

MEAM CONFERENCE 2023

Multispecies Ethnography and Artistic Methods Conference July 3-4 2023

Multispecies ethnography is expanding across a range of different fields, both in research and education, engaging a vast array of analytical frameworks. Regardless of what species or combination of species of animals, plants and fungi as well as water, earth and inorganic entities that ethnographers work with, we are brought together in a series of diverse yet overlapping methodological issues. The opportunities and challenges of multispecies ethnography shape the research design not only in questions of data collection, but also in what analytical frameworks are operationalized throughout the research process, including how the processes of data analysis and writing emerge. Multispecies ethnographers increasingly engage in creative and artistic methods, such as different expressions of creative writing, photo and film making as well as drawing, painting and poetry, to capture relations beyond the human. The entanglements of academia and art in different kinds of collaborations and interdisciplinary endeavors are exploding and there are ample opportunities for crosspollination between multispecies ethnography and the feminist scholarship tradition of using creative methods to further othered perspectives. With the massive and worldwide interest generated by the online MEAM workshop in 2020, the newly established MEAM network now hosts a hybrid conference, taking place in Liège, Belgium and online.

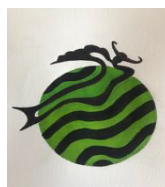
Through an array of analytical tools and methodological approaches we come together in this conference for exchanges around the work that artistic methods can do for multispecies ethnographers. We hope for open minded and collegial constructive discussions when we together critically examine the challenges and opportunities we face in our academic and artistic endeavours.

Program Layout

We have opted for an **experimental hybrid format** for this conference where around half of the presentations take place in-person in Liège and around half takes place on-line. The **in-person presentations will be streamed for the on-line audience** with the possibility to ask questions in the chat operated by one of our on-line moderators during the questions period. **When we move to an online format, all participants will log in to the on-line platform with their individual computers and head-sets.** We have thus asked all in-person participants to bring their own laptop and head-set for these sessions. This is, as mentioned, an experimental format and we appreciate your patience with transitions. We have chosen this format because we hope that it will, on the one hand, offer an egalitarian possibility to participate for those without means (funds, time, energy, etc.) to travel, and will, on the other hand, provide a vibrant ambience for those who can join us in Liège.

We have two **Key Note speakers, one who presents on-line and one who presents in-person**, as you will see in the Conference Program below. We have a diverse group of scholars and artists presenting both online and in person, and we will provide break-out rooms for spontaneous conversations during **Tea Breaks** for online chats, in addition to our physical break-and-relax-space. The conference program will be quite intense and so we suggest that all online participants prepare their own combination of hot and cold drinks and favourite snacks to have on-hand. Tea, coffee, water and vegan treats will be provided in Liège. We will also organise joint Leisurely Lunch and a Social Soirée for those in Liège (at your own cost and to be registered beforehand) on Monday the 3rd July .

The **exhibition of Artistic Methods Pieces** will only be accessible to the Liège participants, as will the in-between mingling, and social soirée. The **Special Session on Artful Publishing** in Academia is designed for those engaged in this conversation from last years MEAM workshop and thus accessible by invite only. We will be happy, however, to report back to anyone interested. Welcome!



MEAM CONFERENCE 2023

DAY 1 – 3 July 2023 (8:30-18:15 CEST) Building L3, rue de Pitteurs, 20 – 4020 Liège, and online	
8:30-9:15	Arrival, registration, coffee/tea and delivery of artistic pieces for exhibition
9:15-10:00	Introduction and logistics: Andrea Petitt (L3, room 013A and streamed as webinar)
Keynote Speaker (online and screened in L3, room 013A) Sophie Chao Chair : Andrea Petitt	
10:00-10:10	Introduction keynote
10:10-10:40	Sophie Chao: <i>Patchy artfulness: Insights from West Papua</i>
10:40-11:00	Questions and discussions
Visit of the exhibition (L5, rooms 2.1 & 2.6)	
11:00-11:30	Constance Hinfray Wendenburg performance: <i>Reenactment of the pied piper of hamelin myth</i> (L5 room 2.6)
11:30-13:00	Lunch Break
Online session/1 (each at their own screen) Responsible interaction with domestic animals Chair : Catrien Notermans	
13:00-13:05	Welcome and introduction
13:05-13:25	Marlies Bockstal: <i>An intersectional and sensory ethnographic exploration of 'responsible' purebred dog breeding practices in Aotearoa New Zealand</i>
13:25-13:45	Simone de Boer and Hanna Charlotta Wernersson: <i>Multispecies engagements in changing agrarian worlds</i>
13:45-14:05	Irina Frasin: <i>Drawing cats and thinking of solidarity in a multispecies community</i>
14:05-14:25	Arthur Arruda Ferreira: <i>What is a dog able to do? Interspecies political activity in Chilean cities</i>
14:25-14:40	Coffee and Tea break

Online session/2 (each at their own screen) Artful methods as a mean of seeing and saying more Chair : Anke Tonnaer	
14:40-14:45	Welcome and introduction
14:45-15:05	Emma Bider: <i>Exploring Tree Agency through Musical Improvisation</i>
15:05-15:25	Gabriela Saldias Aillon: <i>Liquid city. A speculative research project in La Paz (Bolivia)</i>
15:25-15:45	Verena Kuni: <i>Exercises in mimicry, mimesis and metamorphosis</i>
15:45-16:00	Coffee and Tea break
Online session/3 (each at their own screen) Sense and sensitivities Chair : Véronique Servais	
16:00-16:05	Welcome and introduction
16:05-16:25	Marta Kucza: <i>The infinite community of enquiry. Knowing plants and animals with neurodivergent residents of Maarja Küla</i>
16:25-16:45	Sandro Simon: <i>Se toucher toi: Audiovisuality, Touch and Multispecies Care</i>
16:45-17:05	Paraskevi Zotali: <i>Dreaming an indigenous AI</i>
17:05-17:20	Short break
17:20-17:40	Gian Luigi Biagini: <i>Underdogs in Havana</i>
17:40-18:00	Ana Lucia Camphora: <i>Tensions and fluidity in encounters between biodiversity and cattle in Brazilian rural landscapes</i>
18:00-18:15	Closing remarks for Day 1 (online)
19:30	Social soirée: Joint supper in Liège



DAY 2 - 4 July (8:30-17:30 CEST)	
8:30-9:00	Arrival and joint coffee/tea (L5, Hall, second floor)
9:00-9:10	Introduction and logistics: Andrea Petitt (L3, room 013A and streamed as webinar)
In person session/1 (L3 room 013A and streamed as online webinar) More-than-human agency Chair : Nolwen Vouiller	
9:10-9:40	Charlotte Dorn: <i>Terra Artifex</i>
9:40-10:10	Nanna Sandager Kisby: <i>Snow Capacities and Human-Snow Relations: Nonhuman Agency of Shape Shifting Matter in Ilulissiat, Kalaallit Nunaat</i>
10:10-10:40	Harry Wels and Tamara Shefer: <i>On “multispecies intersectionality”: Exploring a microbial perspective</i>
Keynote speaker (L3 room 013A and streamed as online webinar) Olivia Angé	
10:40-10:50	Introduction
10:50-11:20	Olivia Angé: <i>Potato Verses as Interspecies Respect. Reclaiming Tuberous Companionship in the Potato Park of the Peruvian Highlands</i>
11:20-11:30	Questions and discussions
11:30-12:00	Coffee and tea break with sturdy snacks (L5, hall, second floor)
In person session/2 (L3 room 013A and streamed as online webinar) Zoopolitical intricacies Chair : Martin Givors	
12:00-12:30	Vanessa Wijngaarden and Ute Hoerner: <i>Parrot People</i>
12:30-13:00	Karin Reisinger: <i>Avian Farewell Songs for a Disappearing Mining Town</i>
13:00-14:00	Lunch Break – everybody at their leisure

Parallell sessions and visit of the exhibition (L5, rooms 2.1, 2.5 or 2.6)	
14:00-15:00	Nathaniel Hendrickson and Pietro Varrasso: <i>Film projection and questions (L5, room 2.5)</i>
	<i>Special Session on Artful publication in academia:</i> moderated by Andrea Petitt and Anke Tonnaer (online on invitation only)
15:00-15:30	Véronique Servais, Magali Ollagnier-Beldame and Pietro Varasso: <i>Exconat Project : artistic experimentations for the exploration of experience (L5 room 2.5)</i>
	Verena Kuni: <i>Tic (Toolbox meet-up online)</i>
15:30-16:00	Coffee and tea break (L5)
In person session/3 (L3, room 013A and streamed as online webinar) Sensory, somatic and tactile inquiries Chair : Isabelle Borsus	
16:00-16:30	Constance Hinfray Wendenburg: <i>Reenactment of the pied piper of Hamelin myth (L3 room 013A)</i>
16:30-17:00	Martin Givors: <i>60% inside 40% outside. Filming the ecosomatic entanglements of Qigong practitioners (L3 room 013A)</i>
17:00-17:30	Conference closure and MEAM futures...



Organizing Committee

Catrien Notermans is an anthropologist working at the Department of Anthropology and Development Studies at Radboud University, Nijmegen, the Netherlands. She has long-term expertise on kinship, religion and gender, in West Africa, South Asia and Europe. Currently, she is studying human kinship relations with other-than-human beings like trees, rivers and land, and how religious rituals matter in this. This research particularly focuses on India. Catrien Notermans is co-founder of the MEAM network for Multispecies Ethnography and Artistic Methods.
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Andrea Pettitt is a researcher at the Southasia Institute of Advanced Studies (SIAS) in Kathmandu, Nepal and also affiliated with Laboratoire d'Anthropologie Sociale et Culturelle (LASC) at Université de Liège, Belgium, where she taught multispecies relations, sensory anthropology and artistic methods last year. After completing her PhD in Rural Development at the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (SLU) in 2016 she worked as a researcher at the Centre for Gender Research, Uppsala University until 2022, where she is still affiliated. Andrea is an editor for the Creative Section of the Journal of Organizational Ethnography and co-founded the MEAM network for Multispecies Ethnography and Artistic Methods, as well as the Bovine Scholarship Network.
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Véronique Servais is a psychologist and anthropologist who teaches Anthropology of Communication at the University of Liège. Since her PhD, which was about clinical work with animals, she has been conducting research in the field of human-animal communication and relationships. Her current concern is about extending what communication means in order to include communication with animals, natural settings and other forms of life.
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Anke Tonnaer is an anthropologist working at the Department of Anthropology and Development Studies at Radboud University, Nijmegen, the Netherlands. Her research interests include questions of multispecies care in rewilding projects in Europe, and focuses especially on human-animal relations in nature conservation in The Netherlands. Anke Tonnaer co-founded the MEAM network for Multispecies Ethnography and Artistic Methods.
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Chloé Vanden Berghe is a PhD student in social sciences at the Free University of Brussels (ULB). She holds a double master's degree in Literature and in Environment. Her research focuses on urban foxes in Brussels. She is interested in the ways in which fox and human worlds intersect in a densely shared city, but also in the socialities of the foxes themselves. To this end, she has developed a methodology combining social and natural sciences. Carrying out nocturnal observations of the animals, she uses the tools traditionally used in ethology to produce first-hand data on the foxes. In the same way, she aims to show that social science methods, and in particular qualitative methods, are valid tools for studying animals. Her thesis is ultimately an investigation into the political histories of urban foxes socialities.
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Abstracts and Bios

In order of appearance in the program

Keynote speaker

Sophie Chao

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Patchy artfulness: Insights from West Papua

In this keynote, environmental humanities scholar and ethnographer Sophie Chao will examine how accounts of changing multispecies lifeworlds can be enriched through the embrace of “patchy artfulness” as a decolonial feminist research methodology. Approaching patchy artfulness as an exploratory and experimental practice of being in and representing the world, Chao will reflect on her experiences deploying three specific forms of data collection and communication within her ethnographic research on the West Papuan plantation frontier: storytelling, photography, and videography. Drawing on these examples, the talk will consider the potential of patchy artfulness in rethinking what counts as “expertise” and who counts as “experts” when it comes to capturing and conveying multispecies relations, as well as the kinds of collaborative representational practices such a rethinking can enable.

Bio

*Sophie Chao is Discovery Early Career Researcher Award (DECRA) Fellow and Lecturer in the Discipline of Anthropology at the University of Sydney. Her research investigates the intersections of Indigeneity, ecology, capitalism, health, and justice in the Pacific. Chao is author of *In the Shadow of the Palms: More-Than-Human Becomings in West Papua* and co-editor of *The Promise of Multispecies Justice*. She previously worked for the human rights organization Forest Peoples Programme in Indonesia, supporting the rights of forest-dwelling Indigenous peoples to their customary lands, resources, and livelihoods. Chao is of Sino-French heritage and lives on unceded Gadigal lands in Australia. For more information, please visit www.morethanhumanworlds.com.*

Online Session/1: Interacting with/being approached by domestic animals

Marlies Bockstal

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An intersectional and sensory ethnographic exploration of ‘responsible’ purebred dog breeding practices in Aotearoa New Zealand

In recent years, purebred dog breeding has come under increasing criticism. Primary concerns include the widespread health and welfare problems related to the extensive selective breeding and overpopulation in

animal shelters. In response to this critique and the connected “adopt, don’t shop” movement, there seems to be a move towards a discourse of ‘responsible breeding’ introduced by Kennel Clubs and their breeders. This PhD project focuses on this discourse of ‘responsible breeding’ in the context of Aotearoa New Zealand. Through employing an intersectional analytical framework, this study explores how implicit logics of domination, domestication, and capitalism operate simultaneously with logics of love and care within the interspecies relations between breeders and their dogs in the context of these ‘responsible breeding practices’. Sensory narrative interviews are conducted with purebred dog breeders who are part of a ‘responsible breeding’ scheme of the New Zealand Kennel Club. In addition, photos are taken by participants and the researcher of the dogs used for breeding purposes. Such an engagement with a sensory ethnographic research design allows for more species-inclusive data in order to gain an in-depth understanding of the species, breed and gender power relations within these normalized purebred dog breeding practices.

Bio

Marlies Bockstal obtained her Master of Science in Sociology at the University of Ghent in Belgium in 2019. For her master’s dissertation, she conducted a qualitative study that focused on the interactions between young children and their dogs in the family context. Before starting her PhD in 2022, she worked as a junior researcher at the Sociology Department of Ghent University on two research projects: the Red Nose project on mental health stigma among Flemish adolescents, and the EU VAX-TRUST research project on vaccine hesitancy in Europe. She is currently a PhD candidate at the New Zealand Centre for Human-Animal Studies at the University of Canterbury. Her PhD project focuses on purebred dog breeding practices in Aotearoa New Zealand. By drawing from key components of intersectional, (eco)feminist, posthumanist and critical animal studies approaches, her research critically examines the ‘responsible breeding’ discourse using a species-inclusive sensory ethnographic methodology.

Simone de Boer and Hanna Charlotta Wernersson

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Multispecies engagements in changing agrarian worlds

Our presentation is a multimedia montage in which we explore multispecies relationships in four different farming contexts: large-scale industrial and small-scale family cattle farming in Sweden, natural farming in Kyrgyzstan, and organic dairy farming in the Netherlands. Being spaces of agricultural production, these sites host multispecies relationships that are characterized by human use and, oftentimes, killing. However, as Donna Haraway points out, “[t]o be in a relation of use to each other is not the definition of unfreedom and violation.” (2008:74). We should allow for relationships of use to, potentially, be good ones. So, we wonder: what do good relationships of use look, feel, sound, taste like? What does it mean to be in(ter)dependent? How does the physicality and technology of our shared living spaces impact how we live together? Can one care equally for all? And, what does it mean to love? Using photography, video, drawing, and creative writing, we explore the nature and rhythm of the shared lives of human and non-human farm dwellers. More specifically, we focus on the human-worm relationships in Kyrgyz compost heaps, and the human-cow relationships of a Dutch organic dairy farm, and a small- and a large-scale cattle farm in Sweden.

Bio

Simone de Boer

Simone is a doctoral student in Social Anthropology at Gothenburg University. Her PhD research is focused on the development of sustainable agriculture and the making of 'sustainable farmers' in Kyrgyzstan. In her previous research in Kyrgyzstan, she studied (the transformation of) 'traditional' horse games and human-horse relationships in the context of increasing tourism, processes of sportification, and the development of mega sporting events. Simone has a background in Cultural Anthropology and Film & Photographic Studies. Before starting her PhD, she worked as a lecturer at the institute of Cultural Anthropology & Development Sociology at Leiden University, the Netherlands. In 2018-2019, she was one of Leiden's City Photographers, conducting research and creating ethnographic photo essays for the city newspaper in collaboration with fellow anthropologists. Her main academic interests are environmental and media anthropology, multisensory, multispecies and audiovisual/multimodal ethnography, and Central Asia.

Hanna Charlotta Wernersson

Hanna is a doctoral student in Environmental Social Science at Gothenburg University. Her PhD project explores human-animal relationships within the realm of Global North food production and, more specifically, in cattle farming. Through multispecies ethnography, she explores how Swedish cattle farming practices are changing in response to environmental, social, and moral concerns regarding meat-eating, and how these changes impact the lives of farm animals and their farmers. Hanna's methods include film, photo, soundscape-making, and creative writing. In addition, she collaborates with artists that interpret her written and audiovisual fieldnotes. Hanna has an MSc in Socio-Ecological Resilience and has previously worked as a Course Coordinator at the Center for Environment and Development Studies at Uppsala University, Sweden, and as Agricultural Marketing Specialist for the U.S. Foreign Agricultural Service, Canada. She is also farming 12 hectares of land, exploring what regenerative farming might mean on the clay soils of western Sweden.

Irina Frasin

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Drawing cats and thinking of solidarity in a multispecies community

In Romania, where I live, we are having quite a large population of community cats. Considered less of a threat for public health and safety than the dogs, cats are mostly ignored by the authorities and only lately we begun to have some cat rescue organizations. In general community cats are always there but simply ignored; living in the shadows of neighborhoods, in the fringes of communities. My presentation is mainly an autoethnography, based on my experience of living close and taking care of a cat colony since 2015. I began to draw cats as a means to get close to them. I spent hours on end just observing from the distance and gradually I started to be accepted among them. The more I knew the cats the more their portraits were telling their individual stories. Today I'm thinking of ways of using their portraits, in fact their adventures and life histories to raise awareness about their needs, their presence alongside us; to make them visible, to acknowledge their presence in our shared community. More than that, my presentation is an attempt to understand how best we can be there for our feline friends. We can start by simply seeing them and carefully observing and learning more about the way cats live when they are less influenced by us, humans and

maybe challenge some of the very popular conceptions about them. Treating cats as subjects, partners, peers, co-workers and co-researchers we are opening the door to deepen our understanding of their perspective on the world. But taking care of independent, intelligent creatures also raises some very interesting moral challenges. I will be focusing on some of them trying to untangle how this can lead to the development of “interspecies solidarity” and help creating multispecies communities.

Bio

I'm a researcher in the Institute of Social and Economic Research, Romanian Academy, Iasi Branch. My basic formation is in philosophy and history. For about 10 years I have taught classical Greek philosophy and intercultural communication in the “Alexandru Ioan Cuza University” of Iasi. Lately I began to focus my research on anthrozoology, moving from intercultural communication to inter-species communication. Presently I am involved in a new master program on Ethology and Human Animal Interaction in the University of Agricultural Studies and Veterinary Medicine in Cluj-Napoca. I am co-editing the series of books Anthrozoology Studies (Human–Animal Interaction from a multidisciplinary perspective, Prouniversitaria 2019, Thinking beyond Borders, Prouniversitaria 2020, Ethics and the non-human world, Presa Universitara Clujeana 2021, <http://www.editura.ubbcluj.ro/bd/ebooks/pdf/2973.pdf>., Animal Life and Human Culture, Presa Univer. Clujeana, 2022 <http://www.editura.ubbcluj.ro/bd/ebooks/pdf/3343.pdf> and Non-human Animals in Open Societies, coming up in 2023).

Arthur Arruda Ferreira

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What is a dog able to do? Interspecies political activity in Chilean cities

The spinozian question (what are bodies able to do?) can be translated by some contemporary authors, such as Despret: 1) What would animals be capable of if we changed their conditions?; 2) What would animals say if we proposed good questions? An interesting and empirical way to explore these questions can be seen in Chilean cities with a quite peculiar actor: street dogs (quiltros). I worked in this study on a blended ethological-ethnographical approach that allowed me to reflect on some aspects of this singular antropozoogenesis blending dogs-and-humans-in-the-cities. In this sense, I would like to sustain that: 1) this experience produces a new kind of interspecies citizenship; 2) it creates a kind of reciprocal care and domestication that involves feeding, playing and occupying different public spaces (as public protests); 3) it produces a type of domestic cosmopolitanism based on open trust without any priority of some groups (ecological ones) or territories (homes). In short, it is possible to say that it creates a kind of an interspecies socialism that is present during different political scenarios and especially with the popular uprising in Chile (since 2019). The quiltros presence here isn't only symbolic, but really active in a shared and distributed political action, especially in manifestations.

Bio

Arthur Arruda Leal Ferreira is a post-doctoral researcher in the History of Psychology from the UNED (Spain) and Janveriana University (Colombia), and is Full Professor of the History of Psychology at the Institute of Psychology at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ). He has recently edited the following books: Psicologia, Tecnologia e Sociedade, A pluralidade do campo psicológico, História da Psicologia: Rumos e Percursos, Teoria Ator-Rede e a Psicologia and Pragmatismo e questões contemporâneas. He also contributed to the books: Foucault e a Psicologia, Da metafísica moderna ao

Online session/2: Artful methods as a mean of seeing and saying more

Emma Bider

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Exploring Tree Agency through Musical Improvisation

Thinking through the agential nature of trees has been key to my doctoral research. When I discussed tree activism with research participants, they were often at a loss to describe the affective relationship they shared with the treed places they were seeking to protect. Art, however, was often used as a medium to express the perceived importance of these places. I started using music to experiment with what trees "do" to me when I meet them in my field sites. I composed three piano improvisations to think through a) what my musical choices might say about my own relationship to my field sites; and b) what it was the trees evoked in me that was so compelling to express artistically. While I don't have clear answers about whether or not this music helped express tree agency, I can say that this attempt at a music-based method made clear the way art can act "world-making narratives of emplaced, historical and ongoing relationships" (Smith, 2021).

Bio

Emma Bider is a PhD candidate at Carleton University, Ottawa Canada. Her research explores how people in Ottawa produce "tree imaginaries" through activism, art and affective relationships with treed places.

Gabriela Saldias Aillon

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Liquid city

Liquid City is a speculative research project that is introduced into the most human field in the city of La Paz, Bolivia. It focusses on the case of the Choqueyapu River, one of the most important water tributaries in the city and possibly the most polluted by its interaction with it. From the river it is possible to understand the social, cultural and political practices that operate in everyday life. The process is understood as a laboratory of ideas in which generative and critical processes are produced that translate into a dialogue between art and design from which to rethink co-existence relationships towards fairer ways of life. The presentation focusses on artistic and experimental forms from the use of video art and creative writing.

Bio

Gabriela is an artist and researcher. She obtained her Master in Design, Creativity and Social Practice at the Politecnico di Milano and the Fondazione Pistoletto (Italy). She studied at the Official Ballet School and the National Academy of Fine Arts (Bolivia), American Ballet Theatre (USA) and the Bolshoi Theatre

School (Brazil). She worked at the Centre for Contemporary Art of Quito (Ecuador), the Official Ballet School (Bolivia). Invited writer at the 10th Visual Arts Biennial of Mercosur (Brazil) and winner of an IBERESCENA Fund (Mexico - Bolivia). Her interests are focussed on interdisciplinary practices and knowledge environments that cover fields of movement, body, art and design. In which the sensitive worlds are vanishing points to the possible and the gesture of imagining is an act of resistance that operates from critical creation.

Verena Kuni

Visual culture studies at Goethe University (Germany)

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Exercises in mimicry, mimesis and metamorphosis

Becoming plant. Becoming leaf. Becoming stone. Passing as another animal, not of one's kin. Appearing dead. Appearing alive. Yes, we can do that. Some of us at least. Many do so. For different goals and purposes, uses and ends. In some cases even purposeless, occasionally, for joy and fun. Mimicry, mimesis, metamorphosis: This workshop invites you to explore them as ways of imagining, sensing, thinking, communicating and living together - and as tools for multispecies research. As part of the warm-up, I will introduce and discuss, together with methodological perspectives, a selection of inspirational examples from different species, arts and cultures that will allow us to further explore the field, and I will offer related exercises to get into practice. Afterwards, we will share our experiences and insights: Together we will test and discuss a set of exercises, and in case we find some of them suitable and promising for our multispecies research, we can keep them in our toolbox.

TIC (Tool inventors'/investigators' club) meet-up

In addition to the workshop, I'd like to invite all tool-lovers, -researchers, -inventors, and toolboxenthusiasts to join forces with their ties in TIC, MEAM's TOOL. INVESTIGATORS'/INVENTORS' CLUB. In the framework of the MEAM CONFERENCE 2023 we'll virtually (and for those at place probably also physically) gather for a first meeting, followed by ca. bi-monthly VC-meetings dedicated to our exchange on tools, sharing our investigations, inventions and experiences with our experimental tools and toolboxes.

Bio

Verena Kuni is a scholar in the field of art, culture and media studies, and a professor for visual culture studies at Goethe University, Frankfurt am Main. Among her passions is the development of inter- and transdisciplinary projects and programs at the intersections of theory and practice. Her research and teaching, projects and publications focus on transfers between material and media cultures; media of imagination; technologies of transformation; DIY and critical making; toys and/as tools; workshops, toolboxes, and kits for inventive methods and methodologies; creative entanglements between imagination and invention; (in)visibilities and (im)materials; visual epistemologies and (con)figurations of knowledge; biotopes, biotopias, and technonaturecultures; alternate realities; and (trans)formations of time. She has published widely (print & online) on contemporary arts, culture and media. www.kuniver.se – www.under-construction.cc – www.visuelle-kultur.info

Online session/3: Other sensitivities

Marta Kucza

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The infinite community of enquiry. Knowing plants and animals with neurodivergent residents of Maarja Küla

I have been facilitating film and sound workshops in Maarja Küla village, a supported living situated in the magnificent Taevaskoja forest in Estonia, a home for adults labelled with various categories of neurodiversity including autism spectrum, Down syndrome, cerebral palsy and others. The aim of my research is to explore Maarja Küla's residents' embodied knowledge about other living beings. How do they discover what matters to the non-human other? Can the aesthetic experience of sound, movement, appearance, creativity and the play of animals and plants (Souriau 1965) be a way of understanding their ways of being in the world? I'm interested in art as a non-symbolic practice taking place in the material world and grounded in relations with other species, but also as manners of cultivating curiosity. Our group artistic enquiry consists in Foley exercises: recording sound effects made with everyday objects or generated by our bodies in order to re-create sound for existing nature documentary films. Our recent artistic enquiry consists in Foley exercises: recording sound effects made with everyday objects or generated by our bodies in order to re-create sound for existing nature documentary films. The particular feature of foley art in nature documentaries is its hyperreal dimension due to the technical incapacity of recording very close sounds of living beings, or their inaudibility for the human ear. The recorded sound never originates in the same materiality as the recorded image, and as such produces a poetic tension between the mimetic aim and fictional substitution. The recordings originate in improvisations during which the participants watch film excerpts without sound, then try to imagine and produce the sounds that these images evoke. We either perform sounds that correspond to the sensorial memory of a particular species, or let our bodies and objects lead the sound explorations, without the aim of imitation. Emitting sounds mobilises the entire body and its kinaesthetic potential so that we *become* the animal or the insect on the screen. The recorded sounds are collectively evaluated as interesting or needing improvement, and eventually edited as a new soundtrack. While trying to reconstitute the most significant findings of my workshops, I will trace associations between Victor Shklovsky's *estrangement* as artistic device, Donna Haraway's *nonmimetic sharing* (2008), and *shared analytical work*, a term proposed by Nathalia Brichet and Frida Hastrup (Swanson 2020).

Bio

I am a documentary filmmaker interested in practices that explore relations of proximity with the filmed subjects. While facilitating film workshops I have been looking for experimental techniques that liberate perception from automatism, such as estrangement, where camera and sound recording devices help to understand and engage with the worlds beyond the film frame. I'm trained in African Studies (University of Warsaw) and Visual Anthropology (Sound/Image/Culture in Brussels). I have been working also as a film curator, namely for the Riga Pasaules Film Festival screening ethnographic and experimental films. In my current research projet, through an interdisciplinary perspective combining ecosemiotics, ethnography and art-based methodology, I explore non-symbolic engagements between humans, plants and animals in Maarja küla, an Estonian supported living facility for neurodivergent adults.

Sandro Simon

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Se toucher toi: Audiovisuality, Touch and Multispecies Care

Mollusc gleaning in the Sine-Saloum Delta, Senegal, is a distinctively female, amphibious practice guided largely by touch. Gleaners seek to detect and differentiate living and dead molluscs in the water and mud or remove them from mangrove roots. Touch is thereby about interspecies boundary making; fosters experiences of a being-with that must remain, always, a being-without: In touching, gleaners expose themselves and explore the limits toward the other as well as within themselves. As multi-species care in the delta, touch is thus ethically charged and noninnocent, involves death (molluscs) and pain (gleaners), but also fosters relation and progeneration, for instance in the form of stimulating mollusc reproduction or communicating with ancestral spirits via the gleaned molluscs. In this multimodal presentation, I ask: how can gleaners' multispecies haptics-as-care be translated into filmic experience? By the example of my forthcoming short film 'Mollusc Lifeworlds' and by drawing on Marks' (2002, 2014) 'haptic cinema', I inquire how a combination of human and more-than-human perspectives including blurry, overdriven etc. footage provoke both proximate encounters and a sense of alienness and limits of perceptibility. It is at this juncture then, I propose, that beholders can develop a tactile relation and multispecies sensibility. I am giving an oral presentation including film excerpts. I will reflect on my multi-species ethnographic filmmaking from the process of filming to montage. I thereby also inquire into questions of technological intentionality and mediation between resistance and flux as well as the ethics of filmmaking.

Bio

I am a PhD candidate and research associate in the Emmy Noether junior research group Volatile Waters and the Hydrosocial Anthropocene (DELTA), funded by the German Research Foundation (DFG) and located at the Department of Social and Cultural Anthropology of the University of Cologne. My research interests encompass multispecies relations, water, work, the body, and multimodal methodologies and forms of representation. During my dissertation project, I have been conducting ethnographic fieldwork in the Tana Delta, Kenya, and the Sine-Saloum Delta, Senegal. Based in thick participation and audiovisual ethnography and assembling videos and audios, photos, fiction, installation, ethnography and theory, I thereby trace female mollusc gleaning as a distinctively gendered practice of multispecies care amidst the often volatile social, economic and ecological deltaic life. My published works from my research include articles and chapters, multimodal and visual essays, videos, exhibitions, performances and installations.

Paraskevi Zotali

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Dreaming an indigenous AI

This creative process draws from an on-going study that attempts to comparatively discuss a collection of publications on the ethics of Artificial Intelligence developed from indigenous actors [the Indigenous Protocol and Artificial Intelligence Working Group] in relation to AI ethical protocol/guidelines as proposed by major Western institutions [UNESCO/EU]. How indigenous cosmologies, put into technopractice, decenter the dominant understanding of what AI is and what terms define our relation to it? Applied analysis engages with indigenous poesis utilizing the ontological approach from anthropology

(Holbraad, Pedersen & Viveiros de Castro 2013) as well as the related concepts of cosmotechnics (Hui 2016, 2020) and cosmocomputation (Parisi & Dixon-Román 2020, Parisi 2013) from philosophy and critical technology studies. The result will be a creative piece imagining a scenario where the development of AI is based on the indigenous values, in comparative contrast with the present day 'reality' of western canons, including fictional writing as well as drawings/visual images. Note that I trace indigenous cultures 'as cultures that have been transformed through the struggles of colonized peoples to resist and redirect projects of settler nationhood' (Sisson 2015:15). By following the 'indigenous' category, I aim at tracing the decolonization category and, consequently, the current colonization of the digital.

Bio

Paraskevi (Voula) Zotali is a PhD candidate in Social Anthropology ('Cosmo-technologies, techno-ontologies and techno-resistance: Indigenizing the production of digital technologies'), a quality consultant and a chemistry teacher. Her research interests evolve around science and technology, gender & sexuality, alternative states of consciousness and subversive methodologies for knowledge creation. She studied Social Anthropology (BA) at Panteion University and Chemical Engineering (BA) and Material Science & Engineering (MSc) at National Technical University of Athens. Her PhD research explores indigenous initiatives that appropriate the production/design of digital technologies creating new cosmotechnologies. She aspires to manifest her values through her life and work: originality, unity, humor, equality, and learning.

Gian Luigi Biagini

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Underdogs in Havana

The movie was recorded in Old Havana's streets (dogs) and Havana's TV building (vultures). It is an artistic movie that intertwines anthropological, mystic and political dimensions. It poetically and dramatically documents the entanglement between vultures, street dogs and poor street people in Havana. Here the boundaries between humans, animals and syncretic religious cult of the streets fade in a fluid situation; as it is shown by "humanimal" entangled traces on the concrete and by the encounters with the Saint of street-dogs (Lazarus The Beggar). The animals become metaphors, but also actual network-agencies, of a predator-prey trap-assemblage where humans and different animals are caught in the tension between advanced global capitalism and a paranoid communist regime of top-down control. Cuba is crushed between the embargo and an autarchic communist regime; it can only import inflation from the global economy, while it can't import financial capital for development and export. Everything is slowly crumbling down while inflation rises up and the striving to survive becomes hard. Inflation also engenders an unjust class division between the few who can work with tourism (euros and dollars) and the others. The dignity of most Cuban people is still wonderful. Cubans have still not been atomised in "selfish comfort zones" by post-modern techno-capitalism as it happens in the rest of the cold open Globe. However, poverty, scarcity of goods and decadence is hunting and haunting their coloured and sensuous vital happiness. Images, noises and voices are edited to create a dark mystic-thriller to express symbolically and phenomenologically this site-specific paranoia and schizophrenia. However, the videoperformance is open to multilayered resonances of sensations. Art is always a nebula in excess that must be felt-signified more than "clearly" signified. The video was conceived, directed, produced, performed and written by PhD Gian Luigi Biagini and photographed and co-edited by MA Nathaniel Hendrickson.

Bio

My name is Gian Luigi Biagini, I am an artist and independent researcher with a series of masters, a PhD and a dozen academic publications. My specific field of art and research is critical urban interventions that seek to produce an event contesting the capitalist organization of space-time. This practice is connected to the search for an alternative existential territory and to becoming- animal in the sense of Deleuze and Guattari. However, since 2021 I have studied the most important authors of the "interspecies post-human" starting with Donna Haraway and in 2022 I created the Humanimal Community Art Project which is more linked to the "becoming with" and the "contact zone" with the dog. I am a member of MEAM.

Ana Lucia Camphora

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Tensions and fluidity in encounters between biodiversity and cattle in Brazilian rural landscapes

My research delves into the multi-faceted field of practices, values, and knowledge of human- non-human entanglements during the first four centuries of colonial Brazilian society. It was fuelled grounded in a basic question: what do Brazilian historical records tell us about non-human animals? The fruits of this research are presented in my book 'Animals and society in Brazil from the 16th to the 19th centuries', published in Brazil (2017), and in UK (2021). The effort to accommodate multiple angles, by including the singularity of non-human animals rather than a universal category, is a challenge to historical methodological approaches. In addition, my personal experience collaborating with the Brazilian contemporary artist Marcos Duarte has sharpened my perception of how human and non-human animal relations are represented, symbolically and materially. I have recorded Duarte's performative work, environmental art, and installations from 2017 to 2022, as video editor and photographer, as well as lending conceptual support to his projects. Observing cattle in the historical context of tensions between biodiversity and ranching in rural landscapes, Duarte collects traces of the fragile boundaries which have isolated/connected diverse living beings, built memories, and left vestiges: bones, trees, fences, and other testimony of rural ruin. Using visual narratives to record his creative process, I go beyond the limits imposed by textual representations of nature that have served to legitimate anthropocentric assumptions. My presentation is substantiated by selected video art and photos, fruit of the aforementioned collaborative project.

Bio

Ana Lucia Camphora is Brazilian, with degrees in Psychology (1988), Psycho-sociology of Communities and Social Ecology (Masters, 2003), and Social Sciences PhD (2008). She worked as an environmental consultant for the economic sustainability of protected areas, environmental policy instruments and ecotourism. Since 2013, as an independent scholar, Camphora has investigated the interlinkages between contemporary art and academic work on inter-species studies, primarily through video and photography. She is working as teaching assistant to Marcos Duarte, in the Atelier 3D of the Visual Arts School, and will teach the course 'An introduction to material, object, and sculpture', in July, 2023.

DAY 2

In person session/1: More-than-human agentivity

Charlotte Dorn

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Terra Artifex

The relationship between the artist and the artistic material is an entanglement between sentient and non-sentient beings, conditions and movements. Thereby, the artist manipulates the matter, transforming it into an artwork. But how would artworks change if artists would give material more agency in the creative process? Following Pierre Huyghe's *Untilled* (2011-12) and Lisa Jevbratt's *Interspecies Collaborations*, I try to let artistic material unfold and transform itself by interfering less. The project consists in creating an outdoor installation on a piece of land, inspired by a sculpture garden, where plants and animals are welcome to settle down and transform their habitat. Artworks coexist and fuse with beings and matter already there, blurring the line between artwork and exhibition space, human and other-than-human creation. Giving more space to material so it can change according to its own rhythm is, in the words of Timothy Morton, "realizing that there are lots of different temporality formats [...] It's equivalent to acknowledging in a deep way the existence of beings that aren't you, with whom you coexist." (Morton 2018: 66).

Bio

Charlotte Dorn is an artist and researcher and currently doing an artistic PhD at the LUCA Art School in Brussels. Her work mainly consists of printmaking and installative works that play with various sensorial stimuli. She investigates ways of increasing empathy for other-than-human beings through art and develops an ecofriendly creative process. Besides, she is teaching art at the European School Brussels 1. Her Bachelor and Master projects in Fine Art at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts Nantes Métropole and the Accademia di Belle Arti di Napoli rotated about the grotesque and macabre as well as the human body in pain.

Nanna Sandager Kisby

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Snow Capacities and Human-Snow Relations: Nonhuman Agency of Shape Shifting Matter in Ilulissat, Kalaallit Nunaat

Snow is ever present during the long winter months in Ilulissat, *Kalaallit Nunaat* [Greenland]. It covers houses, doorways, roads, cars, sleeping dogs, mountains; it shapes the landscape, re-configures town infrastructure and hinders certain human practices. In order to understand human life in Ilulissat, it is therefore crucial to understand snow and its behavior – just like it is crucial to understand those materials that shape our physical world in order to understand human life anywhere. In itself, snow possesses a *vibrant materiality* (Bennett 2010) as it acts from certain inherent capacities: Snow is a shape shifter, it moves, it takes up space, it is a source of life, and it produces impressions that can be registered by for

example human senses. The capacities of snow are essential to its character. But these capacities further influence snow's relation to others within a larger *assemblage* of actors (Bennett 2010). In order to study these capacities of snow, it was crucial for me as a researcher to make use of artistic methods in addition to traditional ethnographic methods. Through soundscapes and photography, I was able to capture the ways in which snow behaves *and* further translate this, in order to better share it with other humans. These artistic methods function as a medium that transports sensory experiences across distances, they add various layers of understanding of snow in its relation to humans, and they create the possibility to collaborate with snow and other nonhuman actors. Snow itself is unable to write in human words, but it can for example create visual impressions or produce sounds that can be recorded by human devices. In this sense, artistic methods function as a bridge between the nonhuman and the human, producing art as embodied knowledge.

Bio

Nanna recently obtained her MSc in Cultural Anthropology: Sustainable Citizenship at Utrecht University in the Netherlands. Her research focuses on human-snow relations in Ilulissat, Kalaallit Nunaat, where snow is ever present during the long winter months. Nanna's work shows how nonhuman matter such as snow possesses agency, as it has certain inherent capacities and thus influences human lifeworlds. Nanna also has a background in art from Aarhus Art Academy and in movement studies from University College Copenhagen, which inspired her to draw on artistic methods and bodily inquiry in her ethnographic work. Throughout her fieldwork in Ilulissat, Nanna experimented with data collection through a combination of methods such as soundscapes, photography, and sensory ethnography, in order to capture aspects of human-snow relations that escape the written word. Through artistic methods, it thus became possible to inquire into the behavior of snow itself and to experience its agency in relation to other nonhuman actors.

Tamara Shefer and Harry Wels

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On 'multispecies intersectionality': Exploring a microbial perspective

'Most biodiversity on Earth is and always has been microbial, regardless of the greater visibility of animals and plants', (O'Malley 2014: 4). As a consequence biology has developed an 'organismal bias' (ibid: 97), while all these organisms that we often present 'as free-living, independent and self-sustaining organisms [are] in fact (...) entangled in deep webs of interdependence [with microbes]' (Ibid: 211, emphasis added). What does this mean for developing perspectives on 'multispecies intersectionality' and 'intersecting power relations' (Petitt 2022) as well as the search for alternative 'ethico-onto-epistemological' approaches (Barad, 2007) in feminist and multispecies thinking? What would a microbial perspective on these concepts look like, knowing that many microbes procreate asexually (Herren 2019) and in that sense know no gender? What if next to exploring 'large-organism perspectives' (O'Malley 2014: 24), we let ourselves be led in our multispecies intersectionality explorations by microbial perspectives (cf. Kort 2017)? We will support our exploration of a microbial perspective artistically by enlarging microbes to the level of visible critters. And by thinking with the ways in which microbes sometimes most literally 'colour our world', making themselves known through artistic installations, like most spectacularly in Yellowstone National

Park and Lake Hiller in Australia. These visualisations may help to imagine more easily what a microbial perspective might add to our thinking about ‘multispecies intersectionality’ for justice knowledge.

Bio

Tamara Shefer

Tamara is Professor in Women’s and Gender Studies at the University of the Western Cape, South Africa. Her research and publishing has focused on sexualities and its intersecurities with other forms of inequality, and on reconceptualising academia.

Harry Wels

Harry is Associate Professor at Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam and Leiden University. His research and publications focus on multispecies organizational ethnography.

Keynote speaker

Olivia Angé

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Potato Verses as Interspecies Respect. Reclaiming Tuberous Kinship in the Potato Park of the Peruvian Highlands

A dear crop to many humans, potato inspired as famous artists as Van Gogh or Neruda. In its center of domestication, this tuber also is a muse to anonymous poets. Yet the verses performed by Andean growers are unique in being firstly addressed to tubers themselves. This presentation introduces agricultural poetry as relations of respect enabling tubers to respond back in interactions. In the context of the Potato Park, a biodiversity conservation initiative in the Cuzco highland, they are enacted as cosmopolitical verses reclaiming growers’ companionship to their tuberous companions.

Bio

Olivia Angé is a professor of anthropology at the Université Libre de Bruxelles, Principal Investigator of the ERC Starting Grant SeedsValues. She specializes in the study of agriculture, value creation, and relatedness in the Andes. Since 2014, she has been doing research on potato cultivation in Peru. She has also performed extensive fieldwork on barter fairs in the Argentinean cordillera. She is the author of Barter and Social Regeneration in the Argentinean Andes (Berghahn 2022, 2nd edn.), and co-author of Ecological Nostalgias (Berghahn 2021, 1st edn.).

In person session/2: Zoopolitical intricacies

Vanessa Wijngaarden, Ute Hoerner and Mathias Antlfinger

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Parrot people

We (Ute and Mathias) have been living with African grey parrots for more than 20 years. When our companion Karl died at about the age of 60, we realised how little we knew about his past (he came from an animal shelter). The only thing we could assume with great certainty was that he had been born in the wild before he was captured and sold. As we could not find out much about him as a person, we became interested in the history of African grey parrots in Europe, which is closely linked to the history of slavery. In collaboration with social anthropologist Vanessa Wijngaarden we work on *Parrot People*, a multispecies ethnography about the interconnections between humans' and grey parrots' histories, politics and cultures. Our common project engages wild and captive parrots as active participants, radically taking their perspective. This is achieved by cooperating with animal communicators who use intuitive interspecies communication (IIC) to translate multisensual information from wild and captive parrots into human language. Whether dead (as specimen) or alive (e.g. in the pet trade), parrots (as other non-human animals) have often been objectified. Through a crosspollination of communicative and artistic engagements we want to show them as individuals and persons.

Bio

Vanessa Wijngaarden

Dr. Vanessa Wijngaarden is a senior research associate at the University of Johannesburg, with a background in social anthropology and political science. She works on 'othering', multivocality in academia, and human-animal relationships. With a passion for reflexive approaches, extensive fieldwork and creative research dissemination, she teaches Q methodology, works as a certified ATLAS.ti senior professional trainer on three continents, and made several award winning documentaries. Since 2019 she has been working with professional and Indigenous animal communicators from Europe and Africa, to research intuitive interspecies communication (IIC). This has resulted in the human-animal communication network, which brings together academic researchers, artists, practioners and other interessants of IIC worldwide. Her goal is to contribute to an engaged academic future in which knowledge is acknowledged as an intersubjective achievement, and an openness towards multiple ontologies, epistemologies and methodologies subjects dominant and taken-for-granted experiences, assumptions and motivations to critique.

Ute Hörner and Mathias Antlfinger

Ute Hörner and Mathias Antlfinger are Professors of "Multispecies Storytelling" at the Academy of Media Arts Cologne. Their installations, videos and sculptures deal with the relationship between humans, animals and machines and provide both: critical perspectives on changeable social constructs as well as utopian visions of fair terms of interaction between these parties. Together with the grey parrots Clara and Karl they have carried out the interspecies collaboration CMUK since 2014. Their works have been shown at numerous international exhibitions and festivals including, CCA Tbilisi, ZKM Karlsruhe, Shedhalle Zuerich, NMFA Taiwan, Ars Electronica Linz, Werkleitz Biennale Halle, Museum Ludwig Cologne, KAC Istanbul, Transmediale Berlin. Since 2016 they are members of the Minding Animals InternationalNetwork.

Karin Reisinger

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Avian Farwell Songs for a Disappearing Mining Town

Malmberget is a mining town above the polar circle in Sápmi / northern Sweden with a long tradition. It is going to disappear because the underground mining expands and the town has to make way for the further extraction of iron ore. The last houses of the center of the town are dismantled, most of the human inhabitants have left the town. The birds, on the contrary, stayed. They occupy the houses before and during they are dismantled and will continue to stay in the area after it will be inaccessible to humans. Thus, through their complex multi-species relationship, the birds offer a more-than-human continuity to human loss and grief. In four research stays in 2022-23 I recorded the multi-variant bird songs from the deconstruction sites and from the restricted area behind the fences to produce a sound piece which is the result of the more-than-human participatory research amidst large-scale exploitation of resources. The recorded voices of the non-human witnesses will also be a gift for the local embroidery café, a group of women who embroider birds and houses to remember the town's past, founded by Karina Jarrett. They have generously shared their collective practices with me since 2018. The sound piece, edited by artist Lisa Kortschak, is an avian story of communication, predation and more than-human relationships of bird feeding. It will be underlined by photos showing the sites and its avian protagonists as well as a reflection on methods, ethics and complex crosspollination of feminist art/research practices and the avian agencies within community and research.

Bio

Karin Reisinger is an architect with a PhD in Visual Culture and leads the FWF projects Two Ore Mountains: Feminist Ecologies of Spatial Practices and Post-extractive Feminist Futures at the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna, Institute for Education in the Arts. She is deeply and durably involved in cultural practices of mining areas whose towns are shrinking or disappearing due to the exploitation of iron ore. Her contribution to knowledge production is based on submerged perspectives, intersectional feminist ethics, and anti-colonial methods. Karin publishes in periodicals and teaches at the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna. She curated the exhibition Fences Insects Embroideries (material communities) as part of Wienwoche (September 2022).

Nathaniel Hendrickson and Pietro Varrasso

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When I look at the mountain, I see the mountain. When I look at the mountain, I see the mountain. When I look at the river, I see the river

Film projection and questions

This movie is a short documentary in English and French directed by Nathaniel Hendrickson about a 5 week encounter in para-theatrical research on a farm near a forest in Nannine, Belgium. A group of 7 theatre students from the Royal Conservatory of Liege, led by artist and pedagogue Pietro Varrasso and visual artist and actor/director Nathaniel Hendrickson, respond to the call of David Abram, who says that the ecological crisis starts with and is fundamentally linked to a crisis of perception. A production of Project Daena and the Royal Conservatory of Liege, L'ESACT.

Bio

Nathaniel Hendrickson

"Collaboration is the backbone of what makes us human. My work is a test of this belief, a test to my body, heart, and mind to be curious and to keep my eyes and ears open to the possibilities of flourishing collaboration. Through painting, curation, song, writing, movement and multi-media installation, my work weaves, by way of poetic analogy, the skein of the many stories that I encounter. As a curator, I like to work with artists that I feel are important to me, and inspire me to continue. Like a constellation of stars, the communities that we surround ourselves with initiate, sustain and guide us through change in dark times." Nathaniel Hendrickson works as an interdisciplinary artist, painter, curator, documentary filmmaker and freelance producer

Pietro Varrasso

"I am a theater director. Producing shows no longer interests me, on the other hand transmitting and creating situations of openness to learning holds all my attention. I am uncomfortable with the notion of "art". I use art to explore enriching possibilities of using our presence in everyday life. Over time my artistic practice is transformed into a tool for observing the "living", an instrument of action on oneself, particularly on what blocks vitality, the joy of fully existing. I try not to read anyone. I bet on the "cancellation" of my proposals; whether artistic or educational, a large place is left to collaboration and collective intelligence." Pietro Varrasso is a director, actor and professor at the Royal Conservatory of Liège.

In person session/3: Sensory somatic and embodied tactile

Véronique Servais, Magali Ollagnier-Beldame and Pietro Varasso

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Exconat Project : artistic experimentations for the exploration of experience

Nathaniel Hendrickson and Pietro Varrasso conduct research on the perception of the environment and the languages of non-human species. Inspired by the theoretical work of David Abram and the practical work of Jerzy Grotowski, they develop sessions lasting several weeks in forests and rural areas, most of the time without the use of words. Composed of collective and individual actions, these immersions highlight the conditioning and deconditioning of perception in the body. The artistic research has been accompanied by an academic team (Magali Ollagnier-Beldame and Véronique Servais) They collected first-person accounts of the experiences of encountering the forest. This precious and extra-ordinary material allowed them to reflect on the multi-voiced communication that is taking place when people listen differently.

Bio

Véronique Servais

Trained as a clinical psychologist, I am a teacher in Anthropology of Communication at the University of Liège. I am doing research in the field of human-animal communication and relationships. I have initially entered this field of research through the question of animal's positive "effect" on people in clinical settings. Since then, I have tried to understand what this "positive effect" is about and how encounters with

animal (and, later, natural settings) can change the way people feel themselves and relate to their surroundings. My current concern is about extending what communication means in order to include communication with natural settings and other forms of life.

Magali Ollagnier-Beldame

“I am 45 years old. I am a mother of three children (9, 15 and 19 years old). I hold a PhD in Cognitive Science from the University of Lyon in France (2006) and joined the French National Centre for Scientific Research in 2012. As a researcher in the field of human interactions, I am interested in the emergence and the creation of ‘shared worlds’, especially in situations of interaction between two people. I explore the lived experience of encounters between living beings: from human to human and from human to non-human. I lead scientific research at CNRS on those topics, relying on micro-phenomenology and I also investigate this field through psycho-corporal practice

Constance Hinfray Wendenburg

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Reenactment of the pied piper of Hamelin myth

In order to carry out this project, it is fundamental to begin by exploring the founding myths of inter-species relations, by exploring what Freud calls ‘archaic remains’. In other words, those thoughts and visions which, over the millennia, have become part of the common memory and have ended up forming part of the human genetic heritage. Through this performance I will analyse how territory is thought of in relation to otherness (the territory of here or there, our territory or that of others), and can also be read as « the limit between the savage and the non savage » (Philippe Descola, P. Descola, «Le Sauvage et le domestique», «Communications 76 (2004)». Space, but also identities, have thus often been considered from the side of the one who draws borders. These conversations could be put in perspective with analyses of myths that still influence our relationship or rather the distance we maintain to what we call the wild world. The participants lie down and close their eyes, guided by Constance’s voice. Each one wears a headset connected to a station where Constance is sitting. Listening takes precedence over seeing to allow us to experience the environment differently. The performance is created in such a way that the senses used by humans are disturbed. The intention is that the participants slightly lose control and let themselves be carried away by the sound coming through the earpieces. A few cushions are placed on the floor, so that the participants can slowly disconnect from daily activities and rhythm. The ears are first stimulated by Constance’s voice, then slowly non human sounds start to emerge in the soundscape. Scratching, sniffing, high-pitched sounds plunge the participants into a completely new sound environment, inspired by the world of rats. This performance is based on the german tale of the Rattenfänger. The audience is the one who finds itself in a listening position, just as the rats are in relation to the Pied Piper, embodied by Constance and her voice.

Bio

Constance Hinfray Wendenburg is an artist and researcher. She is currently doing a PhD (research & creation label) at the University of Rennes 2. Constance graduated from the School of Fine Arts in Quimper in 2014 and from the Sandberg Institute in Amsterdam in 2017. Her artistic practice consists of organising performances that take place in large metropolises such as Tokyo, Paris, Amsterdam and other smaller cities such as Saint-Malo (FR) or Nijmegen (NL). In her performances, in which the inhabitants of a

neighbourhood are systematically involved, Constance questions the relationship between city residents and the animals that live in the various environments that make up urban space (pigeons, starlings, ducks, rats, etc.). Each performance takes the form of a ceremony bringing into play different practices relating to orality (personal stories, myths, scientific knowledge), gestures (movements, displacements, choreographies), and fabrication (costumes, objects).

Martin Givors

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60% inside 40% outside

Filming the ecosomatic entanglements of Qigong practitioners

In March 2017, Professor Wei Qi Feng was invited in Europe to give workshops in Zhineng Qigong, a Chinese discipline of physical and mental exercises designed to regulate the flows of “energy” (qi) both within the body and between the body and its environment. One day, before going on a silent walk in the countryside, he said to the participants: “When you are enjoying the nature, connect to it with your inside, do not only look at it [...] Put 60% of your attention inside, 40% outside.” Since 2020, I have been carrying a fieldwork with some of his French students in order to study the specific “somatic modes of attention” (Csordas, 1993) developed by the practice of zhineng qigong. My research focuses on how the lived-body of the practitioners becomes a space of meeting and mixing with their environment and the various forces/agents they recognize in it, such as the elements, the weather, the trees or the void. In addition to my own involvement in this practice, I have been filming practitioners since February 2022 to document, analyse and share this research. This choice is based on a wager: that of being able to allow the audience to feel how these bodies are touching and being touched by their environment, by invisible forces, and not only by their own internal imagination. My presentation will therefore be built around the projection of ethnographic videos at the crossroads of documentary and choreography. Mixing images of practice and interviews, these materials aim to both study the ecosomatic entanglements of the qigong practitioners and invite the audience to immerse into their rituals.

Bio

Martin Givors is a FNRS postdoctoral researcher, affiliated to the University of Liège (LASC). In 2019, he is defending a doctoral thesis on the learning processes of the contemporary dancers involved in Fractus V, a dance show choreographed by Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui's, over the course of four years of rehearsal and tour. Today, his work focuses on a collection of somatic practices from site-specific dance and Chinese martial arts seeking for continuities between the body and its environment. This research has led him to follow the creative processes of the choreographer and director Christophe Haleb (Marseille, France), as well as to carry out a fieldwork within different communities of qigong and kung fu practitioners, notably at the Shaolin Temple Europe (Otterberg, Germany) and in the Grenoble region (France).