of a few initial choices.

Each year I looked for a new perspective on the landscape, a new aspect of the environment, and a new kind of relationship between the human body and the place. These variations from year to year, in contrast to the repetitions taking place within one year, can be understood as transpositions of the basic idea of a weekly visit to the same place. The practice of producing rough “time-lapse” videos was transferred to and repeated in another place, with another scarf, with another pose, action, or gesture each year, while the practice was kept sufficiently similar, to form a recognisable series. *Animal Years* was not a preconceived series, however, nor was it designed as a research project, although many of the works have served as data or material for research articles. The series evolved in a manner of trial and error and was only named about half-way through the process; the years did not all begin at the Chinese New Year, some weeks were omitted due to travels or weather restrictions and so on, but all years were nevertheless performed on the same island. My working method utilised the traditions of performance art, video art, and environmental art, moving in the borderland between them.

*Animal Years*, with each year performed approximately once a week for the duration of a year (according to the Chinese calendar, which begins and ends in January or February) and then edited into video works exhibited the following year, consists of the following years: Year of the Horse (2002–3), Year of the Goat (2003–4), Year of the Monkey (2004–5), Year of the Rooster (2005–6), Year of the Dog (2006–7), Year of the Pig (2007–8), Year of the Rat (2008–9), Year of the Ox (2009–10), Year of the Tiger (2010–11), Year of the

Rabbit (2011–12), Year of the Dragon (2012–13) and Year of the Snake (2013–14). A second Year of the Horse (2014–15) was added, as a variation once a month, to complete the cycle.

What were the actions performed and repeated during all those years? Most of them were more like non-performances, simple poses, gestures, or actions that could be edited to be continuous. To begin with, I stood with a blue scarf on my shoulders close to the camera, blocking part of the view from the hill on the island, or sat on a rock in the landscape below the hill.<sup>999</sup> The second year, I walked with the same blue scarf on my shoulders from south to north (or left to right in the image) past the camera, and once again further away from the camera; I also stood on the shore looking out to sea.<sup>1000</sup> In the third year I sat with a red scarf on my shoulders on a ledge on the north-western shore and also stood on a cliff next to it looking out to sea.<sup>1001</sup> For the fourth year I walked with the same red scarf on my shoulders past the camera from left to right, from south-east towards north-west on the western cliffs of the island, stood with the camera behind me on the cliffs, stood further down on the cliffs, and also sat on the cliffs looking out to sea.<sup>1002</sup> During the fifth year, I sat with a yellowish scarf on my shoulders in a pine tree in the southern part of the island. I lay and sat on a rock under another pine tree on the western shore, with the camera first facing the city in the north and then the sea in the south.<sup>1003</sup>

999 In all, sixty-four times, approximately once a week from January 2002 to January 2003.

1000 In all, fifty-four times, approximately once a week from March 2003 to March 2004.

1001 In all, forty-three times, approximately once a week from 11 April 2004 to 20 March 2005.

1002 In all, forty-eight times, approximately once a week from 8 January to 31 December 2005.

1003 In all, fifty-four times, once a week from 7 January 2006 to 11 February 2007.

In the sixth year, with a grey shawl across my shoulders, I span around against the city skyline on the north-western cliffs of the island, and sat on the cliffs, first facing south, looking out to sea, and then facing north, looking towards the city; I also sat under the only spruce tree on the island, recorded from three distances.<sup>1004</sup> In the seventh year, with a lilac scarf on my shoulders, I sat before sunset on a rock on the northern shore of the island and on another rock farther from the camera, walking up and down the steps to the shore as well as standing in the sea, collecting water in a jar and pouring it back into the sea.<sup>1005</sup> In the eighth year, wearing a rust-coloured scarf, I sat or “rode” on a buoy, sat in a niche in the wall, walked in a circle tied by a chain to an iron ring on a cliff on the south-eastern shore, and sat with a piece of wood tied to my shoulders, in a “yoke,” on rocks on the eastern shore.<sup>1006</sup> In the ninth year, wrapped in a white shawl, I walked around and lay down on the remains of the stone base of a building at the centre of the island, repeating the action four times to record it from four directions.<sup>1007</sup>

In the tenth year, wrapped in a green scarf, on Sunday afternoons I visited a juniper growing on the south-eastern shore and stood next to a nearby bird shed.<sup>1008</sup> In the eleventh year, wearing the same green scarf, I called a dragon by ringing a small ceramic bell on the roof of a bunker in the southern part of the island, in four directions, and by waving a green ribbon tied to a stick from the bunker facing north, and from the hill at the other end of the island facing south.<sup>1009</sup> In the twelfth year, finally, wrapped in a pale blue

1004 Approximately once a week between 6 January 2007 and 3 February 2008.

1005 Approximately once a week before sunset between 26 January 2008 and 24 January 2009.

1006 Approximately once a week from 25 January 2009 to 6 February 2010.

1007 Approximately once a week for a year from 14 February 2010 to 31 January 2011.

1008 Approximately once a week between 6 February 2011 and 22 January 2012.

1009 Approximately once a week between 4 February 2012 and 3 February 2013.

scarf, I sat in a swing attached to an aspen on the western shore, lay in the swing, and sat next to the swing and on a pile of rocks nearby. People visiting or working on the island were invited to swing as well.<sup>1010</sup> As a thirteenth year I revisited the site I used during the Year of the Horse 2002, wearing the same dark blue scarf, standing on the hill blocking part of the view, and sitting on the rock on the path, though only once a month this time.<sup>1011</sup>

Each of these years resulted in several works, which are available for preview on the website of the Centre for Finnish Media Art<sup>1012</sup>, usually titled with the name of the year with some specification: *Year of the Horse*,<sup>1013</sup> *Year of the Goat*,<sup>1014</sup> *Year of the Monkey*,<sup>1015</sup> *Year of the Rooster*,<sup>1016</sup> *Year of the Dog*,<sup>1017</sup> *Year of the Pig*,<sup>1018</sup> *Year of the Rat*,<sup>1019</sup>

1010 Approximately once a week between 10 February 2013 and 28 January 2014.

1011 Between February 2014 and February 2015.

1012 See page for Annette Arlander <https://www.av-arkki.fi/artists/annette-arlander/>

1013 *Year of the Horse (Sitting on a Rock)*, 2003 (12 min. 28 sec.), DV 4:3.

1014 *Year of the Goat—Harakka Shore 1-3*, 2004 (40 min.) DV 4:3; *Year of the Goat—Harakka Shore (installation)*, 2004 (13 min. 28 sec.), DV 4:3.

1015 *Year of the Monkey 1-2*, 2005 (7 min.), DV 4:3; *Year of the Monkey (installation)*, 2005 (3 min. 40 sec.), DV 4:3; *Year of the Monkey—Tomtebo*, 2005 (22 min.), DV 4:3.

1016 *Year of the Rooster (installation)*, 2006 (32 min.), DV 4:3; *Year of the Rooster*, 2006 (31 min.), DV 4:3.

1017 *Year of the Dog—Sitting in a Tree*, 2007 (8 min. 10 sec.), DV 4:3; *Shadow of a Pine I, II, III, IV*, 2007 (16 min.), DV 4:3; *Shadow of a Pine I, Shadow of a Pine II*, 2007 (16 min.), DV 4:3.

1018 *Year of the Pig—Weather Vane I (short)*, 2008 (23 min.), DV 4:3; *Year of the Pig—Sitting on a Cliff I-II (short)*, 2008 (46 min.), DV 4:3; *Year of the Pig—Installation*, 2008 (82 min.), DV 4:3; *Under the Spruce I-III*, 2008 (28 min.), DV 4:3. Miniature version on Vimeo: *Year of the Pig—Weather Vane (mini)*, 2008 (4 min. 42 sec.), DV 4:3.

1019 *Year of the Rat—Mermaid 1-2*, 2009 (34 min. 33 sec.), DV 4:3; *Year of the Rat—Uphill—Downhill*, 2009 (19 min. 12 sec.), DV 4:3; *Year of the Rat—Dripping (short)*, 2009, (6 min. 47 sec.), DV 4:3.

*Year of the Ox*,<sup>1020</sup> *Year of the Tiger*,<sup>1021</sup> *Year of the Rabbit*,<sup>1022</sup> *Year of the Dragon*,<sup>1023</sup> and *Year of the Snake*,<sup>1024</sup> as well as the second *Year of the Horse*.<sup>1025</sup> The works of one year were usually shown together in one exhibition, including other works created during that year.

In addition, during two of the years I performed on Sundays in Kalvola, a place two hundred kilometres north of Helsinki, sitting with a red scarf on my shoulders on a birch tree trunk, as well as walking up and down the stairs in the garden (in 2005–6)<sup>1026</sup> and hanging with a yellowish scarf on my shoulders from an old pine tree and leaning against it (in 2006–7).<sup>1027</sup> These extrapolations,

1020 *Year of the Ox—Riding a Buoy*, 2010 (50 min.), HD 16:9; *Year of the Ox—Sitting in the Wall*, 2010 (42 min. 44 sec.), HD 16:9; *Year of the Ox—Walking in Circles*, 2010 (90 min.), HD 16:9; *Year of the Ox—Walking in Circles (short)*, 2010 (19 min. 16 sec.), HD 16:9; *Year of the Ox—In a Yoke 1–2*, 2010 (5 min. 10 sec.), HD 16:9.

1021 *Year of the Tiger (long)*, 2012 (87 min.), HD 16:9; *Year of the Tiger*, 2011 (28 min. 19 sec.), HD 16:9; *Year of the Tiger (mini)*, 2012 (6 min. 19 sec.), HD 16:9.

1022 *Year of the Rabbit—With a Juniper*, 2012 (20 min. 10 sec.), HD 16:9; *Year of the Rabbit—By the Bird Shed*, 2012 (20 min. 10 sec.), HD 16:9. Miniature version on Vimeo: *Year of the Rabbit—With a Juniper (mini)*, 2012 (6 min. 50 sec.), HD 16:9.

1023 *Year of the Dragon Waving (A & B)*, 2013 (50 min. 13 sec.), HD 16:9; *Calling the Dragon (North, East, South & West)*, 2013 (46 min. 50 sec.), HD 16:9; *Calling the Dragon 1–4 (Bell)*, 2013 (6 min. 28 sec.), HD 16:9.

1024 *Year of the Snake—Swinging (installation)*, 2014 (36 min. 30 sec.), HD 16:9; *Year of the Snake—By the Swing*, 2014 (50 min. 41 sec.), HD 16:9; *Year of the Snake—Watching the Harbour*, 2014 (55 min. 3 sec.), HD 16:9; *Year of the Snake—Swinging Along (mix)*, 2014 (3 min. 30 sec.), HD 16:9; *Year of the Snake—Swinging Along*, 2014 (26 min. 30 sec.), HD 16:9; *Year of the Snake—In the Swing*, 2014 (16 min. 8 sec.), HD 16:9. Miniature version on Vimeo: *Year of the Snake (mini)*, 2014 (3 min. 6 sec.), HD 16:9.

1025 *Year of the Horse—Calendar 1–2*, 2015 (installation) (11 min. 10 sec.), HD 16:9.

1026 In all, forty-eight times, approximately at noon on Sundays between 22 May 2005 and 14 May 2006. *Sitting on a Birch*, 2006 (24 min. 15 sec.), DV 4:3; *Secret Garden 1+2*, 2006 (24 min.), DV 4:3; *Secret Garden 1*, 2006 (24 min.), DV 4:3.

1027 Once a month in 2006 except for April, which was made in 2007. *Year of the Dog in Kalvola—Calendar*, 2007 (4 min. 10 sec.), DV 4:3, and *Year of the Dog in Kalvola—Calendar 1–2*, 2007 (4 min. 20 sec.), DV 4:3.

which I have discussed in relation to the idea of autotopography<sup>1028</sup> can also be understood as transpositions. What was transferred or transported to another location (besides the scarf) was not the action but the schedule, the weekly (or monthly) visit throughout a year. Moreover, they repeated the “tune” of the works of that year in some sense (like working with pine trees in 2006–7) and were exhibited together with them.

### **Day and night of the year**

Besides documenting the changes in the landscape in a particular place for one year, I recorded a day and night in the same place each year. The change between an image of one year recorded once a week and an image of a day and night recorded with two- or three-hour intervals, between a big cycle and a small cycle, was often marked through a shift in camera position: a narrowing of visual focus as an equivalent of the tightening of the time span. This kind of thinking in equivalencies, although somewhat arbitrary in most cases – a year as a wider shot compared with a day and night as a closer shot – is key to the logic of transposition here. The difference between a smaller cycle and a larger cycle is transposed into the difference between a smaller shot size and a larger shot size.

Transferring the action of the year to a day and night (for example sitting on a rock once a week for year and sitting on that same rock every two hours for a day and night, with the camera closer) involved a transposition; the action of the year always preceded that of the day and night. In the beginning the logic was not very clear, however. The day and night on the site and with the action of the Year of the Horse (2002) was performed only during the next Year of the Goat (2003) and named after that,<sup>1029</sup> the day and night of the

1028 See Arlander 2012b.

1029 *Day and Night of the Goat—Easter*, 2003 (20–21 April 2003) (6 min. 20 sec.), DV

goat was performed in the Year of the Monkey (2004),<sup>1030</sup> and the day and night of the monkey was performed in the Year of the Rooster (2005). With the day and night of the rooster finally performed during its own year, there were two days and nights for that year.<sup>1031</sup> The following years the days and nights were recorded during their own year, with the exception of the day and night of the rabbit, which was performed in the Year of the Dragon.<sup>1032</sup> Five of them used the same framing of the image as the year,<sup>1033</sup> five were framed in tighter close-up,<sup>1034</sup> while two were recorded on a different but related site,<sup>1035</sup> like the stone base of a smaller building next to the larger one utilised for the year; a kind of transposition again, this time in spatial scale.

4:3; and a variation, *Sitting on a Rock (Rock with Text)*, 2003 (20–21 April 2003) (6 min. 20 sec.), DV 4:3.

1030 *Day and Night of the Monkey (installation)*, 2004 (10–11 April 2004) (13 min. 28 sec.), DV 4:3, and *Day and Night of the Monkey*, 2004 (10–11 April 2004) (13 min. 28 sec.), DV 4:3.

1031 On the site of the year of the monkey: *Day and Night of the Rooster 1–2*, 2005 (24–25 June 2005) (13 min.), DV 4:3, and *Day and Night of the Rooster (installation)*, 2005 (24–25 June 2005) (1 min. 14 sec.), DV 4:3. On the site of the year of the rooster: *Christmas of the Rooster 1–3 (installation)*, 2006 (25–26 December 2005) (24 min.), DV 4:3; *Christmas of the Rooster—Walk (trailer)*, 2006 (25–26 December 2005) (1 min. 54 sec.), DV 4:3, and *Christmas of the Rooster—Tomten*, 2006 (25–26 December 2005) (18 min. 32 sec.), DV 4:3.

1032 *Day and Night of the Rabbit—In the Year of the Dragon 1–2*, 2012 (16–17 June 2012) (40 min. 20 sec.), HD 16:9.

1033 *Christmas of the Rooster, Day and Night of the Pig*, 2008 (22–23 September 2008) (8 min.), DV 4:3; *Day and Night of the Rat—Mermaid*, 2009 (22–23 December 2008) (11 min. 10 sec.), DV 4:3; *Day and Night of the Ox*, 2010 (1–2 May 2009) (14 min. 15 sec.), HD 16:9; and *Day and Night of the Snake—Swinging*, 2014 (6 min. 46 sec.), HD 16:9.

1034 *Day and Night of the Goat—Easter, Day and Night of the Monkey, Day and Night of the Rooster, Day and Night of the Dog*, 2007 (20–21 October 2006) (4 min.), DV 4:3; and *Day and Night of the Rabbit—In the Year of the Dragon*.

1035 *Day and Night of the Tiger*, 2011 (24–25 June 2011) (9 min. 44 sec.), HD 16:9; *Day and Night of the Tiger 1–2*, 2011 (24–25 June 2011) (7 min. 43 sec.), HD 16:9; and *Day and Night of the Dragon 1–3*, 2013 (2–3 February 2013) (19 min. 30 sec.), HD 16:9.

## Variations of transpositions

We could think of transpositions taking place during the process of performing, editing, exhibiting, and so on. Also, the choice of several sites and actions for one year could be understood as a transposition. In most cases there was no preconceived “tune” to be transposed; a “tune” can be recognised only with hindsight. Lying on the rocks as the shadow of a pine tree could be seen as a transposition of sitting in a pine tree, with the pine emerging as the “tune.” And sitting under a spruce the following year could be thought of as a transposition of “working with a tree.” Some more obvious transpositions were produced by the mode of recording: In the Year of the Dog, I recorded the same pine tree from two opposite directions, with the city or the sea in the background. In the following Year of the Pig, I recorded myself sitting in two places on the cliffs with the camera in the centre turned in opposite directions, the city and the sea. This shift – from moving the camera and focusing towards the centre to turning the camera on the spot focusing in two opposite directions – worked like a transposition of the double image. A similar type of transposition from “inward” to “outward,” albeit in four directions rather than two, took place between recording the square stone base of a building from four directions, moving the camera around it, in the Year of the Tiger, and recording the view from the rooftop of the bunker in the Year of the Dragon, by turning the camera in the centre in four directions. Here the act of transposition, of repetition with a difference in a new context, was used as a working tool. With the help of transposition, a “tune” can be found; or, if a “tune” already exists, it can be played with.<sup>1036</sup>

An example of playing with an existing “tune” was the act of returning to the site of the Year of the Horse (2002-2003) to repeat the same action with the same scarf again during Year of the Horse

1036 Thank you to Michael Schwab, for making me aware of this.

(2014-2015), albeit with small variations, like once a month rather than weekly, and with different image proportions using a different camera. The most striking transformation was produced by the schedule, and the resulting change in rhythm, rather than by the expected changes in the landscape over twelve years.<sup>1037</sup> Yet another form of transposition took place through the various experiments in swinging together, which I continued exploring, using the same swing as in the Year of the Snake, and where the combination of actions changed with each new variation. These experiments were always slightly modified, with the swing and swinging as the “tune.”

We could also interpret the variations produced during the process of editing as transpositions, alternative actions performed in the same place were often separated to be shown side by side in an installation. Likewise, works with varying durations were edited from the same material. Rather than transpositions, however, these variations are better understood as simply versions of the work. The same goes for variations within a work, depending on what we consider the work to be – what is the whole and what is a part of it. Is *Animal Years* the work, and all the years only parts of it? Do the various works created in the same year (using the same scarf and related gestures) form a whole, of which the individual works are only parts? If not, then what if the same material was edited into longer or shorter versions, for screening and to be synchronised in an installation, for instance? Or, finally, if one part of the installation version was used as the screening version, would the very same piece become two different works? Sometimes a phase in the working process, an extra experiment, and a version of the work are interchangeable. The main question in most cases is, what is repeated and what is changed; what is maintained to remain as

1037 The working process and the changes that took place I have discussed elsewhere (Arlander 2016a), see also chapter 1.1.

similar as possible, what is transformed or allowed to shift with the circumstances.<sup>1038</sup>

### **“Other experiments” as transpositions**

As an expansion or indeed transposition of each individual year during *Animal Years*, which I performed in one or several places on Harkka Island, I often made experiments in other places as well, using the same scarf and the same or a similar gesture, although mostly without returning to the same place with regular intervals. These “other experiments” were made as variations or repetitions with a difference of the main gesture or theme of that year in alternative circumstances: the basic idea was transposed into a new context, recreating the “tune” of that year, stretching it sometimes beyond recognition. These experiments created outside the island during each year are perhaps the most obvious examples of transpositions in this group of works.

The variations created during the Year of the Rat can serve as a demonstration. One of the starting points for my actions that year was the sculpture *Den Lille Havefrue (The Little Mermaid)* by Edvard Eriksen in Copenhagen and the fairy tale by Hans Christian Andersen that served as its inspiration. It provided the basis for my sitting on a boulder on the shore with bare feet. The works created on the island during the Year of the Rat included other repeated gestures besides the one emulating the little mermaid,<sup>1039</sup> like walking up and down the stairs or pouring water from the sea. The gesture of sitting on a rock wrapped in a lilac scarf, with feet to one side, echoing the fishtail of the mermaid, was nevertheless the one that

1038 I have discussed the various repetitions involved in editing and installing in “What Is Repeated, What Is Changing?” (Arlander 2012a, chap. 11.5, 343–49).

1039 *Year of the Rat—Mermaid 1–2*, 2009, two-channel video installation (34 min. 33 sec.), DV 4:3; *Day and Night of the Rat—Mermaid*, 2009 (11 min. 10 sec.), DV 4:3.

I transferred to other shores. Sometimes I returned repeatedly to the same place for one or two weeks, as in Tunisia<sup>1040</sup> or on Cape Verde.<sup>1041</sup> Sometimes I made images enacted in one session, almost like still images, in locations ranging from Jeju Island in Korea to the coast of Norway, sitting not only on rocks and boulders but also in the water or even in snow.<sup>1042</sup> The most fascinating variations involved sitting next to the actual sculpture in Copenhagen, which by accident happened on her ninety-fifth birthday,<sup>1043</sup> and sitting on flat earth next to the water basins in a salt plant.<sup>1044</sup> What emerged as the “tune” to be transposed in these experiments was, besides the lilac scarf that remained the same, the posture of sitting with the feet to the left of the body.<sup>1045</sup>

A similar type of physical transposition of a gesture until it reached the limits of recognisability took place with riding a buoy, which was transformed into riding a rock or even a piece of wood,<sup>1046</sup> as discussed in a text<sup>1047</sup> in which I arrived at two observations or claims: first, a gesture cannot be understood separately from its context or environment; and, second, a gesture will change and transform in reaction to its context or environment. Continuing

1040 *On the Mediterranean Shore 1-4*, 2009, four-channel (or two-channel) video installation (10 min.), DV 4:3.

1041 *On the Atlantic Shore 1-2*, 2009, two-channel video installation (23 min. 17 sec.), DV 4:3.

1042 *Mermaid Variations 1-9*, 2009, three-channel video installation (3 min. 58 sec.), DV 4:3.

1043 *The Little Mermaid—95th Birthday*, 2009 (5 min. 10 sec.), DV 4:3.

1044 *Sal 1-2*, 2010, two-channel video installation, HD 16:9 (26 min. 17 sec.); and *Sal 1-2*, 2010 (26 min. 17 sec.), HD 16:9.

1045 I have discussed working with the idea of the mermaid in the salt plant in detail in Arlander (2012c, chap. 13, 377-95).

1046 *Year of the Ox—Riding a Buoy*, 2010 (50 min.), HD 16:9; *Year of the Ox—On Rock and Wood*, 2010 (50 min.), HD 16:9; and *Year of the Ox—Riding a Buoy* and *Year of the Ox—On Rock and Wood*, 2010, two-channel video installation (50 min.), HD 16:9.

1047 Arlander 2014c.

from that, we could state the obvious: a transposition will require some form of transformation or change to be a transposition rather than a simple relocation. During the same Year of the Ox I tried, for instance, to translate walking in circles chained to a ring on the ground into stretching and circling with the above-ground roots of Acacia plants on sand dunes, and the action was indeed transformed.<sup>1048</sup> It is questionable whether a viewer would recognise the “tune,” the link between the works, besides the scarf.

One of the gestures I enjoyed most repeating in various versions was standing next to a juniper or “holding hands” with the bush covered by a green scarf. I have discussed the experience of holding on to a juniper and standing next to a bird shed<sup>1049</sup> in detail elsewhere.<sup>1050</sup> These actions performed weekly on the island were relocated to various places that I visited during that year, resulting in works based on either one image with a juniper-like tree or bush<sup>1051</sup> or a series of images with junipers or juniper-like plants in a specific location,<sup>1052</sup> even in works without anything resembling junipers.<sup>1053</sup>

1048 *Year of the Ox—Walking in Circles*, 2010 (90 min.), HD 16:9; *Year of the Ox—Walking in Circles (short)*, 2010 (19 min. 16 sec.), HD 16:9; *Annual Rings*, 2010 (11 min. 12 sec.), HD 16:9; and *Sketches and Exercises*, 2010 (60 min. 58 sec.), DV 4:3.

1049 *Year of the Rabbit—With a Juniper*, 2012 (20 min. 10 sec.), HD 16:9; *Year of the Rabbit—By the Bird Shed*, 2012 (20 min. 10 sec.), HD 16:9; and *Year of the Rabbit—With a Juniper & Year of the Rabbit—By the Bird Shed*, 2012, two-channel video installation (20 min. 10 sec.), HD 16:9.

1050 Arlander 2015a, 2015b.

1051 *With a Juniper—Crete*, 2012 (6 min. 54 sec.), HD 16:9; *Holding Hands with a Juniper—Osaka*, 2012 (4 min. 8 sec.), HD 16:9; *Holding Hands with a Juniper—Seili*, 2012 (7 min. 11 sec.), HD 16:9; *Becoming Juniper in Rain*, 2012 (3 min. 52 sec.), HD 16:9.

1052 *Holding Hands with Junipers—Ibiza*, 2012 (15 min. 6 sec.), HD 16:9; *Becoming Juniper—Ismolos*, 2012 (19 min. 45 sec.), HD 16:9; *Becoming Juniper—Ses Salines*, 2012 (6 min. 44 sec.), HD 16:9; *Becoming Juniper—Rovaniemi*, 2012 (37 min.), HD 16:9; *Becoming Juniper—Kalvola*, 2012 (16 min. 50 sec.), HD 16:9; *Becoming Juniper—Kökar*, 2012 (30 min. 42 sec.), HD 16:9.

1053 *Looking for a Juniper—Claire Island*, 2013 (15 min. 19 sec.), HD 16:9.

In most of the brief descriptions attached to these works I speak of “spending time with junipers”, if not explicitly “holding hands with junipers”. I performed with junipers in Kalvola, Kõkar, Clare Island, Osaka, Seili, and Crete in 2011 and in Ismolás, Rovaniemi, Ibiza, and Ses Salines in 2012, as well as in some other places, from where the performances were never edited and published. In a similar manner, the action of swinging in the Year of the Snake was easy to transfer, simply by hanging the swing from various types of trees, although I often tried to find some form of shore to increase the resemblance to the site on the island. Sometimes only one tree served as the basis for a work,<sup>1054</sup> sometimes a group of related trees were combined in one work;<sup>1055</sup> the variations are named after the locations – Porches, Split, Mugoni, Tiburon – except for the works compiled from images (in silhouette) from Croatia and Sardinia.

Some years, however, I made other experiments, which are not recognisable as transpositions or even variations of the theme of that year, since they followed their own logic, such as the works combined into “The Steaming Earth”<sup>1056</sup> during the Year of the Tiger, which played with volcanic steam. The use of a white scarf coupled with something white in the environment could be seen as a “tune,” although I swapped the rough off-white blanket used on Harakka for a soft white shawl to travel with. Some years I did not make experiments with the action of the year anywhere else, no transpositions at all, as was the case with the Year of the Dragon.

On the basis of the examples above, all of which involve some relocation with transformation, the term “transposition” seems to

1054 *Swinging in Porches*, 2014 (2 min. 27 sec.), HD 16:9; *Swinging in Tiburon*, 2014 (12 min. 29 sec.), HD 16:9; *Swinging in Mugoni*, 2014 (11 min. 46 sec.), HD 16:9.

1055 *Swinging in Split*, 2014 (4 min. 6 sec.), HD 16:9; *Swinging in Silhouette 1*, 2014 (6 min. 15 sec.), HD 16:9; *Swinging in Silhouette 2*, 2014 (7 min. 21 sec.), HD 16:9.

1056 *Vulcano 1-3*, 2011 (8 min. 15 sec.), HD 16:9; *Krysvik 1-5*, 2011 (20 min. 15 sec.), HD 16:9; *Furnas 1-3*, 2011 (10 min. 40 sec.), HD 16:9.

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be useful in at least two senses: on the one hand, to describe a tool in artistic decision making, an action where a “tune” or an entanglement of components is transposed to other circumstances to create new work; and, on the other hand, to describe the “tune,” which emerges as the result of repetitions with a difference, and can often be recognised only with hindsight. The idea of a recognisable “tune” is not always useful, though: transposing a gesture or an action can sometimes be more interesting as a working tool exactly when the “tune” is not supposed to be recognisable. Barad’s notion of entanglement is useful in specifying the rather metaphorical use of the word “tune” I have here used to describe that “something” that is transposed or produced by the act of transposition. The idea that changing some component of an entanglement necessary leads to changes in the others helps describe some of the variations generated and explain some of the difficulties as well. In the example of calling the dragon, the complexity of the entanglement was less conducive to translocations than the simpler entanglement of scarf and juniper, which invited repetition with a difference and generated a variety of transpositions. What is transposed and what is discarded, what generates further transpositions and what is merely repeated will shift according to the situation and the entanglement at hand. In any case, it seems that (a) working with repetition and relocation invites transpositions and (b) transposition is useful in describing artistic practices that involve repetition with a difference. Whether the term is useful for articulating artistic research practices in a more general sense remains to be explored.

Lataa Google-kartta  
Download Google map



**1. Year of the Horse**

Portaikon yläpäässä tolpassa  
Top of the staircase on a pole

**2. Year of the Goat**

Silokalliolla veden rajassa  
On a cliff at the edge of water

**3. Year of the Monkey**

Portaikon alapäässä kaitteessa  
Bottom of the staircase rail

**4. Year of the Roost**

Kallion reunassa koivujen vieressä  
On the edge of a cliff, next to birches

**5. Year of the Dog**

Kivessä männyn juurella  
On a rock, at the foot of a pine tree

**6. Year of the Pig**

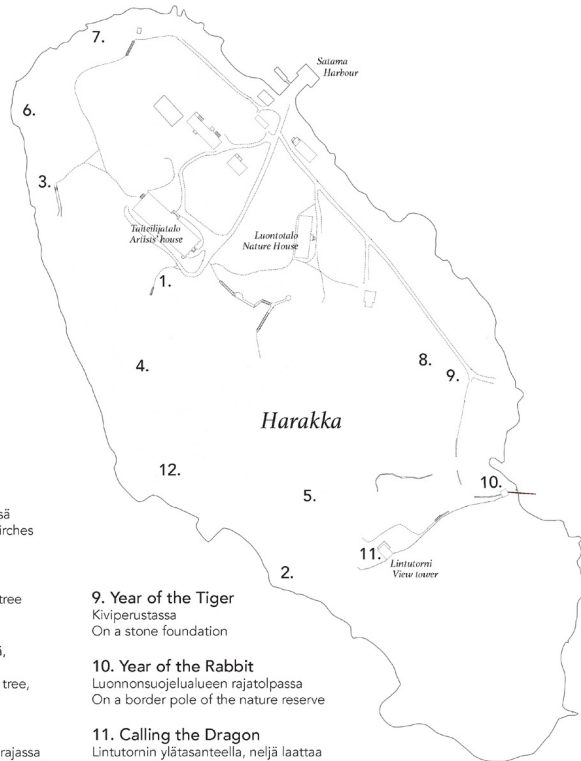
Kalliollla pienen pihlajan vieressä,  
Uuninsuun yläpuolella  
On a rock next to a small rowan tree,  
above 'Uuninsuu'

**7. Year of the Rat**

Vaaleanpunainen iso kivi veden rajassa  
Light pink large rock close to the shoreline

**8. Year of the Ox**

Rautarengas kalliolla  
Iron ring in a rock



**9. Year of the Tiger**

Kiviperustassa  
On a stone foundation

**10. Year of the Rabbit**

Luonnonsuojelualueen rajatolpassa  
On a border pole of the nature reserve

**11. Calling the Dragon**

Lintutornin ylätasanteella, neljä laattaa  
Upper deck of the view tower, four plates

**12. Year of the Snake**

Nuotiopaikalla meren puoleisessa penkissä  
At the campfire site on the sea-facing bench

Figure 35. *Animal Years* (2023)

# AN AFTERTHOUGHT

When writing these notes *Animal Years* are having a come-back of sorts. A selection of them was part of the exhibition Artists' Island 2023 through QR codes printed on small plates of aluminium fastened on rails and other suitable places on the island, near the actual locations where the videos were performed and recorded in 2002-2014. Each QR code leads to a website where the video can be watched on location, with a smartphone – what else. Today (in 2024) the QR codes are still there as a semi-permanent work and if all goes well, they will remain on the island for a while.<sup>1057</sup> When looking at the videos now, it seems obvious that video technology has changed faster than the landscape in most cases, fortunately, and largely due to the island being a protected area. Revisiting the old works one more time in this manner also highlighted the passing of time, how distance in time increases daily and makes old works more and more obsolete and incomprehensible. However, time also makes those video records valuable as testimonies of what the landscape used to look like in the beginning of the third millennium on this island on the northern shore of the Gulf of Finland. Revisiting old places, works and texts is both stimulating and exasperating. In a similar way I hope these texts might have a double function, on the one hand reminding the reader of the contextual limitations of text and thought as well as artistic research and on the other hand stimulating further explorations, more accurate and relevant for current and future concerns.

1057 See brief description of *Animal Years* <https://harakka.fi/annette-arlander-animal-years-elainvuodet-2004-2013/>

## Images

- Figure 1. *Year of the Horse (Sitting on a Rock) 1 & 2* (2003)  
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Figure 3. *How to perform landscape by repetition?* (2016)  
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Figure 34. *Holding Hands with Junipers – Ibiza* (2012)  
Figure 35. *Animal Years* (2023)

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# Appendixes

## Appendix 1. Links to video works

### Animal Years

The following video works documenting a year approximately once a week in the same place on the island are available through AV-arkki, Centre for Finnish Media Art. A selection of works for screening is compiled into *Animal Years I* (2003-2009) (86 min. 47 sec.) <https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/animal-years-i/> and *Animal Years II* (2010-2014) (85 min. 22 sec.) <https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/animal-years-ii/>

### Year of the Horse

*Year of the Horse (Sitting on a Rock)* 2003 (12 min. 28 sec.) DV 4:3

<https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/hevosen-vuosi-istun-kivella/>

*Year of the Horse – Day and Night of the Goat (installation)* 2003 (12 min. 47 sec.) DV 4:3

<https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/hevosen-vuosi-vuohen-vuorokausi-installaatio/>

### Year of the Goat

*Year of the Goat – Harakka Shore 1-3* 2004 (40 min.) DV 4:3

<https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/vuohen-vuosi-harakan-ranta-1-3/>

*Year of the Goat – Harakka Shore (Installation)* 2004 (13 min. 28 sec.) DV 4:3

<https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/vuohen-vuosi-harakan-ranta-installaatio/>

### Year of the Monkey

*Year of the Monkey 1-2* 2005 (7 min.) DV 4:3

<https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/apinan-vuosi-1-2/>

*Year of the Monkey (installation)* 2005 (3 min. 40 sec.) DV 4:3

<https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/apinan-vuosi-installaatio/>

*Year of the Monkey – Tomtebo* 2005 (22 min.) DV 4:3

<https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/apinan-vuosi-tomtebo/>

### Year of the Rooster

*Year of the Rooster (installation)* 2006 (32 min.) DV 4:3

<https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/kukon-vuosi-installaatio/>

*Year of the Rooster* 2006 (31 min.) DV 4:3

<https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/kukon-vuosi/>

The same year, elsewhere:

*Sitting on a Birch* 2006 (24 min. 15 sec.) DV 4:3

<https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/istun-koivulla/>

*Secret Garden 1+2* 2006 (24 min.) DV 4:3

<https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/salainen-puutarha-1-2/>

*Secret Garden I* 2006 (24 min.) DV 4:3

<https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/salainen-puutarha-1/>

### **Year of the Dog**

*Year of the Dog – Sitting in a Tree* 2007 (8 min. 10 sec.) DV 4:3

<https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/koiran-vuosi-istun-puussa/>

*Shadow of a Pine I, II, III, IV* 2007 (16 min.) DV 4:3

<https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/mannyn-varjo-i-ii-iii-iv/>

*Shadow of a Pine I, Shadow of a Pine II* 2007 (16 min.) DV 4:3

<https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/mannyn-varjo-i-mannyn-varjo-ii/>

The same year, elsewhere:

*Year of the Dog in Kalvola – Calendar* 2007 (4 min. 10 sec.) DV 4:3

<https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/koiran-vuosi-kalvolassa-kalenteri/>

*Year of the Dog in Kalvola – Calendar I-2* 2007 (4 min. 20 sec.) DV 4:3

<https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/koiran-vuosi-kalvolassa-kalenteri-1-2/>

### **Year of the Pig**

*Year of the Pig – Weather vane I (short)* 2008 (23 min.) DV 4:3

<https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/year-of-the-pig-weather-vane-i-short/>

*Year of the Pig – Sitting on a Cliff I-II (short)* 2008 (46 min.) DV 4:3

<https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/year-of-the-pig-sitting-on-the-cliff-i-ii-short/>

*Year of the Pig – Installation* 2008 (82 min.) DV 4:3

<https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/year-of-the-pig-installation/>

*Under the Spruce I-III* 2008 (28 min.) DV 4:3

<https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/under-the-spruce-i-iii/>

### **Year of the Rat**

*Year of the Rat – Mermaid I-2* 2009 (34 min. 33 sec.) DV 4:3

<https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/year-of-the-rat-mermaid-1-2/>

*Year of the Rat – Uphill – Downhill* 2009 (19 min. 12 sec.) DV 4:3

<https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/year-of-the-rat-uphill-downhill/>

*Year of the Rat – Dripping (short)* 2009 (6 min. 47 sec.) DV 4:3

<https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/year-of-the-rat-dripping-short/>

### **Year of the Ox**

*Year of the Ox – Riding a Buoy* 2010 (50 min.) HD 16:9

<https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/year-of-the-ox-riding-a-buoy/>

*Year of the Ox – Sitting in the Wall* 2010 (42 min. 44 sec.) HD 16:9

<https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/year-of-the-ox-sitting-in-the-wall/>

*Year of the Ox – Walking in Circles* 2010 (90 min.) HD 16:9

<https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/year-of-the-ox-walking-in-circles/>

*Year of the Ox – Walking in Circles (short)* 2010 (19 min. 16 sec.) HD 16:9

<https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/year-of-the-ox-walking-in-circles-short/>

*Year of the Ox – In a Yoke 1-2* 2010 (5 min. 10 sec.) HD 16:9  
<https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/year-of-the-ox-in-a-yoke-1-2/>

### **Year of the Tiger**

*Year of the Tiger 1-2 (long)* 2012 (87 min.) HD 16:9  
<https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/year-of-the-tiger-1-2-long/>  
*Year of the Tiger* 2011 (28 min. 19 sec.) HD 16:9  
<https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/year-of-the-tiger/>  
*Round of the Tiger* 2011 (23 min. 11 sec.) HD 16:9  
<https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/round-of-the-tiger/>

### **Year of the Rabbit**

*Year of the Rabbit – With a Juniper* 2012 (20 min. 10 sec.) HD 16:9  
<https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/year-of-the-rabbit-with-a-juniper/>  
*Year of the Rabbit – By the Birdshed* 2012 (20 min. 10 sec.) HD 16:9  
<https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/year-of-the-rabbit-by-the-bird-shed/>

### **Year of the Dragon**

*Year of the Dragon Waving (A & B)* 2013 (50 min. 13 sec.) HD 16:9  
<https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/year-of-the-dragon-waving-a-b/>  
*Calling the Dragon (North, East, South & West)* 2013 (46 min. 50 sec.) HD 16:9  
<https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/calling-the-dragon-north-east-south-west/>  
*Calling the Dragon 1-4 (Bell)* 2013 (6 min. 28 sec.) HD 16:9  
<https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/calling-the-dragon-1-4-bell/>

### **Year of the Snake**

*Year of the Snake – Swinging (installation)* 2014 (36 min. 30 sec.) HD 16:9  
<https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/year-of-the-snake-swinging-installation/>  
*Year of the Snake – By the Swing* 2014 (50 min. 41 sec.) HD 16:9  
<https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/year-of-the-snake-by-the-swing/>  
*Year of the Snake – Watching the Harbour* 2014 (55 min. 3 sec.) HD 16:9  
<https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/year-of-the-snake-watching-the-harbour/>  
*Year of the Snake – Swinging Along (mix)* 2014 (3 min. 30 sec.) HD 16:9  
<https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/year-the-snake-swinging-along-mix/>  
*Year of the Snake – Swinging Along* 2014 (26 min. 30 sec.) HD 16:9  
<https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/year-of-the-snake-swinging-along/>  
*Year of the Snake – In the Swing* 2014 (16 min. 8 sec.) HD 16:9  
<https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/year-of-the-snake-in-the-swing/>

### **Year of the Horse**

*Year of the Horse – Calendar 1-2* 2015 (11 min. 10 sec.) HD 16:9  
<https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/year-of-the-horse-calendar-1-2/>  
 Miniature versions available on Vimeo:  
*Year of the Snake (mini)* 2014 (3 min. 6 sec.) HD 16:9 <https://vimeo.com/88325298>

*Year of the Rabbit – With a Juniper (short)* 2012 (6 min. 50 sec.) HD 16:9 <https://vimeo.com/79231798>

*Year of the Tiger (mini)* 2014 (2011) (6 min. 19 sec.) HD 16:9 <https://vimeo.com/177443565>

*Year of the Pig – Weather vane (mini)* 2008 (4 min. 42 sec.) DV 4:3 <https://vimeo.com/79225240>

### **Animal Days and Nights**

The following video works documenting a day and a night each year, or sometimes during the following year in the same place, with two- or three-hour intervals, are available through AV-arkki, Centre for Finnish Media Art. A selection of works for screening is compiled into *Animal Days and Nights I* (2003-2009) (56 min.sec.) <https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/animal-days-and-nights-i-2003-2009/> and *Animal Days and Nights II* (2010-2014) (55 min. sec.) <https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/animal-days-and-nights-ii-2010-2014/>

*Sitting on a Rock (Rock with Text)* 2003 (20-21.4.2003, 6 min. 20 sec.) DV 4:3 <https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/istun-kivella-rock-with-text/>

*Day and Night of the Goat – Easter* 2003 (20-21.4.2003) (6 min. 20 sec.) DV 4:3 <https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/vuohen-vuorokausi-paasiainen/>

*Day and Night of the Monkey (Installation)* 2004 (10-11.4.2004) (13 min. 28 sec.) DV 4:3 <https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/apinan-vuorokausi-installaatio/>

*Day and Night of the Monkey* 2004 (10-11.4.2004) (13 min. 28 sec.) DV 4:3 <https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/apinan-vuorokausi/>

*Day and Night of the Rooster 1-2* 2005 (24-25.6.2005) (13 min.) DV 4:3 <https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/kukon-vuorokausi-1-2/>

*Day and Night of the Rooster (installation)* 2005 (24-25.6.2005) (1 min. 14 sec.) DV 4:3 <https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/kukon-vuorokausi-installaatio/>

*Christmas of the Rooster 1-3 (installation)* 2006 (25-26.12.2005) (24 min.) DV 4:3 <https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/kukon-joulu-1-3-installaatio/>

*Christmas of the Rooster – Walk (trailer)* 2006 (25-26.12.2005) (1 min. 54 sec.) DV 4:3 <https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/kukon-joulu-kavely-esittelypatka/>

*Christmas of the Rooster – Tomten* 2006 (25-26.12.2005) (18 min. 32 sec.) DV 4:3 <https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/kukon-joulu-kotitonttu/>

*Day and Night of the Dog* 2007 (20-21.10 2006) (4 min.) DV 4:3 <https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/koiran-vuorokausi/>

*Day and Night of the Pig I* 2008 (22-23.9.2008) (8 min.) DV 4:3 <https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/day-and-night-of-the-pig-i/>

*Day and Night of the Rat – Mermaid* 2009 (22-23.12.2008) (11 min. 10 sec.) DV 4:3  
<https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/day-and-night-of-the-rat-mermaid/>

*Day and Night of the Ox* 2010 (1-2.5.2009) (14 min. 15 sec.) HD 16:9  
<https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/day-and-night-of-the-ox/>

*Day and Night of the Tiger* 2011 (24-25.6.2011) (9 min. 44 sec.) HD 16:9  
<https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/day-and-night-of-the-tiger/>

*Day and Night of the Tiger 1-2* 2011 (24-25.6.2011) (7 min. 43 sec.) HD 16:9  
<https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/day-and-night-of-the-tiger-1-2/>

*Day and Night of the Rabbit – In the Year of the Dragon 1 & 2* 2012 (16-17.6.2012) (40 min. 20 sec.) HD 16:9  
<https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/day-and-night-of-the-rabbit-in-the-year-of-the-dragon-1-2/>

*Day and Night of the Dragon 1-3* 2013 (2-3.2.2013) (19 min. 30 sec.) HD 16:9  
<https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/day-and-night-of-the-dragon-1-3/>

*Day and Night of the Snake – Swinging* 2014 (6 min. 46 sec.) HD 16:9  
<https://www.av-arkki.fi/works/day-and-night-of-the-snake-swinging/>

## Appendix 2. Video essays

Video essays on *Animal Years* (2003-2014), some with text, some without, some published, some not:

How to perform landscape with repetition? (7 min.)  
<https://www.researchcatalogue.net/profile/show-work?work=403267>  
 Published as “How to perform landscape with repetition?” In *Icehole* #6 [http://icehole.fi/vol-6\\_issue2\\_2017/video-by-annette-arlander/](http://icehole.fi/vol-6_issue2_2017/video-by-annette-arlander/)

The Shore Revisited (30 min. 24 sec.)  
<https://www.researchcatalogue.net/profile/show-work?work=403262>  
 Published as “The Shore Revisited”. *Journal of Embodied Research*, 1(1), 4 (30:34) 2018.  
<http://doi.org/10.16995/jer.8>

The Cliff Revisited (25 min. 40 sec.)  
<https://www.researchcatalogue.net/profile/show-work?work=403242>  
 Transformed into “Breathing and Growth - performing with plants”, *Journal of Dance and Somatic Practices*. Volume 10. Number 2.2018, 175-187.

The Shore with the Birches Revisited (16 min. 28 sec.)

<https://www.researchcatalogue.net/profile/show-work?work=499621>

Published as “Return to the Site of the Year of the Rooster” in Annette Arlander, Hanna Järvinen, Tero Nauha and Pilvi Porkola (eds.) *How to Do Things with Performance?*, *Ruukku* #11 (2019) <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/470471/470472>

The Pine Revisited (16 min. 36 sec.)

<https://www.researchcatalogue.net/profile/show-work?work=452458>

Presented as part of “Regurgitated Perspectives – Performance” Annette Arlander, Hanna Järvinen, Tero Nauha and Pilvi Porkola. In Geoff Cox, Hannah Drayson, Azadeh Fatehrad, Allister Gall, Laura Hopes, Anya Lewin, Andrew Prior, (eds.) *Proceedings of the 9th SAR International Conference on Artistic Research, University of Plymouth, April 11th-13th, 2018*, 299-311. <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/512748/512749>

The Pine on the Shore Revisited (17 min.)

<https://www.researchcatalogue.net/profile/show-work?work=512220>

Referred to in “The Shadow of a Pine Tree. Authorship, Agency and Performing beyond the Human.” In Ewa Bal & Mateusz Chaberski (eds.) *Situated Knowing. Epistemic Perspectives on Performance*. London & New York: Routledge 2020, 157-170.

The City Skyline Revisited (23 min. 48 sec.)

<https://www.researchcatalogue.net/profile/show-work?work=727158>

Published as “The City Skyline Revisited – From networks to trans-corporeality” in *Research in Arts & Education* 1/2020, 37-55 <https://journal.fi/rae/article/view/119301>

The Spruce Revisited (28 min. 50 sec.)

<https://www.researchcatalogue.net/profile/show-work?work=521487>

Presented as part of “How to do things with performance in alliance with things, concepts, bodies or plants”, with *How to Do Things with Performance?* project at the conference *Alliances and Commonalities*, Stockholm University of the Arts 25-27.10.2018.

The Cliff Revisited (Year of the Pig) (25 min)

<https://www.researchcatalogue.net/profile/show-work?work=880327>

not presented.

Revisiting the Rock (39 min. 50 sec.)

<https://www.researchcatalogue.net/profile/show-work?work=953850>

Published as “Revisiting the Rock – Self-diffraction as a Strategy”, *Global Performance Studies* 3.2. (2020) <https://gps.psi-web.org/issue-3-2/gps-3-2-6/>

Returning to the Stairs (20 min.)

<https://www.researchcatalogue.net/profile/show-work?work=953843>

Published in “Returning to the Stairs – on temporality and self-portraiture”. *PARTake: The Journal of Performance as Research* Vol.5 No.1 (2022). <https://partakejournal.org/index.php/partake/article/view/1487>

Revisiting the Rusty Ring (21 min. 20 sec.)

<https://www.researchcatalogue.net/profile/show-work?work=592843>

Published as “Revisiting the Rusty Ring – Ecofeminism Today?” *PARTake Journal* Vol 3. No.1. (2020) <https://doi.org/10.33011/partake.v3i1.473>

Remembering the Year of the Tiger (32 min. 36 sec.)

<https://www.researchcatalogue.net/profile/show-work?work=651844>

Published as an appendix to “Remembering the Year of the Tiger – Image, Memory, Site” in Tua Helve, Outi Lahtinen & Marja Silde (eds.) *Näyttämö & Tutkimus 8: Muisti, Arkisto ja Esitys* [Stage & Research 8: Memory, Archive and Performance] Teatterintutkimuksen seura, 292-318. <https://journal.fi/teats/article/view/122815>

Revisiting the Juniper (21 min. 50 sec.)

<https://www.researchcatalogue.net/profile/show-work?work=662339>

Published as an appendix to “HTDTWP presents: The Transformative Potential of Performance” Annette Arlander, Hanna Järvinen, Tero Nauha and Pilvi Porkola in Leena Rouhiainen (ed.) *Proceedings of CARPA 6 Artistic Research Performs and Transforms: Bridging Practices, Contexts, Traditions & Futures* Nivel 13 (2020) <https://nivel.teak.fi/carpa6/annette-arlander-hanna-jarvinen-tero-nauha-and-pilvi-porkola-htdtwp-presents-the-transformative-potential-of-performance/>

Calling the Dragon Again (28 min.)

<https://www.researchcatalogue.net/profile/show-work?work=723869>

“Calling for Zoe as a Utopian Gesture”. *Ruukku – studies in artistic research* #17 Everyday Utopias and Artistic Research. 2021. <https://doi.org/10.22501/ruu.1112890>

Revisiting the Aspen Tree (40 min.)

<https://www.researchcatalogue.net/profile/show-work?work=834268>

Published as “Revisiting the Aspen Tree.” *Screenworks* 13.1. December 2022 <https://www.screenworks.org.uk/archive/volume-13-1/revisiting-the-aspen-tree>

### Appendix 3. Publications and presentations related to Animal Years

#### **Blogs and websites (related to Animal Years)**

Annette Arlander (personal website) <https://annettearlander.com>

How to Do Things with Performance? (2016-2021)

<https://howtodothingswithperformance.wordpress.com>

Year of the Snake Swinging (2013-2014) <http://aa-yearofthesnake.blogspot.com>

Calling the Dragon (2012-2013) <http://aa-callingthedragon.blogspot.com/>

With a Juniper (2011-2012) <http://aa-katajankanssa.blogspot.com/>

### **Lectures (related to Animal Years)**

“Revisiting” at Tutke post doc event on digital possibilities, 28.1.2021.

“Maisema, materia ja muutos. Harakan saaren luontokulttuuria dokumentoimassa.”

[Landscape, Matter and Change. Documenting the Natureculture of Harakka Island] talk at the symposium Harakka Island and the Sea 27-28 April 2019.

Presentation with the research project How to Do Things with Performance? at the post doc seminar of Performing Arts Research Centre, University of the Arts Helsinki, Theatre Academy 26.10.2017.

“The Shore revisited”, presentation with How to Do Things with Performance? research project at New Performance Turku Festival 7.10.2017.

“Audiences Swinging Together”, presentation at the seminar organised by Nordic Performance Art – Reaching a New Audience in Munkemose, Odense on Friday 1.9.2017.

“Artistic Research and/as interdisciplinarity – Swinging Together”. Lecture for choreography students at University of the Arts Theatre Academy 16.1.2017.

“At the outskirts of the city”, at the seminar on Site-specific Performance and the City at the New Performance Turku Festival, 5.10.2016.

“Teoksesta dokumentiksi ja dokumentista teokseksi” (From Artwork to Document, From Document to Artwork), seminar on documentation of performance art, Arts Promotion Centre of Southwestern Finland, Turku 11.8.2014.

“Becoming Juniper – Performing Landscape as Artistic Research”, lecture in the series Ökologie und die Künste, Internationales Graduiertenkolleg InterArt, Freie Universität Berlin 2.5.2013.

### **Conference papers and seminar presentations (related to Animal Years)**

“Precarious Playground”, introductory walk & talk; screening of “Returning to the Stairs” at NSU (Nordic Summer University) meeting Helsinki 26-27.7.2020.

Presentation with How to Do Things with Performance? project at Tutke Spring Days 28-29.4.2020.

Workshop with How to Do Things with Performance? project for doctoral candidates (online) at University of the Arts Helsinki 14-15.4.2020.

“The Human in Performance?” panel presented with the How to Do Things with Performance? project at PARSE conference 2019 Human in Gothenburg 13-15.11.2019.

“Elastic Connections – Creativity, Resistance, Resilience: A Long Table by the How to Do Things with Performance? research project” at PSi #25 in Calgary 4-7.7.2019.

“Miten tehdä asioita esityksellä -hankkeen kuulumisia - ‘Revisiting’ metodina” [News from the How to Do Things with Performance? project – ‘revisiting’ as method] at

- the Spring Day of the Finnish Society for Theatre Research 26.4.2019.
- “Long table on productive gaps – How to do things with performance?” with How to Do Things with Performance? project at the 10<sup>th</sup> SAR International Conference on Artistic Research, Zurich University of the Arts, 21-23.3.2019.
- “The Rusty Ring Revisited – ecofeminism today?”, presentation at Research Day IV Performance and Feminism, organized by How to Do Things with Performance? project in Helsinki 20.3.2019.
- “Revisiting the Rock”, presentation at Research Day III: Performance Pedagogy organized by How to Do Things with Performance? project at University of the Arts Theatre Academy, 16.11.2018.
- “How to do things with performance in alliance with things, concepts, bodies or plants”, with How To Do Things With Performance? -project at the conference Alliances and Commonalities, Stockholm University of the Arts 25-27.10.2018.
- “Migrating concepts in performance: Authorship, agency and performing in Year of the Dog - Sitting in a Tree” in the panel “Migrating concepts in performance” with How to Do Things with Performance? at IFTR (International Federation for Theatre Research) conference Theatre and Migration in Belgrad 19-23.7.2018.
- “Revisiting the City Skyline”, presentation in the panel “Networking Finland, Malta, Korea – a performative panel across time and space” with How to Do Things with Performance? at PSi (Performance Studies International) #24 in Daegu, Chorea 3-6.7.2018.
- “Authorship, Agency and Performing – in Finnish” in the panel “What is Performativity in Finnish?” with How to Do Things with Performance? project at Cultural Mobility of Performance and Performativity Studies International Conference, Kraków 28-30.5.2018.
- “Return to the site of the Year of the Rooster”, presentation at Research Day II organised by How to Do Things with Performance? project at University of the Arts Helsinki Theatre Academy 2.3. 2018.
- “The Cliff Revisited”, at the Research Day organised by the research project How to Do Things with Performance?, University of the Arts Helsinki, Theatre Academy, 8.11.2017.
- “How to do things by performing with plants” in the panel organised by the research project How to Do Things with Performance? at the IFTR (International Federation for Theatre Research) conference Unstable Geographies – Multiple Theatricalities in Sao Paulo 10-14.7.2017.
- “How to do things with performance – Performing with plants (first attempts)” in the Artistic Research Working Group at PSi #23 Overflow (Performance Studies International conference) in Hamburg June 8-11.2017.
- “Accessing Performance” - a two-day event organized together with Hanna Järvinen, Pilvi Porkola and Tero Nauha, Camino Events at the Artistic Research Pavillion in Venice 17-18.5.2017.
- “What is Given?” a workshop together with Tero Nauha, Hanna Järvinen and Pilvi Porkola at the SAR (Society for Artistic Research) conference Please Specify! in Helsinki 28-29.4.2017.

- “How to perform landscape by repetition”, presentation at the Kick Off seminar of the Academy of Finland funded research project How to Do Things with Performance? at Theatre Academy, University of the Arts Helsinki, 4.10.2016.
- “Working with the Weather”, paper at PSI #22 (Performance Studies international) Performance Climates, University of Melbourne, 6-9.7.2016
- “Performing Landscape - Swinging Together”, presentation at Transversal Practices: Matter, Ecology, Relationality. VI Conference of New Materialisms in Melbourne 27-29.9.2015.
- “Year of the Horse Revisited”, performance-presentation in the Porous Studio at Performance Studies International PSI #20 at Shanghai Theatre Academy, China 4-8.7. 2014.
- “Calling the Dragon – avant-garde or not?” paper at Performance Studies International PSI #20 at Shanghai Theatre Academy, China 4-8.7.2014.
- “From interaction to intra-action in performing landscape”, paper at V Annual Conference on New Materialisms, New Materialist Methodologies – Gender, Politics, The Digital in Barcelona 25-26.9. 2014.
- “Re-routing a Performance Practice - Visiting a Juniper, Calling the Dragon”, presentation at the IFTR/FIRT Conference Rerouting Theatre in Barcelona 22.-26.7.2013.
- “How Time Takes Place or Performing Landscape for Years”, paper at Performance Studies International PSI #19 at Stanford University, California 26.-30.6.2013.

### Peer-reviewed research articles (related to Animal Years)

- “Miten julkaista esitys toisin? – Miten tehdä asioita esityksellä -tutkimushankeen kokemuksia konferenssisesitysten julkaisemisesta” in Taidelähtöinen toisinjulkaiseminen (forthcoming)
- “Kertaa ja koosta’ – työmenetelmä ja julkaisumuoto” In Järvinen, Hanna (ed.) *Miten tehdä esityksellä?* [How to do with performance?] Vastapaino 2024, 191-224.
- “Revisiting the Aspen Tree.” *Screenworks* 13.1. December 2022 <https://www.screenworks.org.uk/archive/volume-13-1/revisiting-the-aspen-tree>
- “Returning to the Stairs – on temporality and self-portraiture”. *PARTake: The Journal of Performance as Research* Vol.5 No.1 (2022). <https://partakejournal.org/index.php/partake/article/view/1487>
- “Calling for Zoe as a Utopian Gesture”. *Ruukku – studies in artistic research* #17 Everyday Utopias and Artistic Research. 2021. <https://doi.org/10.22501/ruu.1112890>
- “Remembering the Year of the Tiger – Image, Memory, Site.” Tua Helve, Outi Lahtinen & Marja Silde (eds.) *Näyttämö & Tutkimus 8: Muisti, Arkisto ja Esitys* [Stage & Research 8: Memory, Archive and Performance] Teatterintutkimuksen seura, 292-318. <https://journal.fi/teats/article/view/122815>
- “Revisiting the Rock – Self-diffraction as a Strategy.” *Global Performance Studies* 3.2. (2020) <https://gps.psi-web.org/article/view/57/55/>
- “Revisiting the Rusty Ring – Ecofeminism Today?” *PARTake Journal* vol 3 no 1 2020. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.33011/partake.v3i1.473>

- “The City Skyline Revisited – From networks to trans-corporeality”, *Research in Arts & Education* 1/2020, 37-55. <https://journal.fi/rae/article/view/119301>
- “Return to the Site of the Year of the Rooster”. In Annette Arlander, Hanna Järvinen, Tero Nauha and Pilvi Porkola (eds.) *How to Do Things with Performance?*, *Ruukku – Studies in artistic research* 11. 2019. <http://ruukku-journal.fi/en/issues/11>
- “Process as Performance or Variations of Swinging”. In Hetty Blades & Emma Meehan (eds.) *Performing Process: Sharing Dance and Choreographic Practice*. Intellect Books. 2018, 99-118.
- “Calling the Dragon, Holding Hands with Junipers: Transpositions in Practice.” In Schwab, Michael (ed.) *Transpositions - Aesthetico-Epistemic Operators in Artistic Research*. Orpheus institute series, Leuven University Press, 2018, 41-58. <https://lup.be/book/transpositions/>
- “The Shore Revisited.” *Journal of Embodied Research*, 1(1): 4 (30:34), 2018 DOI: <https://doi.org/10.16995/jer.8>
- “Day and Night with Malla.” *Screenworks* 8.2. Digital Ecologies and the Anthropocene, 2018 ISSN 2514-3123 <https://www.screenworks.org.uk/archive/volume-8-2/day-and-night-with-malla>
- “Dune Dream – Self-imaging, Trans-corporeality and the Environment”. In *Body Space & Technology Journal* 17(1), 3–21. <http://doi.org/10.16995/bst.293>
- “Performing with the Weather”. *Global Performance Studies* Issue 1.2. Performance Climates <http://gps.psi-web.org/issue-1-2/performing-with-the-weather/>
- “Calling the dragon - The five avant-gardes today?” *Research in Arts & Education* 3/2017, 1-12. <https://journal.fi/rae/article/view/118828>
- “Maisema, materia ja muutos. Harakan saaren luontokulttuuria dokumentoimassa.” [Landscape, Matter and Change. Documenting the Natureculture of Harakka Island] In Mari Mäkiranta, Ulla Piela and Eija Timonen (eds.) *Näkyväksi sepitetty maa*. [The Land Narrated Visible] Kalevalaseuran vuosikirja 96. Helsinki: SKS 2017, 23-39.
- “Practising art - as a habit? / Att utöva konst - som en vana?” In *Ruukku Journal*, # 7. June 2017. <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/292065/292066>
- “Performing Landscape - Swinging Together or Playing with Projections”. In *Body Space Technology Journal* vol.16, 2016. <https://www.bstjournal.com/articles/10.16995/bst.1/>
- “Mitä tekijä voi tehdä?” [What can an author do?] In Annette Arlander, Laura Gröndahl and Marja Silde (eds.) *Tekijä – teos, esitys ja yhteiskunta*. [Author – work, performance and society] Näyttämö ja Tutkimus 6. Teatterintutkimuksen seura Helsinki 2016, 12-37. <https://journal.fi/teats/issue/view/8695>
- “Repeat, Revisit, Recreate—Two Times Year of the Horse”. In *PARSE Journal* Issue #3 Repetitions and Reneges. 2016, 43-59. <http://www.parsejournal.com/article/repeat-revisit-recreate-two-times-year-of-the-horse/>

### Non-refereed research articles (related to Animal Years)

- “Miten tehdä asioita tutkimuspäivillä – Katsaus ‘Miten tehdä asioita esityksellä?’ -tutkimushankkeeseen” [How to Do Things with Research Days – Review of the research project How to Do Things with Performance?] Annette Arlander, Hanna Järvinen, Tero Nauha, Pilvi Porkola. In Tua Helve, Outi Lahtinen & Marja Silde (eds.) *Näyttämö & Tutkimus 8: Muisti, Arkisto ja Esitys* [Stage & Research 8: Memory, Archive and Performance] Teatterintutkimuksen seura, 428-432 <https://journal.fi/teats/article/view/122815>
- “The Shadow of a Pine Tree. Authorship, Agency and Performing beyond the Human” in Ewa Bal & Mateusz Chaberski (eds.) *Situated Knowing. Epistemic Perspectives on Performance*. London & New York: Routledge 2020, 157-170.
- “HTDTWP presents: The Transformative Potential of Performance”. Annette Arlander, Hanna Järvinen, Tero Nauha and Pilvi Porkola. In Leena Rouhiainen (ed.) *Proceedings of CARPA 6 Artistic Research Performs and Transforms: Bridging Practices, Contexts, Traditions & Futures* Nivel 13, 2020. <https://nivel.teak.fi/carpa6/annette-arlander-hanna-jarvinen-tero-nauha-and-pilvi-porkola-htdtwp-presents-the-transformative-potential-of-performance/>
- “Looking at Malla / Steaming Earth”. In Jonathan Pitches and David Shearing (eds.) *Performance Research* Vol 24. No 2: On Mountains, 2019, pp. 96-99. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13528165.2019.1624066>
- “How do we do things with performance?” Annette Arlander, Hanna Järvinen, Tero Nauha and Pilvi Porkola. Introduction to *Ruukku – Studies in Artistic Research* 11 2019 How to Do Things with Performance? <http://ruukku-journal.fi/en/issues/11>
- “Miten tehdä asioita esityksellä? – tutkimushanke Sao Paulossa” [How to Do Things with Performance? – the research project in Sao Paulo] Annette Arlander, Hanna Järvinen, Tero Nauha and Pilvi Porkola. In Anna Thuring, Anu Koskinen and Tuija Kokkonen (eds.) *Esitys ja Toiseus* [Performance/Representation and Otherness] Näyttämö ja Tutkimus 7, Teats Teatterintutkimuksen seura 2018, pp 204-214. <https://journal.fi/teats/issue/view/8694>
- “Regurgitated Perspectives – Performance” Annette Arlander, Hanna Järvinen, Tero Nauha and Pilvi Porkola. In Geoff Cox, Hannah Drayson, Azadeh Fatehrad, Allister Gall, Laura Hopes, Anya Lewin, Andrew Prior, (eds.) *Proceedings of the 9th SAR International Conference on Artistic Research, University of Plymouth, April 11th-13th, 2018*, pp. 299-311. <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/512748/512749>
- “How to do things with performance in relation to what is given?” Annette Arlander, Hanna Järvinen, Tero Nauha & Pilvi Porkola. In *Ruukku Journal issue 8* (voices) 2018. <http://ruukku-journal.fi/en/issues/8>
- “Agential Cuts and Performance as Research”. In Annette Arlander, Bruce Barton, Melanie Dreyer-Lude, Ben Spatz (eds.) *Performance as Research: Knowledge, Methods, Impact*. London and New York: Routledge 2018, 133-151.
- “Miten tehdä asioita esityksellä - annetuissa (työpaja) olosuhteissa?” [How to do things with performance - in given (workshop) circumstances], Annette Arlander, Hanna Järvinen, Tero Nauha & Pilvi Porkola. In *TAHITI* 3/2017, 71-86. <https://tahiti.journal.fi/article/view/68927>

- “Data, Material, Remains”. In Mirka Koro-Ljungberg, Teija Löytönen & Mark Tesar (eds.) *Disrupting Data in Qualitative Inquiry. Entanglements with the Post-Critical and Post-Anthropocentric*. Peter Lang Publishing 2017, 171-182.
- “The Steaming Earth - A Terra Fumegante”. In Teatro Em Campo Expandido - Theatre in the Expanded Field, *Art Research Journal* 3, 2016, pp 142-157. <http://periodicos.ufrn.br/artresearchjournal/issue/view/450/showToc>
- “Becoming Juniper – Performing Landscape as Artistic Research”. In *Nivel No 5* 2015, The Publication Series of the Theatre Academy Helsinki Nivel <http://nivel.teak.fi/becoming-juniper/becoming-juniper-performing-landscape-as-artistic-research-annette-arlander/>
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### **Publications intended for professional communities (related to Animal Years)**

- “Kertaa ja koosta” eli märehittiminen menetelmänä [“Repeat and combine” or regurgitating as a method], *Taide* 3/2021, 26.
- “A few words”. Introduction to *Icehole #6* 2017, The Live Art Journal. [http://www.icehole.fi/vol-6\\_issue2\\_2017/few-words-by-annette-arlander/](http://www.icehole.fi/vol-6_issue2_2017/few-words-by-annette-arlander/)
- “How to perform landscape by repetition?” video with text, *Icehole #6* 2017, The Live Art Journal. [http://www.icehole.fi/vol-6\\_issue2\\_2017/video-by-annette-arlander/](http://www.icehole.fi/vol-6_issue2_2017/video-by-annette-arlander/)
- “Performances for Camera”. *Icehole #2* 2015, The Live Art Journal <https://icehole.fi/issue2/performances-for-camera/>
- “Year of the Snake Swinging”. In Yelena Gluzman, Matvei Yankelevich (eds.) *Emergency Index vol. 3*. Ugly duckling presse, New York 2014, 40-41.
- “Year of the Snake Swinging (mini)” *Ice Hole #1*, The Live Art Journal. <https://icehole.fi/issue1/video-by-annette-arlander-year-of-the-snake-swinging/>
- “Jäädetytty aika ja maiseman tapahtuminen” [Frozen Time and the Happening of Landscape] *AVEK* –lehti 2/2014, 22-28.
- “Calling the Dragon”. In Yelena Gluzman, Matvei Yankelevich (eds.) *Emergency Index vol. 2*. Ugly duckling presse, New York 2013, 44-45.
- “Year of the Rabbit – With a Juniper”. In Yelena Gluzman, Matvei Yankelevich (eds.) *Emergency Index* Ugly duckling presse, New York 2012, 64-65.



In *How to Do Things with Artistic Research – Revisiting Animal Years* Annette Arlander presents her method of revisiting by returning to a series of video works named after the Chinese calendar, created in the years 2002-2014 on Harakka Island in Helsinki. As part of the Academy of Finland funded research project *How to Do Things with Performance?* in 2016-2020 she revisited the sites of those works as well as theoretical concepts or concerns previously discussed in relation to them. Experimenting with the video essay as a form she wrote these texts for various contexts. Here they are compiled to demonstrate how not only landscapes change over time but thinking, too, transforms.

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