



IMAG

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InSEA ART Education VISUAL Journal IMAG intends to provide a visual platform, which, in line with the constitution of InSEA, will help foster international cooperation and understanding, and promote creative activity in art through sharing experiences, improving practices, and strengthening the position of art in all educational settings. IMAG is an international, online, Open Access and peer-reviewed e-publication for the identification, publication and dissemination of art education theories and practices through visual methods and media.

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TRACES

Visual Arts Education in Sweden

Introduction

This special IMAG issue, Traces – Visual Arts Education in Sweden, is published by members of InSEA Sweden, and include 20 visual essays and articles. The aim of this publication is to map the field of Swedish visual arts education by describing, exemplifying and discussing some of the issues relevant in current visual arts education, also of interest to the international art educational field. The InSEA members who are contributing with their work are visual arts teachers in elementary and secondary school, art pedagogues in preschools and museums, doctoral students and researchers in universities, from the far north to the south of Sweden.

In this issue of IMAG the content and the current national visual knowledge field is divided into five themes: Environment & Sustainability, Educational projects, Art & Museums, Gender perspectives and Teacher Education. Through the themes, the reader meets different practices and theoretical perspectives on visual arts education. The visual essays and articles give examples of discusses educational contexts and situations involving children and pupils, as well as visual arts teacher students work, through a combination of drawings, paintings, photographs and texts.

With this contribution – with an aim to trace and depict the Swedish visual arts educational situation on an international map – we wish the reader a pleasant and informative reading.

March 2020

The editors,
Tarja Karlsson Häikiö & Annika Hellman

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Presentation of themes and contributions



Photograph from visual essay Dissolving views, Anna Ramberg

Theme ENVIRONMENT & SUSTAINABILITY

In the first essay, *Art-based Environmental Education and Ecological Literacy as a Foundation for Sustainable Thinking and Acting*, Margaretha Häggström present a study with an attempt to explain the phases of ecological literacy in relation to art-based environmental education based on a life-world phenomenological perspective. This visual essay give examples of how teachers and pupils experience and use the aesthetic values of plants and natural environments. The study is an action-research study that includes

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video-taped, participative observations and interviews, where art-based environmental education is used in order to achieve sustainable sensibility and plant awareness. The results of the study contribute with knowledge about ecological literacy development.

The unexpected, risk-taking and creative actions are core pedagogic concepts in a second-year module in a visual arts teacher BA course at a university in southern Sweden. In the article *From Non-site to Sustainable Design Challenged by Material Transformations and Oral Receptions*, Helena Malm present and discuss the work processes of three second-year visual arts teacher students. The students' processes are about sustainable site-specific design through visual and ethnographic methods which includes documentation and sketching processes in different materials. During the process, the students challenge each other through oral reception analysis, inspired by social constructivist semiotic analysis. This pedagogic design is based on interweaving theory and practice, and the idea that students should develop knowledge in, about, and through images.

Theme SCHOOL PROJECTS

Oskar Lindvall's contribution is a visual essay called *Notes on lifting art - A creative school project*, that describes a collaborative project between a compulsory school in Sweden and two artists, focusing on strengthening the arts curriculum in secondary school. In the project pupils in school year 9 and the artists, with experience of working with collaborative site-specific street art projects, creates art works in the school environment. The project, that was financed with money from the Swedish Arts Council, was part of Creative school, a national investment in art in schools by the Swedish government. The art project is based on the curriculum for the subject visual arts for years 7-9, where the learning goals encompasses directives on meaning-making through art in society.

The authors of the article *Additional Adjustments in Visual Arts Education*, Lisa Öhman and Barbro Johansson, reports from an ongoing participatory project carried out in an upper secondary school in an Art program in visual arts. The two researchers and a

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visual arts teacher have jointly developed professional knowledge about additional adjustments in visual arts education. The overall aim for the project is to investigate how different additional adjustments can develop the didactic design in the classroom of visual arts. The documentation gathered in the study offers critical reflections on how the teacher can reorganise and provide new and different support structures for learning.

In the article *Performing Otherwise - The Classroom as a Nomadic, Material Space*, Paul Resch and Ulla Lind engages in what the production of differences can mean for pedagogy in knowledge-generation, meaning-making and educational creativity. The aim is to exemplify how open-ended ambiguousness can cross boundaries, propose newness, and unfold knowledge as something playful. An assignment involving an imaginative story used to introduce a Sloyd (Handicraft) classroom assignment for 10 year-olds. The authors argue that by engaging with classroom experience as nomadic, material and performative, we gain intriguing passages into learning where the unexpected, uncertain and ambiguous have the potential to un-fold learning activities in relation to everyday life.

The research by Elin Låby involves the phenomena of how child art intervene with different ideals of schooling and childhood in a historical Swedish context. Her article is called *Interventions of Time – Child Art Competitions in the 20th Century*. It starts with a discussion on the phenomena of child art competitions, where the images from the 1940's to late 1970's are analysed. In the end of the article, the author also discuss how children in the municipality in the city of Eskilstuna worked together with artists in an art project in 2017, creating a sculpture together.

Ulla Lind and Annika Hellman writes about young people's visual and verbal becomings through fabulations, in their article called *Visual Fabulations and a Thousand Becomings in Media and Art Education*. The empirical material draws upon two educational research studies from visual arts and media practices, conducted by the authors. They contribute with knowledge about the potentials of visual arts and media education to fabulate, speculate and thus generate future becomings, that might be realised. By analysing

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pupil's fabrications, the potentiality of visual arts and media education becomes visible; for example unleashing creativity through experimental and open ended learning processes.

Malena Wallin and Charlotta Gavelin present a study called *Teacher Students Meet Their Intended Target Group - Aesthetic Work on Tweenies as a Phenomenon*, with the purpose to investigate how visual representations of identity are created and perceived by future leisure-time center teachers. In the leisure-time center there are opportunities to focus on interdisciplinary, value-based work, not least through aesthetic and creative processes through use of storyline. Through using storyline as a method, the students dared to experiment with other inputs than the ones in traditional teaching. The storyline method helped the students to approach and deal with problems like how to take up difficult subjects in the teaching activities.

Theme ART & MUSEUMS

In the visual essay *Children and young people meet the art at Moderna Museet*, Maria Taube, Ylva Hillström and Pernilla Stalfeldt writes about young people's encounters with art, and methods for children and young people to meet art. Moderna Museet was one of the first modern museums in Sweden to set up a workshop where children and young people could paint and draw inspired by what they saw at the museum. Since then, the pedagogical activity has developed further. Here three recent projects are presented, based on the museum's exhibitions on climate change, photography and guided art tours for parents with babies.

The visual essay *Project at Svandammsskolan Involving the Artist Marie-Louise Ekman* is written by Margareta Abenius Eriksson. The essay consists of images made by pupils in school years 3-6, as paraphrases on the expressive and colourful art by the Swedish artist Marie-Louise Ekman. In the autumn of 2017 the art project started from an exhibition with the artist at Moderna Museet in Stockholm. Some of the pupils were acquainted with her art works, but for some of them the art by Ekman was intriguing. With inspiration from the painting *Lonely lady*, the pupils talked about what the artist – but

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also themselves – could long for. As a comment to the visit at the museum the pupils painted pictures of what one can long for, which were presented in a school gallery.

Bitte Fossbo writes about a school project with two high school classes in the visual essay *Learn from the Artist!* In the project, the students followed a guided tour at the art museum Moderna Muséet in Stockholm. The students participated in art talks and worked with the museum's collection of 20th century art. The visual essay describes how artistic expressions can be used for creating an understanding of what the world was like in the time when the artists were living. In this way the art talks also functioned as an example of visual arts educational activities outside of school, where the museum functions as a societal arena for knowledge acquisition.

In the article *Acts of Performance - as Research Method and Entangled Ethics*, Camilla Johansson Bäcklund explore how specific processes of art-based research can be described as method using concepts from posthuman theory. She explores boundaries between acting and performing that also grapples with wider ethical aspects produced from, and connected to, artistic practice. She discusses the act of performance in relation to the role of artist, but also as a way to approach the role of teacher through "research led-practice". This, claiming art to be useful within the usually text-dominated context of educational science, and as a comment to how teachers can approach roles, frameworks and learning spaces through Deleuze and Guattari's philosophical theory.

Author Anna Ramberg explore and present the course of events of children performing as guides at guided tours at an annual visual arts degree exhibition in Stockholm. In her visual essay *Dissolving Views - Re-Visualizing the Art Exhibition* the participants made paper fortune tellers to guide visitors through the exhibition. The aim of the essay is to show how both gallery exhibitions and guided tours can be re-visualized, thinking with children. Magic Lanterns, contemporary art, researchers and paper fortune tellers enabled dissolving views and creative ways of looking and learning. The study shows that art is not only about the artefacts; it is about the continuous making of the space, becoming together with the art

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and other visitors.

In this article, *Art Pedagogy – Contemporary Visual Art Studies*, the authors Anna Widén and Hans Örtengren describe a collaboration between a university and an art museum. The Contemporary Art Museum in Umeå in northern Sweden is one of Sweden's largest art galleries for contemporary art. The collaboration involves a course called Art Pedagogy, where an art-pedagogical project is planned, conducted and presented. Two projects collected in the spring of 2018 were selected for analysis. The result show that a win-win situation may occur when actors with different competences and resources participate in a project. For this to happen the schools and teachers need to have an interest in, and be prepared for a project, with an initial understanding.

Theme GENDER PERSPECTIVES

An image says more than a thousand words, but what does these words mean? Katarina Jansson Hydén gives examples of how art works can be analysed in upper secondary school, with and without a norm-critical perspective. Her essay *See more queer! to enable a broader perspective on existence through a norm-critical analytical thinking*, concerns notions pre-conceiving knowledge and the need of developing understanding through norm-critical image analysis in relation to a social gender context. Through examples with young people, the author discusses how image analysis is colored by normative pre-conceptions, often perceived and staged by gestures or choice of clothing, as well as glances of positioning, gender and spatiality.

The article *Perspectives on Equality and Assessment: Boys' Responses in Visual Arts Education* is written by Lova Palmér, and is centered around conditions for creating equivalence in assessment in the school subject visual arts. The study is informed by a socio-cultural perspective on learning, and the material presented is based on tasks in Palmér's own visual arts classroom from the study year 2017-2018 in the school years 7-9 in compulsory school. One of the main directives in the curriculum in Sweden is that school should be imbued with equivalence. According to previous studies, the

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subject visual arts has a strong female connotation, and according to national evaluations in Sweden girls have better average grades than boys in the subject. The aim of the study was to test and improve teaching practice, pupils' activities and assignments, and to improve the professional skills of the teacher.

Theme TEACHER EDUCATION

In the visual essay *What happens to image teacher students who work with conceptual contemporary art methods and processes?*, Ewa Berg describes the use of conceptual, contemporary art methods in visual arts teacher education. She shows how visual arts teacher students' critical thinking and active agencies has been developed and empowered by working with contemporary conceptual artistic methods. Equally important is the presenting of students' art work in public spaces. The author further argues that since art-teacher-student inevitably will re-enact their experiences to pupils in secondary school, and thus are able to also carry over processes of empowerment to these pupils, it is of a vital importance to provide well thought-through learning process in higher education.

In the visual essay *Sketching and Drawing as Part of the Learning Process - Showing Ideas and Presenting Projects*, Anneli Martin describes sketching as a part of the learning process in different kinds of teaching contexts with university students at three different faculties and programs in higher education. In the essay, case studies are presented from design courses, teacher education and engineering courses at three universities. Pen and paper, as well as charcoal and coloured crayons, were introduced to the students as analogue tools for sketching and presenting ideas. The essay is a summary of a five-year long study where results are presented of the similarity and difference on use of sketching and drawing as means for thinking and expression in different kind of studies.

Maria Stam discusses the possibility of using artistic role models as a way of understanding Modernism in visual arts teaching in her visual essay *Modernism - Historical Perspectives in Visual Arts Teacher Education*. The author shows examples from several students' duplications and paraphrases of art work from famous

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artists. The visual essay is a narrative description of how modernistic art works can be used as tools in visual arts teacher education to create understanding of how artistic trends affects the society and the ways of seeing in society, creating an insight of art historic, artistic and educational knowledge through the students' art work and pedagogical reflection.

In the article *A/r/tography in Visual Arts Teacher Training Program Examination*, Annika Hellman and Tarja Karlsson Häikiö discusses degree projects in visual arts teacher education. Through the concept a/r/tography the authors aim to reflect and discuss the positions as artist, researcher and teacher, that are interlaced in the future position as, and becoming a visual arts teacher. One student's visual and textual degree project is selected to investigate the exams from artistic, research-based and teaching practice perspectives. The authors highlight and discuss the benefits and limitations of merging these three positions, and what implications these processes might have for visual arts education in general.

ART

&

MUSEUMS

Acts of Performance as Research Method and Entangled Ethics

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Abstract

In my artistic practice there is a common occurrence of staging or entering into situations in which investigative acts is performed. The acts are often durational, iterative, bodily exhausting and an attempt to point out contradictions and deal with vague parts of a researched phenomenon. By taking pounce in my own performance practice, contextualizing the experience within agential realism as well as analysing the practices of other artists, the essay will examine how these specific processes of research can be described as method. In doing so, it also grapples with wider ethical aspects produced from and connected to the artistic practice; a practice that takes note of a non-human-centered worldview.

Keywords: performance, performativity, entangled ethics, intra-action, diffraction, respons-ability, svar-barhet, ethico-onto-epistemology, research led-practice

Dedicated to the unnamed spruce

Performance acts as room for thinking

In my artistic practice there is a common occurrence of staging or entering into situations in which investigative acts is performed. The acts are often durational, iterative, bodily exhausting and an attempt to point out contradictions and dealing with vague parts of a researched phenomenon. These inquiries almost always dig into tangential questions of relations, not only those derived from human interaction, but rather including any material entities; environmental, non-human and human. Entangled in time and space.

I often experience performance as a space for me to develop my understanding beyond what the performance itself is staging or implying. In my artistic practice it's not only the outcome and the meeting with an audience that is important in terms of knowledge production. Within this essay I will discuss what can be produced from an artistic practice of durational and iterative performance. The text does not focus on what is communicated to a potential audience or what becomes visible to a recipient in itself. Nor is the recipient's understanding or experience of performance focused. A special interest is put into acknowledging about how the actual process of doing a performance can inform the researchers/artists own inquiry/practice.

By speaking through my own performance practice and contextualizing the experience within theory as well as analyzing the practice of two other artists, this essay will examine how these specific processes of research can be described as method. In doing so, it also grapples with wider ethical aspects produced from and connected to the artistic practice; a practice that takes note of a non-human-centered worldview.

Related previous work and formulation of a problem

I will start by saying something about how I have used performance acts as method in previous works. As part of my thesis from the teacher's program in arts and crafts, *Knowing Through Artmaking [Kunskapande genom konstskapande]*¹, I staged a spatial setting for artistic action in which I projected my own shadow against the wall and tried to fill in my own outlines while moving. The intention was to create possibilities to illustrate or picture identity production in relation to different concepts

of knowledge and truth. The staging and the action intended to provide something other than, what later proved, to be its most important feature; a space that produces new knowledge, a setting that actually worked as an inquiring method. At that time, I could not contextualize or name this method. I just know it helped me and played an important role for the actual thesis.

Eight years later, I took those experiences further within my master thesis. An auto-ethnographic study *The Unfree Will [Den ofria viljan]*, that proposed how teachers could approach the roles, frameworks and learning spaces through Deleuze and Guattari's philosophical arguments around smooth and striated spaces.^{2 3} I researched those questions through literary studies, pedagogical fieldnotes and two performances, *The Cycling* and *The Ironing*.^{4 5} This was to explore the contradictory position I found myself in as an artist and a teacher, working in a labor market training program between 2009 and 2011.

The Cycling intended to explore the school system and society in relation to will and matter. This work was performed during 13Festivalen at Konstepidemin, Gothenburg in January 2015. For three hours of performance I rode a static bike with a dia-projector which projected an image of myself. My projection and me were dressed in the same grey suit⁶.

The Ironing intended to explore the contradiction in how I, as teacher, fellow human and artist sometimes, whilst in meetings with others, in spite of good intentions, make the situation worse.

1. Wu, C. (2008), *Kunskapande genom konstskapande* <http://hdl.handle.net/2077/18534>
2. Johansson Bäcklund, C. (2016). *Den ofria viljan* <http://hdl.handle.net/2077/46704>
3. Deleuze, G. & Guattari, F. (1987). *A thousand plateaus: capitalism and schizophrenia*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis.
4. Johansson Bäcklund, C. *The Cycling*, 2015, http://camillart.se/WORKS/Poster/2015/1/5_Cyklingen.html, (accessed 29 October 2019).
5. Johansson Bäcklund, C. *The Ironing*, 2016, http://camillart.se/WORKS/Poster/2016/1/5_Ironing.html, (accessed 29 October 2019).
6. The work also refer to *Momo/The Grey Gentlemen/The Men in Grey* and is in a way a critical reflection of labour and motivation.

This work was performed during 13Festivalen at Konststepidemin, Gothenburg in January 2016. During one day of work (7 am to 4 pm), I ironed 80 unwrinkled shirts wrinkled.⁷ The shirts were made of different materials and their color and quality varied. The remaining scenography was completely gray and I wore the same gray suit as in *The Cycling*.

To make these performances useful within the text-based context of educational science, I recollected the memorial outcome from the acts by taking notes in direct connection to the performances. A few minutes to write down words and short sentences from what the act and the setting made me think about when doing it. The notes eventually became the main structure of a poetic narrative that I used as data for the study. The note-taking is also something I have continued to use as a way of remembering and holding on to my experience of what the acts produce. Examples of these kind of notes and how they work will be presented later.

The Cykling, *The Ironing* and the total work of *The Unfree Will* [*Den ofria viljan*] were framed and discussed within affect theory according to the philosopher Gilles Deleuze. Subsequently I developed and named the method as auto-affective. This is described in the chapter *Performance as Auto-affective Method - Ways of Becoming in Educational Science*, part of the anthology *Art-based education: an ethics and politics of relation*⁸.

*The words "affect" and "affection" do not describe personal feelings. Affect is ability, the ability to affect or to be affected. Deleuze and Guattari describe the becoming as an operation between space, percept, and affect as a result of bodies in action. [...] Departing from those theories of affects and becoming as well as from my own experience of artistic work and teaching in artistic/aesthetic school subjects, I have used a research method I describe as auto-affective. In this context, "auto" does not imply that phenomena or people can be affected without interaction with contexts/things/other persons. The method of auto-affect instead concerns the artistic act where artists are put themselves in staged situations that presumably give rise to moments of intensity where affects appear.*⁹

But I still felt a need of having a theory and methodology that grasped the whole complex picture of all entangled becoming, including the ethical aspects, within the process. Something I seem to have found in the quantum physicist Karen Barads *agential realism*.¹⁰ Within this essay, therefore, I reframe the method and transition from affect-theory towards agential realism.

At first I will try to contextualize these acts of performance within a research context. Then I go through and define the concepts *performativity*, *intra-action* and *diffraction*, which have relevance for the methodology. After this I will present two recently performed works, *To Kill a Tree* and *To Stand With a Tree*, and the notes produced from them. As a closing discussion I, by linking the presented theories and concepts with the material produced from the performance acts, hopefully meet up with the two main uncertainties and vagueness about previous attempts to formulate and contextualize this methodology of my artistic practice. (1) The problem with human centered notion and (2) the partly used ethics. This in an attempt to make the methodology more understandable and useful for me and others.

Art-based research and knowledge production

The part of my practice I am trying to contextualize in this essay, according to Andris Teikmanis, Professor of art history, semiotics and research, can be described as research "through art" rather than "in art".¹¹ In the chapter *Typologies of Research*, Teikmanis goes through several descriptions of artistic research and formulates five different kinds of artistic research in a model to describe *relations between*

7. The work refer to Deleuze and Guattarie's philosophical argument on smooth and striated spaces.

8. Karlsson Häikiö, T. & Eriksson, K. G. (red.), *Art-based education: an ethics and politics of relation*, HDK, Göteborg, 2018.

9. Johansson Bäcklund, C. "Performance as Auto-affective Method - Ways of Becoming in Educational Science". In T. Karlsson Häikiö & Kajsa G. Eriksson (red.), *Art-based education: an ethics and politics of relation* (pp. 203-226), HDK, Göteborg, 2018.

10. Barad, K. (2007). *Meeting the universe halfway: quantum physics and the entanglement of matter and meaning*. Duke University Press, Durham, N.C.

11. Wilson, M. & van Ruiten, S. (red.), *Share: handbook for artistic research education*, ELIA, Amsterdam, 2013, (p.164).

art practice and research. According to this model, I would suggest that the method that is intended to be contextualized with this essay is most related to “research led-practice”. This is a practice characterized by having an intention to produce both artwork and new knowledge, formulate solutions and theory, and produce both text and artwork by the same author.

For me, the performance is a cooperating part of the thinking produced within the act. This can possibly be compared to many other artists and their experience of practice, but it is difficult finding texts describing the relationship between the performance act and what it produces in relation to the artists own understanding.

In January 2017 I saw a documentation on Wura-Natasha Ogunji’s work *Will I still carry water when I am a dead woman* at Louisiana Museum of Modern Art. A performance in collaboration with two other women where they walked in the heat, with kegs of water strapped to their ankles, through the inner streets of Lagos, Nigeria.¹² The process seemed for me to have many connections to the specific durational, iterative and the bodily exhausting performance acts I am performing, and I decided to contact Ogunji for an interview. The questions to her puts attention on how the performance act produces knowledge or informs specific understandings for the artist that performs it. For example, what the performance makes the artist think and rethink during the process of doing it. Ogunji answers:

Performance, for me, provides a way to answer certain questions that other forms of creativity do not. I’m specifically interested in how physical actions, movements of the body (sometimes including endurance, but not always) provide knowledge, information, clarity, expansion in how I see the world.

...

The works offer a structure for (self) understanding via performance. This understanding is most often experienced as an elevated state of being, a clearer way of looking at and understanding the world.

¹³

This *clearnes* that Ogunji describes can maybe be related to what

I mean when I say that the set for the performance offers a room for thinking. A delimitation that offers clarification. Frames that clarifies for thoughts to develop.

But how does this become a research method that, not just results in public art and artistic processes, but also produces and communicates knowledge? Annette Arlander, professor in performance, art and theory has, through her text *Agential Cuts and Performance as Research*, described how she have found the agential realism useful to her practice.¹⁴ Especially how it can challenge and account for the inclusions and exclusions that is produced within the performance artists research.¹⁵ Additionally, how we use our apparatuses, and what apparatuses we are used by.

Even though artistic methods in many ways have been part of research traditions during history, they are still often seen as emotive rather than informative. This can, according to the authors of *Handbook of the arts in qualitative research: Perspectives, methodologies, examples, and issues*, be derived back to Plato.¹⁶ As a result of UNESCO recommendations for international standardization of statistics on science from 1979, and OECD definitions and classifications of research and development in Frascati Manual from 2002, art-based practices have being distinguished from scientific research.¹⁷

12. Ogunji, W. N. (2013). Will I still carry water when I am a dead woman, https://wuraogunji.com/artwork/3269387_Will_I_still_carry_water_when_I_am_a.html, (accessed 29 October 2018).

13. E-mail intervju with W. N. Ogunji, 2019-12-04.

14. Arlander, A., Barton, B., Dreyer-Lude & Spatz, M.& B. (red.), *Performance as research: knowledge, methods, impact* (pp.133-151). First edition., Routledge, New York, 2017. 15. A. Arlander, 2017, op. cit. (147)

16. Knowles J. G. & Ardra, L. C. (2008). *Handbook of the arts in qualitative research: Perspectives, methodologies, examples, and issues* (pp.3-6). Sage, 2008.

17. H. Borgdorff, *The conflict of the faculties: perspectives on artistic research and academia*. Leiden: Leiden University Press, 2012.

For the last two decades, however, there has been a move towards more transdisciplinary research practices, not only within the humanities or natural science but even crossover. This might be why agential realism has been so well received in many fields, including the artistic. With theory well grounded in practice, Barad make clear how the dualistic idea of science as nature and the humanities as culture is worth questioning. Arlander point out that this "bridge" between science and humanities gives "space for a wide variety of experimental practices artist-researchers might engage with".¹⁸ *Agential realism* is troubling binaries. For example nature and culture, macro and micro, matter and discourse. With this approach, even ontology and epistemology are inseparable. Through agential realism, knowledge-making is studied in becoming. "The study of practices of knowing in being". "We know because we are of the world".¹⁹ This attitude that knowledge becomes into being, gives the researcher no distinction between epistemology and ontology and Barad has, based on this reasoning, formulated the concept of onto-epistemology.²⁰

Performativity, intra-action and diffraction

The concept of performativity is used frequently by artists with a performance related practice. But there is a lot of ambiguity in the use of these terms. In the article *Artistic Research: A Performative Paradigm*, the research theorist and visual artist Barbara Bolt addresses the question "What is performativity?". She attempting to, unravel how the term was defined by the philosopher John Langshaw Austin within the linguistic tradition and how it has been expanded within academia, and also adapted by contemporary visual and performing arts, by theorists as John Searle, Jacques Derrida, Judith Butler and Gille Deleuze.²¹

*In Searle's hands Austin's ideas have become incorporated into a 'general theory of the speech act'; through Derrida's notion of différance we come to understand the dynamics of the iterability; in Butler's theorizing, Austin's frame of reference is expanded to demonstrate how performativity can include bodily acts; whilst Deleuze espouses the forceful, transformative and creative potential of the performative.*²²

Performativity is also used and described by Barad, as part of agential realism, as the ongoing mattering of the world. Agential realism questions the tradition of human-centered research by introducing and developing several concepts.²³ The interpersonal interaction is replaced by intra-action, which shows the participation of matter and the non-human within the process of becoming. As mentioned before, materiality and discourse are treated as intimately entangled and impossible to separate.²⁴ The human body, or other bodies, thus does not take place in the world. They are constantly created through material-discursive intra-actions. "Bodies and the environment create each other in intra-activity".²⁵ This creation of the world through intra-action is what constitutes the definition of performativity in Agential Realism.²⁶

Both Barad and Bolt point out that the way performativity has been, and still are, used within the arts somehow complicates and undermines the understanding of the concept. But while Bolt suggested to partly staying with Austin's definition and extends it with affect theory, Barad suggests that every intra-action is performative in the ongoing becoming of the world. With Barads materialistic and posthuman notion of performativity, as I understand it, you cannot say there are no non-performative performance.²⁷

A performative mode of thinking is about being a part of, or within, the researched phenomenon. It's a "science-in-the-making" that does not deal with representationalism and how it "reflects on the world from outside".²⁸ As soon as we understand that *we are a part*

18. A. Arlander, 2017, op. cit. (147)

19. K. Barad, op. cit. (185)

20. K. Barad, op. cit. (185, 381)

21. Bolt, B. (2016). *Artistic Research: A Performative Paradigm*. Parse Journal, No 3, 129-142.

22. Bolt, 2016, op. cit.

23. Barad, 2007, op. cit. (146)

24. Barad, 2007, op. cit. (148-152)

25. Ivarsson, J.(2016). Agentisk realism: en genusvetenskaplig formulering av kvantfysikens Lagar. Tidskrift för genusvetenskap, 37(3), 96-113, 2016. Translated citation.

26. Barad, 2007, op. cit. (152)

27. Barad, K. (2003). Posthumanist performativity: Toward an understanding of how matter comes to matter. *Signs: Journal of women in culture and society*, 28(3), 801-831.

28. Barad, 2007, op. cit. (87)

of we also have to abandon the idea of reflection as a tool for knowledge production. Instead Barad suggested to use diffractive methodology formulated by Donna Haraway, Professor in history of consciousness.²⁹ The diffractive methodology deals with differences and relationalities. The knowledge produced is from the patterns of differences researched from within a phenomenon, the diffraction patterns. This approach means reading *through* (as a diffraction grating) rather than *against* (a fixed target, such as mirroring).³⁰

*The move toward performative alternatives to representationalism shifts the focus from questions of correspondence between descriptions and reality (e.g., do they mirror nature or culture?) to matters of practices/doings/actions.*³¹

Social aspects, agency and entangled ethics

No matter which issue or relation, there are always plenty of nuances and many possible ways of approaching it. The ethical considerations constantly force us into contradictory positions often described in terms of right and wrong that, when you really try to make good decisions, seem to merge into the same act. The dilemmas formulated within the moral philosophy are often fabricated histories of humans forced into decisions we almost never stand in front of. I ofcourse think these models for thinking ethics can be constructive in many ways, but they are, as i see it, useless in relation to what we are facing regarding mass extinction, climate change and other natural-cultural relations. This cannot be solved with these blunt tools.

In both my reading of art theory and in the educational contexts I've been involved in, I have found that ethics are mostly formulated and discussed in relation to socially engaged art; art that have an intention to reach, for example, a specific public or deal with certain problems within society. During the last two decades it has been a growing interest of social collaboration which is described by the art historian, and critic Claire Bishop as "the social turn".³² The change has also led to that the assessment of artists practice has become more process oriented and judged by "the degree to which they supply good or bad models of collaboration". I would assert that ethics, with that approach, is treated

as a separate field of study and applied *on or to* a problem, as if the ethics appear only when a specific, often human-centered, relation is on state.

To investigate phenomena consisting of people and materials, as well as the intangible thoughts and ideas that take part in the research process, a theoretical framework is needed that can master the complexity it entails. Through the agential realism, Barad describes an understanding of the world as natural and social forces in a constantly intertwined existence. Barad argues that we cannot look at materiality as either something given, a surface waiting to be activated, or a product of human culture. Agential realism makes clear that he human itself is material.

The onto-epistemological approach in combination with the fact that nature and culture cannot be separated makes ethics constantly present.³⁵ Barads formulation of the agential realism thus constitutes an *ethico-onto-epistemological framework* where the being, the knowledge and the ethical dimensions are intertwined. The framework of agential realism³⁶ brings an ethico-onto-epistemological approach³⁷. It's a material-discursive practice where both natural and social forces come to matter³⁸.

29. Barad, 2007, op. cit. (90)

30. Barad, 2007, op. cit. (90)

31. Barad, 2003, op. cit. (802)

32. Bishop, C. (2006). The social turn: Collaboration and its discontents. *Artforum International*, 44(6) (02), 178-183.

33. Bishop, 2006, op. cit. (2)

34. Barad, 2007, op. cit. (183)

35. Barad, 2007, op. cit. (182-185)

36. Barad, 2007, op. cit. (26)

37. Barad, 2007, op. cit. (185, 381)

38. Barad, 2007, op. cit. (146-153)

*Ethico-onto-epistemology. An intertwining of ethics, knowing, and being – since each intra-action matters, because the becoming of the world is a deeply ethical matter.*³⁹

According to my reading of Barad, there is an importance of being aware of the presence of ethics throughout the whole research process, and to accept ethics as entangled within the whole work. The ethics turns out to something you cannot examine in relation to one single part of the process. But this can also be paralysing. How can I possibly do anything if every movement somehow can have bad effects on some locations of the entanglements I'm a part of?

Two performance acts from spring 2019

I will now present the texts from two acts performed during spring 2019. I do this as an attempt to make visible how the performance somehow informs my understanding and intra-actively produces knowledge. The diffractions from the intra-acting causes patterns within the thoughts which I try to grasp by taking notes.

Performance act 1 : 2019 04 05 : To Kill a Tree

I am gardening. Trying to transform my easy-care evergreen 70 's garden into a forest garden, an agroforestry system with woodland ecosystems and biodiversity that gives me locally produced food. Within this action I once again find myself into a situation where my intentions to do something good turns out to produce a lot of ethical complexities. And the act becomes actualized within my artistic practice. I decided to film myself when sawing down one of the spruces.

The act of sawing down the spruce made me think of my self in relation to The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, article 17, which says: *Everyone has the right to own property alone as well as in association with others. No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his property.*⁴⁰ I could not resist the absurdity. How this formulation formulates an intention of equality, and at the same time implicate asymmetries of power. There are traces from human history of capitalism, nationalism and human centrism, all entangled with the will of create equality. After the act of sawing down

the spruce I take notes.

Jag äger en bit land / Tydligen är det min rättighet / En mänsklig rättighet / Människor är exceptionellt bra på att beskriva sina rättigheter / Men vad är mina mänskliga skyldigheter? / Hur kan jag använda denna plätt / min trädgård / till att agera lokalt men tänka globalt / Spaden sätts i jorden, rötter grävs upp, träd sågas ner / Men trots goda intentioner skaver mina handlingar / Jag sågar ner en gran för att ge plats åt ett fruktträd / Vem är jag att bestämma vad som skall tas bort och läggas till / kolonialisera / exploatera / Snart skall jag besöka världens äldsta träd / Old Tjikko / En gran på Fulufjället i Dalarna / Den är 9 550 år / Min gran blev 11 / Jag har räknat på det / På ringarna i dess sår

I own a piece of land / Obviously, it's my right / A human right / Humans are extraordinary on describing their rights / But what are my human obligations? / What can I do with this piece / my garden / to act locally but think globally / The shovel is put into the soil, roots are dug up, trees are cut down / But in spite of good intentions / my actions chafe / I saw down a spruce to give room to a fruit tree / Who am I to decide what should be removed and what should be added / to colonize / to exploit / Soon I will visit the world's oldest tree / Old Tjikko / A spruce located at Fulufjället in Dalarna / It's 9 550 years old / My spruce was 11 years / I've counted on that / On the rings of its wound

39. Barad, 2007, op. cit.

40. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, article 17



The intra-actions within the act actualizes, clarifies and connects different memories and knowledges and makes me aware of my role within a researched phenomena. I see this as a way of how diffraction becomes visible within the act and shapes diffractive patterns in thought.

Performance act 2: 2019 05 14 : To stand with a tree

In May, I traveled to Fulufjället with Annette Arlander to visit the 9 550 year old spruce Old Tjikko and to interview her about her performance practice. I have found similarities in our practices while reading about her work. For example the iterative processes and the note-taking. Annette Arlander and I stand with Old Tjikko fifteen minutes per hour during one day. I take notes after each act.



10:30 Stå som old Tjikko / Armarna längs kroppen / Blunda / Stå / Stå

10:30 Stand like old Tjikko / Arms along the body / Eyes closed / Stand / Stand

11:30 Annette står / sitter / Old Tjikko står, hänger, kryper / längs berg / klamrar / i sprickor / Står / Jag sitter med Tjikko / och Annett / Blundar / Rött / Tittar / Blått / Blundar med varmröda ögonlock / Tittar / Blått, grönt, grått / Reser mig / Går fyra steg / Står / Ansiktet mot dalen / Blundar / Står / Blundar / Står / Står / Går

11:30 Annette stands / sits / Old Tjikko stands, hangs, crawls / along mountains / clamps / in cracks / Stands / I sit with Tjikko / and Annette / eyes closed / Red / Eyes open / Blue / Close eyes / warm red eyelids / Eyes open / Blue, green, gray / raises / Walk four steps / Stands / Face to the valley / Closes eyes / Stands / Eyes closed / Stands / Stands / Leaves

13:30 Samma procedur / Ändå helt annan / Ny / Går / Sitter / Går /
Står / Blundar / vajar / nästan omärkligt / Samtidigt tydligt märkbart
/ Blundar / Står / Blundar / Står / Det är varmare / Sol mot rygg /
Blundar / Står / Går

13:30 Same procedure / Yet completely different / New / Walking
/ Sitting / Walking / Standing / Eyes closed / Waves / Almost
imperceptible / At the same time clearly noticeable / Eyes closed
/ Stands / Eyes closed / Stands / It is warmer / Sun against back /
Eyes closed / Stands / Leaves

14:30 Upprepar / Iterativt / Sitter på stenen / Framför / bakom /
intill Tjikko och Annette / Undrar om rötter sträcker sig under den
sten som jag sitter på / Undrar om Tjikko känner min tyngd / Undrar
om jag stör / Undrar över en specifik gren / Undrar hur gammal
den är / Undrar över varför åldern verkar viktig för mig / Undrar hur
gammal granen där en bit bort är / Undrar varför jag inte sitter hos
den / Undrar om någon döpt den / Undrar om den bryr sig / Reser
mig / Går några steg runt / Ställer mig / Står / Sluter ögonen / rött
/ Står / Blundar / Står / blundar / Vacklar till / Öppnar ögonen /
Går

14:30 Repeats / Iterative / Sitting on the stone / In front of / behind
/ next to Tjikko and Annette / Wondering if roots extend under the
stone I sit on / Wondering if Tjikko feels my weight / Wondering if I
disturb / Wondering about a specific branch / Wondering how old
it is / Wondering why age seems important to me / Wondering how
old the spruce a bit away is / Wondering why I'm not sitting with it
/ Wondering if someone named it / Wondering if it cares / Raises
/ Walking a few steps around / Stand still / Stands / Closes eyes /
red / Stands / Eyes closed / Stands / closed eyes / Waver / Opens
eyes / Leaves

15:30 Iteration / Upprepning med liten förändring / Blivande
/ Tillblivelse / Sitter / blundar / Undrar / Reser / Går / Står /
Glömde jag sätta på inspelning? / Spelar det någon roll? / Står
/ Blundar / Undrar / Står / Blundar / Vinden tar tag / Jag vajar
till / Vacklar / Står kvar / ... / Står / Öppnar ögonen / Tittar på
Tjikko / Går

15:30 Iteration / Repetition with a small change / Becoming /
Sitting / closed eyes / Wondering / Raises / Walkes / Stands /
Did I forget to record? / Does it matter? / Stands / Closed eyes
/ Wondering / Stand / Eyes closed / The wind grabs / I Wave /
Wobble / Still stays / ... / Stand / Opens eyes / Watches Tjikko
/ Leaves

16:30 Iteration / Om någon har ett namn / Är vi mer benägna
att ta hand om den då? / Old Tjikko, gran, träd, växt, art,
organism / Namn, ord, språk / Igenkänning, kunskap, utveckling
/ Upplysning, kunskap, utveckling / Överlevnad, tävlan,
kapitalism / Överlevnad, samarbete, samhälle, solidaritet /
Blundar / står / Undrar / Blundar / Står / Går

16:30 Iteration / If someone has a name / Are we more likely to
take care of it then? / Old Tjikko, spruce, tree, plant, species,
organism / Name, words, language / Recognition, knowledge,
development / Enlightenment, knowledge, development
/ Survival, competition, capitalism / Survival, cooperation,
society, solidarity / Closes eyes / stand / Wonder / Eyes closed
/ Stands / Leaves

17:30 Tjikko har inget ansikte / Jag inbillar mig ändå att den står vänd mot dalen / Så jag står vänd mot dalen / När jag blundar står jag föresten vänd i alla riktningar / Jag inbillar mig att Tjikko står vänd i alla riktningar / Vi står här / Vända i alla riktningar / Ser inget / Jag ser förresten insidan av mina egna ögonlock / Jag kan inte sluta se / Även om jag skulle förlora synen skulle jag se / Eftersom jag en gång sett / Står / Blundar / Vänder blicken mot Tjikko / Tjikko står / Ligger / Slingrar / Breder ut / Sträcker fram, bak, åt sidan, upp / Jag går

17:30 Tjikko has no face / I still imagine it is facing the valley / So I am facing the valley / When I close my eyes I stand facing all directions / I imagine that Tjikko is facing all directions / We stand here / Facing all directions / Sees nothing / By the way, I see the inside of my own eyelids / I can't stop seeing / Even if I lose sight I would see / Since I once saw / Standing / Eyes closed / Looking at Tjikko / Tjikko stands / Lying / Meanders / Widening / Stretches forward, back, at side, up / I leave

18:30 Mulnar lite / Fler fåglar nu / Står / Blundar / Fallet hörs / Ibland mer / Ibland mindre / Är det vinden / Blundar / Står / Står / Vänd i alla riktningar / Står / Vajar i takt med fågelns sång / Vajar / Vacklar / Återfår balans / Står / Går

18:30 Mulls a little / More birds now / Standing / Eyes closed / The fall is heard / Sometimes more / Sometimes less / Is it the wind / Eyes closed / Standing / Standing / Facing all directions / Standing / Sways in rhythm with the song of the birds / Sway / Wobble / Returns balance / Stand / Leaves

As mentioned before, this method is driven by durational and iterative processes. Both those aspects are important to how the method turns out to offer a room/space where the action allows thought to expand on a researched subject, matter or question. The reiteration of an act can, for someone watching from a distance, seem to be repetitive. For the engaged entities of the act, however, each iteration give rise to changes. The diffractive notes make this clear. For every session new thoughts are produced. This knowledge production is an intra-active process giving rise to new understandings from the mattering of all entangled entities within it. In fact it's not even the exact set of matter that intra-act within each reenactment.

"To kill a tree" and "To Stand With a Tree" resulted in a video work, "The Cut". The four minutes long film shows me standing with tjikko, accompanied by the sound from me sawing down the unnamed spruce in my garden.

The performativity in every act, the notions from diffraction, and the respons-ability

By linking theories and concepts with experiences from performance practice and the material produced from it I, with this essay, intended to meet up with the uncertainties and vagueness about previous attempts to formulate and contextualize the methodology of my artistic practice. The intention was to reframe the method and make a shift from affect-theory, towards agential realism.

To dig deeper into how those performance processes operate, a wider range of interviews are necessary. But it is still possible to say something about what happens in the shift from affect theory to agential realism. Conceptually I suggest this shift means that the Deleuzian "bodies in action" becomes a Baradian "bodies in intra-action". I may also suggest to rename the method from auto-affective to *intra-diffractive*.

The performativity in the act of performing this essay, including all entangled matter, human as well as non-human, also in itself produced diffraction patterns in thought, partly recollected by note-taking. These notes, previously described as "affective narratives", how can they be named from now? Maybe notions *from diffraction*? I let those notions from diffractions be a starting point for this closing discussion.

Performativa akter är inte (nödvändigtvis) performances / Jag agerar inte (som i teater), Jag agerar (utför aktioner) / Jag utför inte aktioner (som i activism), jag utför iterativa handlingar (jag reagerar) / Då varje handling är performativ är en performativ akt inte alltid ett performance / Ett performance är inte alltid ett performance (på scen/som teater/för publik) / Varje handling är performance och en performativ re-aktion i världens tillblivande / Jag agerar inte, jag intra-agerar / Aldrig ensam i detta kunskapande / Aldrig utanför / Aldrig en avdelning, snarare en del-av / Jag äger ingen agens / Mina handlingar sammanflätade med andras - intra-aktionerna - producerar tillfällig agens / Agens är svar-barhet. / Etik är ansvar.

Performative acts are not (necessarily) performance / I'm not acting (as in theatre), I'm acting (does actions) / I'm not doing actions (as activism), I perform iterative actions (I reenact) / As every act is performative a performative act is not always a performance / A performance is not always a performance (on stage/as theatre/in public) / Every act are performance and a performative re-enactment of the worlds becoming / I am not acting, I am intra-acting / Never alone in this knowledge production / Never outside / Never apart, rather a part / I have no agency. My acts intertwined with others - the intra-actions - producing temporary agency / Agency is about respons-ability. / Ethics about responsibility.

The act of performance and research are entangled practices. Science-in-the-making. In this entangled practice, ethics is constantly present. The question that remains for me is, how do we deal with this overwhelming awareness? Is there ways to find ethical rules or structures to relate to and make decisions from? Or is this what the agential realistic knowing brings? That you never can step outside but still have to take responsibility of how you act within these intra-actions. Knowing that every movement you ever chose or didn't choose to do will have cause and effects to the whole. I have, in this text, stated that the traditionally used tools for dealing with ethical dilemmas, with agential realist knowing, are dated. I do not, however, have any suggestions for how to go on from here except from being aware that every action counts, even the act of not acting. It's a trap. But also an opportunity.

Svar-barhet

Respons-ability

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