Fatma Kargın, Dorothée King,
Selena Savić (eds.)

TEACHING ARTISTIC STRATEGIES

Playing with Materiality,
Aesthetics and Ambiguity

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[transcript]

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Introduction by Fatma Kargın, Dorothée King, Selena Savić

The strategic development of artistic research, art education research, research creation, and practice-based research in art and design suggests that art and design can offer innovative modes of knowledge practices, with a focus on a reciprocal relationship between theory and practice. Numerous publications from the UK, The Netherlands, and the Nordic Countries have been debating legitimacy, specificity, strength, and weaknesses of research in these contexts since the 1990s, steered by the Bologna educational reform in Europe.[1] While teaching is an important aspect of academic training and experience, the transfer of doctoral research into teaching has not been extensively discussed. And yet, it is precisely in the moment of transfer to teaching that academic knowledge coming out of art- and design-based research contributes to public knowledge and to the institutional grounding of these practices. This is an important step to ensure the transfer of the research to the public, and to contribute back to the field.

In May 2022, a four-day symposium *Teaching Artistic Strategies* for research and teaching in arts and design institutions was held at the University for Arts and Design in Basel, Switzerland. The intense conference on practice and theory transfers in diverse research projects on PhD and post-PhD levels was held as a joint event of the Institutes for Arts and Design Education (IADE) and Institute Experimental Design and Media Cultures (IXDM). The organizers were in a positive way overwhelmed by the approval and thus the apparent need for young researchers to ex-

change information on the methods and reasons for the transfer of artistic, design-based and art education research into teaching contexts.

This interest is quite understandable when we look at the short history of putting artistic strategies, academic research, and pedagogy in the same box of interest. Artistic research developed as a way to follow the Bologna protocol of the BA, MA, and PhD trajectory to secure comparable attention and funding to the humanities or natural sciences. Artistic and design-oriented researchers always seemed to suffer from an inferiority or a form of comparison complex regarding the traditional academic disciplines. After two decades of borrowing research methods from other disciplines and mixing them with artistic and design-led approaches, current researchers are understandably still sometimes confused by the big buffet of possibilities on how to apply their diverse perspectives on knowledge production methods. More questions on how to transform or infuse arts and design practices with science and transfer knowledge into teaching arose than could be answered. Daring to invent your own modes of speculation might be the only possible artistic way, but it still needs to be justified in an academic context.[2] The speculation about and transformation of possible methods continues. As the Godfather of artistic research Julian Klein said: "The proximity to scientific strategies and practices lies in the "not-yet-knowing."[3]

Art Education stands at a turn. Making a link to the adventuring method of French philosopher Jacques Rancière, the square between artwork, art educational method, educator, and audience is increasingly dissolving in favour of diverse, situational, and spontaneous processes of engagement.[4] The contributions to the Basel symposium reflect on those multiple angles approaches to art education may take nowadays.

With this book we intended to initiate a different trend of 'knowing.' Our intent is to share our knowledges, and to make teaching approaches accessible and discussable. We want to foster feelings of being less lost. We aim to activate a new generation and community of researchers who care for one another, but also care for the different subject matters circling towards inclusion rather than trying to find the correct new terms for their research.

The symposium *Teaching Artistic Strategies* showcased outstanding approaches to pedagogy that problematized the transfer of research into teaching. It initiated a systematic exchange between junior researchers and established scholars in the field. The program included keynote lectures by Elke Krasny, Glenn Loughran and Irene Posch, along with twelve workshops and presentations by doctoral candidates and junior scholars. Some of these presentations were the basis for contributions we present in this book.

The main questions participants of the symposium raised were aimed at the contribution to epistemology in the arts and inclusive contemporary pedagogical methods through diverse media settings. We proposed to focus on this challenge through experimental approaches characteristic of the research practices of the participants. With this volume we allow ourselves a renewed transfer of knowledge. By showcasing different approaches to pedagogy and problematizing the transfer of research into teaching, this volume aims to contribute to long-term prospects and sustainability of practice-based and education-oriented research in art and design institutions. The main question we posed ourselves is how can innovative research questions on and around art-, design-, and media-relevant topics be transferred into teaching as well as into new discussion-initiating textual forms?

The stimulating contributions by the international researchers in this publication all deal with diverse knowledge discourses, media diversity, and innovative methodic-methodological transfers. Contributions are short enough to make a point, yet long enough to give a glimpse into the variety of ways artistic and design can index knowledge practices. While bringing significant impulses to artistic and art education research-and-teaching settings, the diversity of the contributions simultaneously showcases the potential of multi- and trans-perspectivity in both discourses. The question of the artistic is conceived differently in the individual contributions. The concepts and views of materiality and aesthetics addressed by the authors complement, challenge, and enrich each other by highlighting their wide-ranging contextualization in each contribution. Specifically, the issue of ambiguity as the third focus of this edition strikes us here – as it should – in manifold ways. We see

the productive potential of ambiguity in the diverse points of access and approaches to art pedagogy/education and to artistic research. What seems to be ambiguous in the sense of *Mehrdeutig* are the meanings ascribed to materiality and aesthetics. One step further, we identify another level of ambiguity in the sense of *Mehrdeutig / Zweideutig*, which manifests itself in the methodic-methodological considerations. In a closer look, finally, we encounter another layer of ambiguity in the sense of *Ambig* entangled in the moments, spaces and settings of teaching and learning conceptualized by the authors. While, for instance, Kargın suggests in her article that the *spaces between* are ambiguous, Hahn relies on ambiguity with the premise that the entities only emerge from the process of *intra-action*. While a certain categorization between the contributions seems to be redundant, as they position themselves specifically and strategically at the intersection of entangled discourses, the topics and the focus of the research can be divided into two central themes: **Arts Education** and **Artistic Research.**

Pedagogy in arts and design contexts is a mysterious field. Often the so-called true fine arts and design disciplines look down on the pedagogy departments. Pedagogy might be mocked or even ironically ignored in arts and design schools as a space where ideas and experience of doing art gets rationalized so that it can be effectively shared. Granted, participatory learning processes are strenuous, hurtful, and confrontational – but also rewarding. Knowledge transfer and learning how to produce and spread knowledge might be the most sustainable artistic practice there is. The articles in this edition focusing on **Art Education** revolve around events, whereas the understanding of the event spans from its explicit views as in the 'event-based learning in artistic research processes' to the 'learning as an event itself' with a phenomenological approach. In a more subtle way, we come across an event in the form of a shift as in the case of 'horizontal writing' and encounter it again in its temporally extended nature in the form of an 'observation of one's own situatedness and placement within diverse human-thing constellations.' Situated within the discourse of archipelagic thinking, phenomenology, performativity, epistemology and neo-materialist approaches, the articles ask for spacious mindsets and different approaches to epistemology

through artistic, empirical and theory-based research methods revolving around aesthetics, ambiguity and materiality.

In individual contributions, art pedagogy and artistic research become tools of reflection through opening up to possibilities of responding to as well as designing the urgencies of our moment. Artistic research shall be understood as a transitory process of societal creativity, of imaginary agency, and cyclic modes of design. Importance is enhanced in questions of ownership, new forms of documentation, and anticipating future forms of knowledge.

Fatma Kargın raises in her chapter **Spontaneity and the Spaces Between** the question about spatial, time-related, and educational localization of learning in the museum, based on her ongoing empirical research on the modes of spectatorship and aesthetic experience. Kargın negotiates the intersections of performative spaces, learning, *Bildung*, spontaneity, and responsive phenomenology. She identifies such spaces as performative and therefore transitory and constantly mutating, coming up with the thesis that learning shall be considered as an event.

In his chapter **Glenn Loughran** explores **ARCHIPEDAGOGY – Un-islanding Artistic Research and Its Education** how the concept of the archipelago and archipelagic thinking can be used as a theoretical framework to support event-basedartistic research processes. Loughran offers an original account of teaching experiences that stem out of a research project *What is an Island* which he led between 2018 and 2021 on Sherkin Island, Ireland. Highly relevant to the volume, this contribution connects anti-colonial philosophy and theory with art pedagogy in meaningful and insightful ways. Loughran looks into methods for translating those thinking processes into pedagogies of care and attention. The desire to 'un-island' knowledges and artistic practicesdemands new open communities ready for transdisciplinary experimental actions.

Lennart Krauss' chapter **Writing Horizontally – What Teaching, Artistic Research and Epistemology Might Have in Common** asks for shifts in research, epistemology, and education through new ways of integrating essayistic writing into educational artistic settings. Krauss' take on teaching as trying things out puts a special focus on the mean-

ing and methods of working with writing, namely the format of the essay. This argument, partly rooted in etymology, is explored historically and practically. Krauss aims to turn a vertical learning process into a horizontal one by twisting authorship through the implementation of interstices and transgressions with switching modes of "thinking of" and "thinking about" to "thinking with" and "thinking through".

In her chapter **Researching and Reshaping Human-thing Constellations – Neo-material Thinking as a Principle for Teaching in the Arts**, **Annemarie Hahn** proposes an art educational teaching sequence in which the idea is to observe one's own placement within different human-human and human-thing constellations in order to better understand how we act and interact, include, and exclude. Relying on new materialist theory and object-oriented ontology, Hahn documents a teaching scenario which explored participants' understanding and experience of inclusion in the context of the digital. She not only considers the conditions of human actors but also pays attention to material and spatial and media-related conditions that determine collective agency. The chapter thus addresses a very timely question, namely the relation between digital culture and inclusion.

Elsa Gomis' chapter **Imagining New Ways of Representing Refugees** explores ways to bring awareness to the influence of the dominant Western media gaze on migration and refugee crises. In her teaching materials and the participatory pedagogical setting, Gomis carefully works to deconstruct the politically charged representation of migration in mainstream media through different artistic practices such as sketching, drawing and mapping. She uses those newly created images as a starting point to seek alternative means to visually portray contemporary migrants to challenge today's 'aesthetic of the we'.

Vanessa Graf's chapter **Dichotomous Keys as a Way of Seeing: Teaching Botany Out of Context and Other Ways of Questioning the Artistic in Artistic Research Strategies** discusses how to bring together artistic and *artistic-scientific research*. Graf analyses the scientific method of ID-keying used in biology and botany as a practice that could be transformed in an art-related educational setting. Graf's intention is to blur disciplinary boundaries and methodical divides, to enable a mean-

ingful contribution to a wider scientific discussion on how knowledge is constituted, created, and established.

Thomas Laval's chapter **Opuntia's Ubiquity: Learning Situatedness from Artists** analyses situatedness of knowledge comparing the ways in which two contemporary artists, Fareed Armaly and Mariana Castillo Deball, work with the same plant: the opuntia. In each artistic project, this cactus is discussed as a representation of a specific geographical and cultural territory. The question Thomas Laval is aiming for in his pedagogical approach is how to invite a terrestrial plant into the artistic practice without being confined to a utilitarian role.

In her chapter **Teaching More-than-human Invitation in Artistic Research and Pedagogy**, **Selena Savić** addresses three examples (imaginary of Plato's symposium, Joseph Beuys' performance How to explain pictures to a dead hare, a fishing wharf off the Atlantic coast of Canada) to ask questions of inclusion, authorship, environmental destruction, and human-centeredness with methods of posthumanism and feminist new materialism. Her focus is on notions of invitations and hospitality with the goal to find more inclusive forms of artistic pedagogy.

The contributions to *Teaching Artistic Strategies: Playing with Materiality, Aesthetics and Ambiguity* engage our readers into a variety of epistemological experiments with the aim to divide the borders between perception and production of arts and media. The diversity of contributions is a strength of this volume as it demonstrates the inexhaustive plurality and space of coexistence for the approaches taken by the authors.

With this compilation we hope to strengthen new communities of educators and researchers in arts and design, whose practices are built on the concept of care as empathetic knowledge production. We seek to contribute to new modes of phenomenological adventures in art-led research and didactics. The collection opens a space for discourse on art pedagogy, artistic research and practice-based research in art and design which hopes to contribute to broader concerns in higher education institutions.

Notes

1   Without compiling a comprehensive list of books, the following will offer an overview: Christopher Frayling, *Research in Art and Design* (London: Royal College of Art, 1993); Mika Hannula, Juha Suoranta, and Tere Vadén, *Artistic Research: Theories, Methods and Practices* (Helsinki: Gothenburg, Sweden: Academy of Fine Arts; University of Gothenburg/Art Monitor, 2005); Estelle Barrett and Barbara Bolt, eds., *Practice as Research: Approaches to Creative Arts Enquiry*, Paperback ed (London: Tauris, 2010); Henk Borgdorff, *The Conflict of the Faculties: Perspectives on Artistic Research and Academia* (Amsterdam: Leiden University Press, 2012); Celia Lury and Nina Wakeford, eds., *Inventive Methods: The Happening of the Social*, Culture, Economy, and the Social (London; New York: Routledge, 2012).

2   Tröndle, Martin & Warmers, Julia: *Artistic research as aesthetic science. Contributions to a transdisciplinary hybridization of science and art*; Bielefeld. 2012

3   Klein, Julia: "Was ist künstlerische Forschung?" In: kunsttexte.de/ Auditive Perspektiven, No. 2., 2011.

4   Jacques Rancière: "The Emancipated Spectator". In: Artforum. Vol. 45, 2007, edition 7, pp. 271–281, 279.

Spontaneity and the Spaces Between

Fatma Kargın

When considered in terms of museum(s), where does 'learning' really take place? In a workshop or a seminar room during a mediation offer, or in the halls and galleries of a museum with a guided tour? Or, simply, in none of these spaces? The question of space and learning is a result of my ongoing empirical research in which the spectators of an installation artwork in an exhibition room in Denmark are spontaneously asked to think aloud and film the entire process of spectatorship with a GoPro action camera. Based on the filmed *processes* that are recorded through the perspective of the spectators, research reconstructs the gaze, movement, and the constructed narratives in relation to responsivity, performativity, and materiality, and thus theorizes various styles of spectatorship. With an explorative search for the space(s) of learning, this article can also be read as a negotiation or theorization of such spaces situated at the intersection of theoretical positions between space, learning, *Bildung*, and responsive phenomenology.

For such an explorative search, the article assumes that learning in the context of museums – or even in an academic context – can be considered an event (*Ereignis*). Events, as Alva Noë argues, are "creatures of time. They are temporally extended in nature. They are never whole. At the beginning, they have not yet achieved a conclusion. At the end, their beginning is done with."[1] Noë further concludes that the "past and the future are not present [in events], but they are implicated by them."[2] In a similar manner, Bernhard Waldenfels argues that what happens 'here and now' constitutes the 'not-yet' and 'not-anymore',[3] and therefore points to the temporally extended nature of events. Furthermore, events

have a space-time constituting effect[4] and are results of continuous interlinking (*Anknüpfung*) and taking up of something.

Similarly, the 'learning' I refer to in this article can be understood as a playful interlinking, always at the floating intersection of movement (also as thinking), deviation, escalation, rejection, acceptance, or challenge. Constantly from one event into another, building on what is there, changing not only the *knowledge*, but also the way in which the manner of acquiring knowledge constantly deviates and shifts. Learning,[5] as Käte Meyer-Drawe argues, can also be understood as an execution (*Vollzug*) and an activity;[6] learning, she further concludes, always signifies the history [history of socialization] of the learners, as well as their divergent and conflictual process of change.[7] In such an execution / activity, Meyer-Drawe ascribes an 'awakening' character to learning, whereas the learning describes a 'beginning' but by no means a 'completion'.[8] The metaphor of 'awakening as learning' can further be understood as a transition and/or a response which do not rely or are not based on the initiative of individuals.[9] – Such a response is always eventful. – In her concept of learning, Meyer-Drawe also differentiates between 'learning, unlearning and relearning', whereas the 'relearning' (*Umlernen*) describes something which not only happens in 'experience', but takes place 'as experience'.[10] Such a relearning which equates an awakening always starts with an affect (*Widerfahrnis*) which comes from somewhere else, from others.[11]

Parallel to the 'awakening' character, learning can be thought of as a (responsive) event, which, in itself is eventful and event-like. By being an event, and therefore having these qualities, learning, I suggest, brings forth its own temporality and spatiality. That is to say, it brings forth and claims its own space as an event. In comparing learning to an *event* and pointing out its eventfulness and event-like quality, this article lays emphasis on its space and spatiality. Such a space, I suggest, can be understood in terms of a performative space in which an event/ a performance takes place. As Erika Fischer-Lichte argues in the context of theater and performance studies, a performative space neither pre-dates a performance, nor represents a construct;[12] but, it is brought forth through the performance itself. On the assumption that this argument also applies to

learning as an event, I explore, first, the conditions of emergence and functions of performative spaces, and renegotiate them in terms of spaces of learning. With a phenomenological approach, I sketch out a *space between* that equally relies on the inevitability of responding and a request which comes from somewhere else/the Other à la Waldenfels.

I   Performative spaces

As the text suggests that *learning as an event* takes place in performative spaces, I first discuss briefly the conditions of emergence and the modality of such spaces in relation to the co-presence of bodies. Performative spaces, as Fischer-Lichte defines them, refers to all spaces in which a performance takes place. Such spaces, usually theatres, open "special possibilities for the relationship between actors and spectators and for the movement and perception. Whatever the ways in which these possibilities are used, applied, realized, treated, or, alternatively, subverted, they affect the performative space."[13] They also need to be distinguished from architectural-geometric spaces[14] in which a performance takes place. Fischer-Lichte compares these places, to a certain extent, to containers; as they pre-date and contain the performance/event and continue to exist long after the performance.[15] While the spatiality of such "containers" is, for instance, given, the spatiality of performative spaces is brought forth anew by the performance.[16]

This kind of spatiality can be compared to the spatiality of the body, insofar as the body's spatiality changes, and therefore does not represent a fixed point in space. Merleau-Ponty notes that the body's spatiality resembles much more a *situational spatiality,*[17] than a positional one. A situational spatiality indicates that, for instance, words such "here", "under," and "on" anchor the active body[18] / phenomenal body in an object and space, and do not refer to a determinate position and place in space. A body's spatiality, for instance, is brought forth through movement,[19] and it contributes to generating the spatiality of performative spaces. Furthermore, the spatiality of performative spaces is marked as 'unstable and fluctuating,' as they transform and mutate with every movement

of the actors and spectators, and with spatial arrangements.[20] That is to say that bodies play a significant role in bringing forth the spatiality of performative spaces. If thought within the discourse of the sociology of space and in relation to bodies, Martina Loew makes a pointed and parallel argument on the construction of social space (*Sozialraum*)[21] and argues with Bourdieu that such a space is a social structure (*Gefüge*) which is brought forth through the movements/actions[22], and therefore does not pre-exist.

Similarly, in the context of stage (*Bühne*), Waldenfels notes that it is a space in which something occurs, something takes place[23]. It is, particularly, a 'space in becoming'; such a space does not pre-exist, but it paves its own way, along with its spatiality and temporality during the performance.[24] He further explicates that such a space does not represent a mere construct, rather, it functions as an instance of orientation and anchoring in experience.[25] In a similar argument, Fischer-Lichte, too, indicates that spatiality is transitory and fleeting,[26] and argues that the performative space, unlike architectural-geometric space, does not represent a construct or a work of art, and that its performativity needs to be attributed to events.[27]

For generating the performativity of space, and with regard to spatiality, Fischer-Lichte introduces three strategies:

> "first, the use of an (almost) empty space or one with variable arrangements allowing for the unrestricted movement of actors and spectators; second, the creation of spatial arrangements enabling so far unexplored possibilities for the negotiation of relationships between actors and spectators, movement and perception; and third, the experimentation with given spaces usually fulfilling other purposes."[28]

Especially with the third strategy she emphasizes that this bears the potential to "blend real and imagined spaces [and thus] defines the performative space as a 'space between.'"[29] Such a 'space between', if thought again in terms of Loew, not only comprise the real ones, but also the imagined ones.[30] The theory of spaces between pertains primarily to theatre and performance studies. However, I suggest that it can be extended

to any space in which bodies co-exist, perform, act, engage, and simply, occupy that space with various purposes. Within this experimental negotiation I will focus on museums and sketch out a space between which not only results from the experimentation of given spaces, but one that can also be brought forth through experimental approaches in a broader sense.

II   Spaces between

To further conceptualize performative spaces as 'spaces between', I suggest broadening and negotiating this concept and its emergence in relation to presence, presentness and mood. Performative spaces as spaces between offer the possibility of blending the *real* and the *imagined*. As they accommodate such a possibility, they also function as a 'liminal space', a space for possible transformations.[31] Fischer-Lichte notes that the spatiality of performative space "results not just from the specific spatial uses of the actors but also from the particular atmospheres these spaces exude."[32] Atmospheres, according to Boehme, represent the collective reality of the perceived and the perceiver. That is to say, it is the reality of the perceived as a sphere of its presence, and, at the same time, it is the reality of the perceiver, insofar that the perceiver experiences their own corporeality while experiencing the atmosphere.[33] Following Boehme's definition, Fischer-Lichte argues that through atmospheric space, spectators become aware of their own corporeality; the atmosphere penetrates the bodies and breaks down their limits.[34] Accordingly, she concludes that through this process, the performative space functions as a liminal space of transformation.[35] Spectators are not "positioned opposite to or outside the atmosphere; they are enclosed by and steeped in it."[36] Following Boehme, atmosphere is considered as a "sphere of presence," which is neither specifically located in a thing that radiates them nor pertains to a person who experiences them.[37] Atmosphere pertains to both of them,[38] that is to say, it lies in-between, as present.

However, I suggest that spheres of presence or the presentness of the spaces between does not only represent or result from atmospheric space, à la Boehme. In his text *Bildung vor Bildern*, Pazzini negotiates the concept of mood (*Stimmung*) in the context of educational processes.[39] As he notes, a mood can be brought along, found in a space, or, alternatively, it can emerge ad hoc, or be triggered.[40] Moods affect, and are infectious. They pertain neither to objects, or attached to things that causes them, nor to the bodies that radiate or perceive them. Moreover, a mood is not a representation of something; it is, nonetheless present as spatial and temporal.[41] Mood, Pazzini argues, exceeds the individual subjects, affects and encompasses multiple individuals, and sets something in motion.[42] Mood, in this sense, can be regarded as transformative; since it "arouses, and can be aroused. It captivates, it can carry one away, and can lead one up until the point of a lapse."[43] The concept of mood, as vague as it may seem at first sight, captures the spheres of presence and the presentness of the spaces between. Mood, in my view, shapes the spaces in-between, and brings them forth as such. Through 'mood,' temporality and spatiality of the spaces between become present (for individuals). Moreover, in/with a 'mood', individuals experience their own corporeality, spatiality, and temporality, since they experience themselves as present.

Presence emerges, is articulated and perceived through the body.[44] Fischer-Lichte notes in the context of performance that, presence does not refer to the appearance of something extraordinary; "instead, it marks the emergence of something very ordinary and develops it into an event."[45] – One might add that this kind of emergence occurs in experience. – Similarly, with regard to the presence of bodies and that of events/performances, Waldenfels argues that a performance, an event, or any kind of happening which takes place brings forth its own temporality and spatiality.[46] Especially in the context of events he notes that every event in which the individuals are particularly involved takes place in an intermediate area.[47] – that is to say, in spaces between. – An intermediate area can further be understood as a betwixt and between space which emerges in experience as such. Moreover, Waldenfels argues that such spaces are, to a certain extent, ambiguous.[48] This kind

of ambiguity results from the condition that a stage/a space between can only be considered and brought forth as such, if the individuals perform, if the performance/event attracts attention and manages to transform the present bodies into spectators [or co-actors].[49]

Spaces between emerge as present. They pertain neither to particular individuals that may partially trigger or be involved in them, nor do they merely belong to the space itself.[50] This kind of presence results from the movements, interactions and, more generally, from diverse responses of the individuals, either semi-scripted or temporally structured ones as in the case of some performances, events or mediation offers, or rather spontaneous ones. If thought again in terms of Pazzini, spaces between also emerge as present in, through and out of a certain mood – while also establishing a certain mood and functioning as captivating and contagious (*ansteckend*). As a direct response to that what is happening, taking place, they can be triggered spontaneously, or come forth unexpectedly and spontaneously. In this regard, I will briefly discuss the concept of spontaneity – as developed in my doctoral research – as a responsive-transformative strategy (*Anlass*) for museums as spaces of learning, as spaces between.

III Spontaneity

Interactions of individuals/spectators with each other, with the space, and with the event shape the spaces between. Such interactions can be the result of a certain mood or affect. Alternatively, they can also constitute a certain mood and thus bring forth a space between as present. Fischer-Lichte indicates that a performance/event only comes into being and claims its space through the performance/event itself; that is to say, through the interactions between the performers and spectators.[51] Resulting from this argument, she further concludes that "the act of receiving is a creative and transformative act."[52] Fischer-Lichte's 'act of receiving' is by no means a passive digesting. On the contrary, it relies heavily on individuals and therefore their capabilities of bringing forth the performance/event and its performative space as such. For the spaces be-

tween sketched out here, I would like to think Fischer-Lichte's creative and transformative act of receiving more in terms of a creative and transformative way of responding, and therefore renegotiate it in terms of responsivity.

As Waldenfels argues, responsivity refers to the understanding that "all of our speech, action and feeling begins elsewhere, namely with our being struck, touched, affected or approached, and that we respond to this, whether we want or not."[53] Responsivity, he further concludes, needs to be differentiated from "the orientation of intentionality to sense as well as from the rule-directedness of communicativity."[54] More generally, he defines the responsivity as the main character of human behavior,[55] which calls for a specific form of response.[56] Such a form is not reduced to a linguistic response, rather, it is a bodily response in corporeal responsory and shapes the entire behavior of individuals to themselves, to others, and more generally, to the world as such.[57] In addition, Waldenfels differentiates between two types of responses; productive/creative and reproductive responses.[58] By creative response he indicates that the responder never gives a pre-existing response to the stimuli, rather, a response first develops in the process of responding.[59] One might add that such a response shapes/ and emerges in spaces between. Waldenfels argues that "the *by-what* of being touched [gets] transformed into the *to-what* of responding,[60] – and this with a genuine shift in time – and therefore points at the transformative character of the responding process. Waldenfels furthermore defines 'responding' as a performative act[61] and therefore distinguishes it from the content of the response itself. Responsivity, he argues, is directly connected with a request which comes from the Other/ Somewhere else.[62] Such a request can take the form of a demand, appeal, claim, excitement or a challenge;[63] alternatively, it can also appear as a disruption or an interference.[64] Such a request is, he argues, nothing but that to-what we respond when we say something and act.[65] Consequently, he then defines 'a response' as our touching upon that which we feel affected, struck by or appeals to us.[66]

More crucially, Waldenfels lays emphasis on the inevitability of responding when faced with a request/demand; and argues that, for in-

stance, a conscious not-responding defines actually a form of response; a looking-away is a form of looking; and similarly, a remaining silent is at the end a form of speech.[67] This kind of inevitability is, in the end, what a performance/ an event relies on. A not-responding is a direct and inevitable response to that which occurs, takes place. Moreover, a not-responding can also be interpreted as a creative and possibly transformative way of responding, since it becomes a part of what is happening, taking place, and therefore, shapes it as well.

As mentioned above, a disruption, an interference, or, alternatively, a direct irritation can function as a request by appearing as a rupture in the everyday course of events which then imposes a response on the responder/spectator. Such a rupture can occur either spontaneously, as something that falls out of the ordinary, or can be brought about by someone as a spontaneous request to act, perform or engage. Such spontaneous requests can be experienced as inviting, playful, or alternatively, repelling, provoking, and disturbing. Moreover, they can also set an uncertain and ambiguous mood in motion, and thus attract curiosity and therefore elicit a collaborative behavior, or, alternatively, result in a sort of resistance – which is a response nonetheless. Whatever the ways in which such requests are experienced, they trigger, ultimately set something in motion and even act as an event by themselves.

For bringing forth the spaces between, spontaneous requests/demands function as a sort of rupture – which falls out of the ordinary – and as such, they ultimately provoke an action, a response, either a linguistic or a bodily one. They therefore trigger a process, an event-like situation which is only constituted through the responses of the individuals/spectators. Spontaneous requests to act or engage in various settings can thus be understood as responsive – even performative – as they are directed towards a response. They can also be thought of as transformative; not only because the responding is a performative act, as Waldenfels states, but because of the possibility of undergoing a (temporary) transformation during the process of responding – which is a liminal state. Spontaneity as one of the basic forms of human behavior can thus be understood as a responsive-transformative strategy that

brings forth the spaces between. Where the real and imagined melt into each other.

IV Conclusion

Now, after this brief discussion on the conditions of emergence, possible triggers, presence, and the presentness of the spaces between, I would like to take a step back and pose the same bundle of questions that initiated this entire negotiation. "When considered in terms of museum(s), where does 'learning' really take place? In a workshop or a seminar room during a mediation offer, or in the halls and galleries of a museum with a guided tour? Or, simply, in none of these spaces?" *Learning as an event* is the presupposition of this article. And as such, it is a temporally extended process, one that brings forth and claims its own space as a responsive event. Moreover, learning is eventful and event-like. As indicated in the introduction, learning signifies a playful interlinking, a constant movement at the intersection of deviation, escalation, rejection, and challenge. Always from one event into another. Or as Meyer-Drawe puts it, learning is an awakening, a beginning without a certain completion.

If thought about in the context of museums, the structure and the variety of settings differ from a classical teaching setting at an academy. However, as indicated above, such a structure can be compared to a container, which is given and its spatiality does not rely on the co-presence of the bodies. Spaces between as the spaces of *events and spaces of learning*, on the other hand, can only be brought forth through the co-presence of bodies, through actions, interactions, and responses. *Spontaneity*, for instance, can be used not only to create an event, but as an event, an occasion (*Anlass*) by itself. Such an event can take the form of a direct appeal for spectators to engage with a certain work of art, or to collaborate with each other. Only during such an engagement or encounter between a spectator and a work of art, or during the interaction of multiple spectators a space between can be brought forth as present. If thought again with Meyer-Drawe, such an 'awakening' can also be thought in terms of

an encounter with a work of art, whereas the artwork functions as an impulse which comes from somewhere else, attracts attention and therefore requires a response. Only in the process of responding does such a space between emerge as present.

Through this brief and experimental discussion, the article compares learning to an event in order to negotiate a space for it. With the assumption of learning as an event, it argues that it takes place in *spaces between* – a performative space where the real and imagined melt into each other. Such a space is transitory, and constantly mutates, as is the case with performances and events. Spaces between, I would like to argue, ultimately rely on the inevitability of responding and a request which comes from the other, somewhere else. Moreover, such spaces are responsive and transformative. Similarly, in terms of Fischer-Lichte, also liminal. Spaces between as sketched out here emerge in experience as present and do not represent a physical construct. They emerge not only as a result of the experimentation with given spaces – as conceptualized for performances – but also through a range of experimental approaches in general. For instance, through the introduced concept of spontaneous request to act, perform, or engage in the context of the museum. Such requests, as explicated, can define something which attracts attention, or induce a sort of provocation, alternatively, can be a direct appeal for an engagement, be it with a work of art or with the other spectators. At this point, I also would like to emphasize that my sketch of learning, *Bildung*, and spaces between are also equally applicable concepts to academical settings where the learning processes can also take place spontaneously, eventfully and unexpectedly. However, within the current discourse of *Bildung* and skills-based learning-and-teaching, as well as in the context of related theoretical positions, such concepts are mostly neglected, or barely considered.

Spaces between can further be situated in the context of transformative educational processes. The main premise of the theory, as Koller argues, marks the higher-level learning as educational processes (*Bildung*) and indicates that individuals in such processes not only acquire new knowledge, but they may undergo a certain transformation.[68] Behavioral changes (*Denk-*, *Handlungsdispositionen*), as Koller argues, can

be consequences of such transformations in relation to the self, and the world.[69] Inquiring about the possible cause(s) for transformative educational processes, Koller concludes that the impulse always comes from somewhere else, therefore indicates that educational processes are always *responsive events*, and do not refer to the unfolding of the inner potential of individuals.[70] Following this argument, and on the basis of the concept sketched out above, I suggest that such responsive events along with the suggested transformations regarding the shifts in terms of perception and behavior take place in spaces between.

Notes

1   Noë, Alva: *Varieties of Presence*, 2012, p. 77.
2   Ibid., p. 78.
3   Waldenfels, Bernhard: *Phänomenologie der Aufmerksamkeit*, 2019/2004, p. 47.
4   Ibid., p. 47.
5   With my sketch of "learning" I lean on the phenomenological, educational-theoretical positions in which the concept of learning and/or *Bildung* is always thought as an open-ended process with an event character. See: Käte Meyer-Drawe, Bernhard Waldenfels.
6   Meyer-Drawe, Käte: *Lernen als Erfahrung*, Zeitschrift für Erziehungswissenschaft, Vol. 6, issue 4/2003, p. 508.
7   Ibid., p. 506.
8   Meyer-Drawe, Käte: *Zur Erfahrung des Lernens. Eine Phänomenologische Skizze*, Santalca, Filosofija, 2010 18(3), p. 7.
9   Ibid., p. 7.
10 Ibid., p. 7.
11 Ibid., p. 8.
12 Fischer-Lichte, Erika: *The Transformative Power of Performances. A new aesthetics*, 2008, p. 114.
13 Ibid., p. 107.
14 Ibid., p. 107.
15 Ibid., p. 107.
16 Ibid., p. 107.
17 Merleau-Ponty, Maurice: *Phänomenologie der Wahrnehmung*, 1966, p. 125.
18 Ibid., p. 125–126.
19 Ibid., p. 128.
20 Fischer-Lichte, Erika: *The Transformative Power of Performances. A new aesthetics*, 2008, p. 107.
21 Löw, Martina: *Raumsoziologie*, 2012/2001, p. 26.
22 Ibid., p. 26–27.
23 Waldenfels, Bernhard: *Die Bühne als Brennpunkt des Geschehens*, 2016, p. 18.

24   Ibid., p. 18.

25   Ibid., p. 18.

26   Fischer-Lichte, Erika: *The Transformative Power of Performances. A new aesthetics*, 2008, p. 107.

27   Ibid., p. 114.

28   Ibid., p. 110.

29   Ibid., p. 114.

30   Löw, Martina: *Raumsoziologie*, 2012/2001, p. 27–28.

31   Fischer-Lichte, Erika: *The Transformative Power of Performances. A new aesthetics*, 2008, p. 119–120.

32   Ibid., p. 114.

33   Böhme, Gernot: *Atmosphäre. Essays zur neuen Ästhetik*, 2013 (7th edition), p. 21.

34   Fischer-Lichte, Erika: *The Transformative Power of Performances. A new aesthetics*, 2008, p. 119–120.

35   Ibid.

36   Ibid., p. 116.

37   Ibid., p. 115.

38   Ibid.

39   Pazzini, Karl-Josef: *Bildung vor Bildern. Kunst – Pädagogik – Psychoanalyse*. 2015, p. 317.

40   Ibid., p. 323.

41   Ibid., p. 318–319.

42   Ibid., p. 319.

43   Ibid., p. 320.

44   Fischer-Lichte, Erika: *The Transformative Power of Performances. A new aesthetics*, 2008, p. 98.

45   Ibid., p. 99.

46   Waldenfels, Bernhard: *Phänomenologie der Aufmerksamkeit*, 2019/2004, p. 47.

47   Ibid., p. 41–42.

48   Waldenfels, Bernhard: *Die Bühne als Brennpunkt des Geschehens*, in: Norbert Otto Eke, Ulrike Haß, Irina Kaldrack (Hg.): Bühne. Raumbildende Prozesse im Theater. Paderborn: Fink 2016 (Schriftenreihe des Graduiertenkollegs "Automatismen"), p. 13–26, here p. 20.

49   Ibid., p. 20.

50   Waldenfels, Bernhard: *Phänomenologie der Aufmerksamkeit*, 2019/2004, p. 42

51   Fischer-Lichte, Erika: "Introduction: Transformative aesthetics – reflections on the metamorphic power of art", in: Erika Fischer-Lichte & Benjamin Wihstutz, eds.: *Transformative Aesthetics*, 2018, p. 13.

52   Ibid., p. 13.

53   Waldenfels, Bernhard: "Metamorphoses of experience in the picture", in: Erika Fischer-Lichte & Benjamin Wihstutz, eds.: *Transformative Aesthetics*, 2018, p. 71.

54   Ibid., p. 71.

55   Waldenfels, Bernhard: *Antwortregister*, 2016/2007, p. 327.

56   Waldenfels, Bernhard: "Antwort auf das Fremde. Grundzüge einer responsiven Phänomenologie", in: Bernhard Waldenfels & Iris Därmann, eds.: *Der Anspruch des Anderen. Perspektiven phänomenologischer Ethik*, 1998, p. 45.

57   Waldenfels, Bernhard: *Erfahrung, die zur Sprache drängt*, 2019, p. 255.

58   "Produktive und reproduktive Form des Antwortens", Bernhard Waldenfels, *Topographie des Fremden*, 2020/1997, p. 53.

59   Waldenfels, Bernhard: "Metamorphoses of experience in the picture", in: Erika Fischer-Lichte & Benjamin Wihstutz, eds.: *Transformative Aesthetics*, 2018, p. 71.

60   Ibid., p. 71.

61   Ibid., p. 71.

62   Waldenfels, Bernhard: *Das leibliche Selbst*, 2018/2000, p. 368.

63   Waldenfels, Bernhard: *Antwortregister*, 2016/2007, p. 243–244.

64   Waldenfels, Bernhard: *Erfahrung, die zur Sprache drängt*, 2019, p. 113–114.

65   Waldenfels, Bernhard: *Das leibliche Selbst*, 2000, p. 368.

66   Waldenfels, Bernhard: *Erfahrung, die zur Sprache drängt*, 2019, p. 75.

67   Waldenfels, Bernhard: Topographie des Fremden, 2020/1997, p. 52, & Waldenfels: Antwort auf das Fremde. Grundzüge einer responsiven Phänomenologie, 1998, p. 46.

68   Koller, Hans-Christoph: "Grundzüge einer Theorie transformatori-
       scher Bildungsprozesse", in: Andrea Liesner and Ingrid Lohman,
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       führung*. Stuttgart 2010, p. 290.

69   Ibid., p. 290.

70   Koller, Hans-Christoph: "Probleme einer Theorie transformato-
       rischer Bildungsprozesse", in: Hans-Christoph Koller, Winfried
       Marotzki and Olaf Sanders, eds.: *Bildungsprozesse und Fremdheitser-
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       Bielefeld, transcript, 2007, p.71.

ARCHIPEDAGOGY – Un-islanding Artistic Research and Its Education

Glenn Loughran

Artistic research is a fluid form of embedded research that enables interdisciplinary engagements between artistic practices and academic discourse. It can incorporate unpredictable entry points and unforeseen consequences that are continually (re)creating, (re)articulating and (re)imagining new forms of engagement in the public realm. Each time artists engage with artistic research, they bring something new to the practice and discourse, some new concept that usually emerges from their ongoing attempts to navigate practice and theory. This paper explores how the concept of archipelago and archipelagic thinking were used as a theoretical method to support event-based, artistic research strategies. Notably, these archipelagic frameworks emerged from placed-based education in island contexts and were further translated into archipelagic pedagogies of care and attention towards the world.

Archipelagic thinking can be understood as a multifaceted postcolonial framework for thinking about difference, diversity, and relation beyond generic concepts of network and globality.[1] In 2011, reflecting on archipelagic thinking as a disciplinary method, a group of prominent island studies scholars called for researchers to expand on "the ways of being, knowing and doing—ontologies, epistemologies and methods—that illuminate island spaces as interrelated, mutually constituted and co-constructed".[2] A similar statement could be made about artistic research today, where the ecologies of practice that define artistic research are rarely brought into dialogue in a significant format outside of the art-science career path complex. Within this context, there is a need

to further illuminate artistic research "ontologies, epistemologies and methods" as "inter-related, mutually constituted and co-constructed."[3] Archipelagic thinking provides such a transdisciplinary framework, supporting practices that transgress disciplinary boundaries and borders through techniques of "un-islanding."[4]. To "un-island" artistic research is to point artistic research away from disciplinary silos towards co-production, relation, and openness. In 2018, un-islanding was developed as an artistic research strategy to explore the "inter-related, mutually constituted and co-constructed" fields of art education and island studies, through the *What is an Island?* project[5].

The *What is an Island?* project was initiated within the geographic context of West Cork, the political context of Brexit and the environmental context of the Anthropocene.[6] It began as an open-ended, experimental journey into the changing nature of islands in contemporary life and an exploration of the characteristics of artistic research and its education. Through this process, the project bridged two educational programmes: the BA in Visual Art on Sherkin Island (TU Dublin) and the MA in Art and Environment (TU Dublin) in the West Cork archipelago. Connecting these educational points the project opened up an inquiry into the significance of place-based art education operating at the edges of the university, an art education that links the island, archipelago and world. The form of this enquiry was multi-modal, combining live events, performative lectures, and community dialogue within island communities. These events reflected on: i) *the methodological potential of archipelagic thinking for art education in the Anthropocene*, ii) *the development of event-based, artistic research processes*, and iii) *the impact of visual arts education on isolated island communities*.

To fully capture these lines of flight, the following overview is organised around three key structural concepts: *site, event,* and *world*. Through the *site(ing)* of the work, we gain an understanding of the educational context from which the project emerged, highlighting the broad impact of art education on island communities. Through the *evental* dimension of the research, we explore how historical, political and artistic events can motivate and inspire imaginative action and reflection. Finally, reflecting on the *World* dimension of the project, this paper concludes with

an outline of an archipelagic art education designed to support a world orientation. By transferring the theoretical framework of archipelagic thinking onto the methodological ground of artistic research this paper reflects on each iteration of the project, as it unfolded across three distinct archipelagic environments: West Cork Archipelago (2018), Galapagos Islands (2019) and Virtual Archipelago (2020).

SITE – ISLAND

Sherkin Island, originally called *Innisherkin*, is a small, English-speaking island located just off the southwest tip of Cork, beside the coastal fishing village of Baltimore. Approximately 5 x 2.5 km, it is accessible by a ten-minute ferry ride and recently recorded a population of 111 inhabitants[7]. Historically, the island is connected to the Carbery and O'Driscoll clans, and is divided into six townlands; *Slievemore, Nine Greeves, Kilmona, Horse-shoe Harbour, Cloddagh,* and *Farancoush*.[8] In the late nineteen seventies and early eighties the accessible location and natural beauty of the Island began to attract landscape painters, photographers and writers.[9] Within this burgeoning art community, local artists Majella Collins O'Neill and Dublin-based artist Ber Burns set up a popular summer school, which eventually grew into the BA in Visual Art. Initiated in 2001, the BA in Visual Art was developed in response to education policy directives set out in the White Paper on Adult Education Learning for Life (2000).[10] As outlined in the paper, the course aimed to address three key areas that remained underdeveloped at the time: rural exclusion in the arts, curricular support for adult learners outside of work and family commitments, and infrastructural support for the arts ecology in West Cork.[11]

Over a period of twenty years, these aims and ambitions matured into a flagship project for island-based art education, supported by a unique partnership model that connected grassroots community organisations: Sherkin Island Development Society (SIDS), local arts infrastructure; the West Cork Arts Centre (Uillinn) and academic supports; TU Dublin (then DIT). In 2004, the BA Visual Art was formally validated as an off-campus, level 8 honours degree programme, offering up to 20 stu-

dents per year access to art education on a remote island off the west coast of Cork. Built around six intense contact weekends per semester, the BA in Visual Art was delivered on the Island, in the community centre, every two weeks over four years. Structured weekends were further supported by online lectures and tutorials, providing adult learners with flexible supports and expanded content. Emphasizing the local context, the curriculum was grounded in the study of rural environments, landscape painting, and community engagement. Supporting adult learners to continue their education whilst working or attending to family responsibilities, the course strongly emphasized research-led practice and peer-to-peer learning.

Key to the early implementation and successful validation of the BA in Visual Art programme was the installation of an ISDN line on the Island in 2001. From an institutional perspective, the ISDN line was instrumental in the formal validation process of the program since it connected a diverse array of live lectures in an urban university to a student body on a remote island. Following this, the programme explored methodological innovations with educational technologies and supported artistic enquiries on the role of technology and connectivity in an island community. The combination of education and technology is often central to pioneering models of adult or distance education that prioritize access over social reproduction, such as the Open University (OU) (1969–2022). Originally called 'the University of the Air.'[12], the Open University utilized technological infrastructure to support democratic principles of access and inclusion. Led by Prime Minister Harold Wilson and Scottish socialist Jennie Lee, then Minister for Education, the OU initiated telephone and radio tutorials, televised lectures, and postal delivery curricula.[13] Following such models, the idea of the expanded academy gained increasing traction within educational discourse and practice. Due to the development of digital technologies, networked communications, and the COVID-19 pandemic the past ten years have seen a significant acceleration of such applications on the course.

In addition, the BA in Visual Art has had a critical economic impact on the community and the region, ensuring that local facilitators and administrators are employed annually the course significantly con-

tributed to an increase in people using the ferry from September to May. Accommodation (Hotels, hostels, and houses) and catering establishments on the Island also benefitted from the students throughout the winter months, and educational field trips bringing Dublin-based students to the Island at non-peak times also brought associated economic benefits to the region. The impact of these rich cultural experiences across the wider West Cork region has helped promote Sherkin Island as a contemporary art community, which has, in turn, helped inform the strategy of "The Island of the Arts" (2015–18). As such, the course contributed to the economic and cultural vibrancy of the island, proposing an alternative vision of island communities as models of sustainable tourism rather than 'hide-away' retreats for urban dwellers.

The economic benefits of these kinds of projects for rural environments have been the focus of numerous studies, including the *Europe 2020 Flagship Initiative Innovation Union*[14] driver for economic and social development, innovation, and social cohesion. However, whilst the impact of the BA in Visual Art on Sherkin Island was significant, several unrealized opportunities began to be formulated between 2015 and 2018. Firstly, the sustainable nature of the course and its impact on the local community highlighted the need to expand on the model so that it could create broader links with other island communities, locally and internationally. Within this, there were opportunities to expand on the disciplinary contexts informing the course, connecting artistic practices and discourses with emerging debates within island studies. These disciplinary links brought a greater awareness of the changing nature of islands in contemporary life, particularly with regard to their geopolitical significance, their relational 'patchwork' character, and importantly, their increasing relevance for thinking about sustainable life in the Anthropocene[15]. From this perspective, the figure of the archipelago emerged as a theoretical and practical framework for thinking through artistic research and its education in the Anthropocene.

Event – Archipelago

Archipelagic thinking can be understood as a post-colonial, theoretical discourse that emerged out of island contexts in the late eighties through the work of French Caribbean thinkers such as Martinique poet and philosopher Édouard Glissant (1928–2011). Arguing against traditional colonial representations of "centre" and "periphery", Glissant challenged the image of the Island as an isolated, inward-looking entity left behind by modernity.[16] An antidote to modernity's "continental" presumptions of "origin, unity and security", Glissant privileged the interdependent, rootless subjectivity of the archipelago, its multi-scalar processes and relational ontology. He writes, "[C]ontinental thought [...] makes us think that we see the world as a bloc, taken wholesale, all-at-once, as a sort of imposing synthesis, just as we can see, through the window of an airplane, the configurations of landscapes or mountainous surfaces. With archipelagic thought, we know the rivers' rocks, without a doubt even the smallest ones."[17]

This unique geological dynamic inspired Glissant to argue for an "archipelagic imaginary" that was spatialized in the process of "relating" *between* islands, and where "the imaginary of my place is connected (*relié*) to the imaginable reality of the world's places."[18] To think the world as an archipelago, is to think difference beyond political and geophysical borders, as a fluid historical relation between land and sea and sky. In this oppositional understanding of globalization archipelagic thinking proposes a form of counter-mapping which emphasizes dispersal, flow and relation against stasis, control and division. Importantly for Glissant, the concept of relation was defined simultaneously by the geographical reality of islands/archipelagos and the radical potential of those spaces to produce cultural transgression and transition, what he called *creolisation*[19]. Understood as deeply political, creolization is not to be confused with other post-modern brands of cultural mixing; it was rather, for Glissant, an "event", a rupture, an opening "the difference that makes contact and produces the unforeseeable".[20] Following this, Glissant experimented with, and advocated for disciplinary transgressions between academic and artistic borders, merging story, poem and phi-

losophy, claiming, 'I find it quite pleasant to pass from one atmosphere to another through crossing a border. We need to put an end to the idea of a border that defends and prevents. Borders must be permeable'.[21]

Today, art and its education have taken on a similar character, expanding beyond traditional borders, including sites of production and reception within the gallery circuit to foster modes of exchange across a diverse range of local and global contexts. Often understood as the "social turn",[22] these expanded practices have brought artists into contact with non-traditional art communities where social engagement and relational forms have become central to the artist's operational toolbox. Further broadening this toolbox, Brian Holmes proposed the concept of *eventwork* to support the transgression of disciplinary fields, pointing towards a convergence of "art, theory, media, and politics into a mobile force that oversteps the limits of any professional sphere or disciplinary field while still drawing on their knowledge and technical capacities".[23] For Holmes, such transgressions often require an institutional sidestepping or externalization, as characterised by the disciplinary experimentations of Argentinian collective *Tucumán Arde*, he states;

> So, what was achieved by the move to these zones external to art? At a time when institutional channels were blocked and the modernizing process had become a dictatorial nightmare, the project was able to orchestrate the efforts of a broad division of cultural labor, capable of analyzing complex social phenomena. It then disseminated the results of this labour through the expressive practices of an event in order to produce awareness and contribute to active resistance. What resulted was a change in the finality, or indeed the use-value, of cultural production [...] Or as the *Robho* dossier put it, "The extra imagination found in *Tucumán Arde*, if compared for example to the usual agitation campaign, comes expressly from a practice of, and a preliminary reflection on, the notions of event, participation, and proliferation of the aesthetic experience." That's a perfect definition of eventwork.[24]

In many ways, this proposition captures the performative dimension of un-islanding in artistic research, which, through "aesthetic work",

can simultaneously compose an enquiry that is instrumental and open, geographically situated and poetically diffuse.If un-islanding can be understood as materiality and metaphor, action and ambiguity,[25] then artistic research, as a disciplinary form perceived through the lens of archipelagic thinking, should also support a form of disciplinary "counter-mapping" that emphasizes evental procesess over scientific ones. Reflecting on the tensions inherent to this proposition, Prof. Barbara Bolt has emphasized the concept of "method as emergence"[26] in artistic research as an alternative to the "methodological guaran-teeism",[27] characteristic of the sciences. For Bolt, artistic research methods openly unfold through the relationship between performance, practice, and theory. Similarly, Mackenzie and Porter argue that specific forms of artistic research can address the 'study of events' in such a way that 'reveals their significance without neutralizing it'.[28] What is at stake in this strategy is the capacity of events to be understood and studied in such a way that does not preclude their closure, which would otherwise eliminate their unique 'evental' quality[29]. Following this, the next section presents a short account of three artistic research strategies that aimed to extend the Island based education on the BA in Visual art towards an archipelagic Masters programme in Art and Environment. As a part of the *What is an Island?* project they aimed to un-island artistic research through *event-based, artistic research* methods.

West Cork / The Ship School (2018)

The first iteration of the project aimed to connect with island communi-ties around *their* perception of Islands and island life. In response, three local artists and artist collectives were commissioned to develop an art-work with island communities on one of three islands in the West Cork archipelago: Sherkin Island, Long Island (art manoeuvres) and Heir Is-land (Tess Leak). The first event, initiated by artist Mona O'Driscoll was titled: *Insiders Perspective* and aimed to explore aspects of the interaction between island dwellers and the visible and non-visible environment be-neath the sea's surface. Through unique drawing techniques, *Insiders Per-spective* showed how fishermen used landmarks, visible to the eye, to cre-

ate routes on the sea's surface and how to triangulate these landmarks to reference fishing grounds to harvest fish from beneath the surface. To investigate these interactions, the project explored traditional navigation methods, echo sounder readings, nautical charts, and drawings, all of which are linked to create a coherent whole. Moving from Sherkin Island to Long Island, the second event – the collective performance *Immram* – was facilitated by art manoeuvres: Marianne Adams, Sheelagh Broderick, Jennifer Corcoran, Moze Jacobs, Brendan McCormack, Eleanor Murray and Peter Tadd. *Immram* draws on Celtic immram – mythological sea voyages whose protagonists search for 'the Otherworld' on islands west of Ireland. The event was a narrated, orchestrated walk across Long Island, moving from the dock pier to the island head. Pausing, sensing, listening, and looking, the participants in Immram were instructed in ways of knowing beyond traditional forms of epistemological enquiry.

Fig. 1: Prof. Mick Wilson. What is an Island 1. 2018. Image: Daniel Harper

Courtesy of Glenn Loughran

The third and final event took place on Heir Island. Titled "Our boats are open, and we sail them for everyone" Tess Leak, in collaboration with composer Justin Grounds, explored ideas of opacity, transparency,

stasis and fluidity. Performed on the site of a local restaurant, a diverse collection of musicians took the form of a networked set of islands (archipelago), each defined by a single instrument (guitar, clarinet, etc.). Beginning with a loosely defined score, the audience was invited to move through and between the different island instruments, influencing the performative dynamic and altering the compositional direction of the performance. The written score, designed to be as open and accessible as possible, was available for the participants to take away and perform again with another group of musicians. Each artistic event was connected by an eight-hour ferry journey, which was, in turn, was supported by a unique pedagogical programme, *The Tidalectic Lecture Series.* Bringing artists, academics, philosophers, diplomats, and Islanders together on a single ferry journey, the series delivered presentations from the ship's wheelhouse through the tannoy system and reflected on the political and poetic potential of archipelagic thinking as a contemporary imaginary. Key presentations in the series included; *'What is a Boat?'* – Pat Tanner; *'Art and the Archipelagic Imaginary'* – Prof. Mick Wilson; *'Continental Thinking: A Report on Brexit'* – Emer Deane, diplomat and director of Ireland's Brexit team in Ireland's embassy to the EU; and a final summation from philosopher Richard Kearney. A critical shift in perspective towards the Anthropocene was inspired by Jonathan Pugh's presentation, *'Island Relation and the Anthropocene'*[30], which in turn, significantly influenced the second iteration of the *What is an Island?* Project developed in the global south.

The idea of the Anthropocene derives from the work of Nobel prizewinning chemist Paul Crutzen, who argued that we have left the Holocene and have entered a new geological epoch. Because of the environmental effects of industrialization, population growth and economic development, this is the first epoch to be anthropogenic – that is, to be man-made.[31] This crisis has brought the arts into renewed correspondence with the social and earth sciences. Within this shift, island studies scholar Elizabeth DeLoughrey has drawn particular attention to the role that the visual arts play in representing how "crises are narrated or visualised."[32] Referencing Walter Benjamin, De Loughrey focuses on the use of allegory, how it emerges at times of crisis and that its role

within this context is to provide symbolic order through "form, method and thematic".[33] Similarly, Bruce Clarke has stated that allegory "typically models a concept of world-space through an articulation of nested structures, universal systems with a montage of ontological levels."[34] Understood as *allegorises*, these methods capture the complexity of the Anthropocene by staging "the present's relationship to the past" and telescoping out "from part to whole and back again".[35] Expanding on this proposition, the second iteration developed the concept of allegory to support "constellations" of analysis with island communities. Taking the elements of sand and sea as binding narratives in the Anthropocene, the second iteration journeyed from island archipelago to world archipelago, from the western hemisphere to the southern hemisphere through *The Listening School*.

Galapagos Islands / The Listening School (2018)

The Listening School was a conceptual school set up in July 2019 between the city of Guayaquil, Ecuador, the Jambelí archipelago on the Peruvian border, and San Cristobal Island in the Galapagos Islands. Developed over three months, the project initiated a research agenda for reciprocal modes of exchange across island localities, through mediated listening practices. A pivotal moment within this process occurred when visiting the Island of *Jambelí* on the Ecuadorian border. Once a paradisiacal tourist destination for the region, it had in recent years been subject to funding withdrawal for key services and infrastructure. Alongside this, the destruction of coastal mangrove forests, which act as natural flood barriers, left the Island vulnerable to rising sea levels and a catastrophic storm which impacted the Island severely in 2012.[36]

Speaking to local islanders about the events of 2012, we heard familiar stories about political neglect, indifference, and resilience. Through these discussions, the often-positive concept of resilience took on a darker, more insidious character, one of coercion and co-option, where the islanders felt uncomfortable being celebrated for their ingenuity and creativity. A common experience in island communities and a common theme emerging in island studies in the Anthropocene,

a similar position was expressed by Carol Farbotko about a series of flooding events that took place in Tuvalu island in the Pacific Ocean in 2019. Highlighting the symbolic and structural violence resulting from the Western ecological gaze on Islands, Farbotko argued that Islands are increasingly being viewed as "canaries in the coal mine", sites of experimentation with new forms of survivalism that fit far too neatly into neoliberal policies of privatization[37].

> Islands imagined as laboratories appropriate the space of an already marginalised population; these are imaginings by cosmopolitans who demand, for various and at times conflicting reasons, that disappearing islands provide tangible manifestations of the statistical abstractions that dominate climate science[38].

Following these experiences, the Listening School was set up to engage islanders on these issues through three conceptualizations of sound: *1. Sounding the Island: Dialogical workshops with islands (Sherkin/Galapagos) using horizontal public-address techniques. 2. Sounding the Archipelago: Workshops to facilitate field recordings of the island environments. 3. Sounding the Anthropocene: Public Interrogation of the perception of the islands in the Anthropocene.* Where the first sounding methods focused on recording environmental, island forms of listening, the final project, at the *Casa de Cultura* in San Cristóbal in the Galapagos islands, developed methodologies for public dialogue. Reflecting on these discussions, a series of Long Table events were developed. In the Long Table Methodology a table is placed in the centre of the room. On the periphery of the table, around the room's walls, participants listen and observe. At no point are individuals or groups invited to contribute, nor are they addressed directly through prompts or provocations. Participants decide to come to the table to speak based on what they have heard spoken or what they have not heard spoken at the table. Through this "spatial slowing down", participants remain open to receiving and transmitting through bodily techniques of communication: the glance, the sigh, the sniff, and the shift in the seat.

Fig. 2: What is an Island 2. The Listening School (2019). Image: Tomasz Mada-jczak

Courtesy of Glenn Loughran

Initiated by feminist artist Lois Weaver the Long Table methodology offers a unique aesthetic formulation of democratic participation, and where "models of public engagement function through the appropriation of domestic forms as an open-ended and non-hierarchical format."³⁹ Early conversations with islanders and community workers in

this process drew out significant tensions with the way environmental and conservation concerns had overshadowed gender inequalities and issues related to gender violence, followed by reflections on modernity, decolonization, rising sea levels and the role of technology on islands. These conversations were streamed live through a series of public sculptures installed in the town of Skibbereen. Consisting of eight one-tonne sandbags, a series of *Listening Pods*, each with an audio device buried in the sand, translated the discussions alongside environmental soundings from the different archipelagic regions. Through these geo-locational, aesthetic events, a unique focus on connectivism and digital education began to emerge, influencing the final iteration of the project: The Digital Archipelago (2022).

### Digital Archipelago / Virtual Pedagogy (2022)

One of the key academic supports behind the second iteration of the project in Ecuador was that of French philosopher Bernard Stiegler, who, throughout his life and work, argued for our capacity to intervene in the negative effects of technological change through artistic experimentation and exploration[40]. In public discussions on his work in Guayaquil, Stiegler formulated a concept of the archipelagic imaginary as a means to overcome the standardizing image of the social network, which, he argued, tends to "reduce the strategic resonance of local realities by favouring generic structures"[41]. Such generic structures often undermine the real and genuine expression of differences, and for Stiegler the archipelagic framework has the capacity to highlight the role of localities (local institutions, local forms of knowledge, local practices, etc.) as agents of transformation. At the centre of this proposition was the concept of contributory research, which aims to rethink the relationship between the universal and the particular, how knowledge can be transmitted between localities. Following these discussions, Steigler formed a consortium of academics and islanders around the proposal for an *Archipelago of the Living* which "Intends to develop a network of territorial laboratories of digital contributory research in order to study constraints on living archipelagos with regard to the ecological

niches of species that inhabit the same territories".[42] Supported by the *Archipelago of the Living* consortium, the final iteration of the *What is an Island?* Project developed a digital platform for based on real-world islands using satellite imagery. The stated aim of the platform at the time was to *i) use digital technologies as an educational tool to create contributory dialogues across global territories; ii) support masters student engagement with virtual environments; and iii) develop virtual environments that could function as artistic research environments.* Connecting with a consortium of academics and islanders online, a series of dialogues were set up on Zoom to establish a framework for thinking through the connective potential of a digital archipelago. Following these discussions, a 3D archipelago was constructed in Blender[43] to provide space for academic, islanders and students to work and think critically about the digital environment through an archipelagic dynamic.

On the 7th of December 2020, seven students in the MA Art and Environment were in full lockdown in different parts of the country; most were living on the West Coast, with two students living directly on the islands of Sherkin and Cape Clear. At this time, all seven students were sent Oculus Rift headsets with instructions to join a virtual space in the workplace platform: Spatial[44] (available in beta at that time). The first session in the programme focused on a close reading of Glissant's *Poetics of Relation*, from which the students were tasked with developing a virtual installation in response. With very rudimentary skills, they were quickly able to visualize a reaction to the text that was both spatial and dynamic. Following this experiment, skills-based classes were set up to support students in developing artworks in virtual reality. Alongside these workshops, a series of theoretical lectures on the concept of techno-genesis supported a more critical and philosophical understanding of technology, particularly through the VR experience. Throughout this educational process, students connected with islanders and the islands in the archipelago, developing interviews and conducting environmental/archival research. Across these activities students would organise virtual representations of their research to be presented to their peers in virtual studio spaces. These dialogical "crit" experiences were surprisingly fluid, analytical, and generative. Walk-

ing through virtual installations, you could experience island sounds and rhythms, wind, birdsong, rustling trees, the sea, and motorboats; group discussions would reflect critically on three-dimensional models that proposed floating cinemas, floating forests, plant nightclubs, fog harvesting sculptures; and audio environments captured the voices and experiences of islanders and island life during the pandemic. While these experiences provided much-needed novelty and excitement for the students during extreme routinization and limitation, they also raised important pedagogical questions about the potential for embodied knowledge experiences within virtual environments and the need to engage further with the connections between the bio-sphere and the techno-sphere. Taking the environmental concept of "rewilding" as a form of ecological restoration, the students aimed to "re-wild" and "re-world" the virtual, *enhancing* rather than *flattening* its "diversity".

Fig.3. What is an Island 3. Virtual Archipelago (2020). Image: Dan Guiney
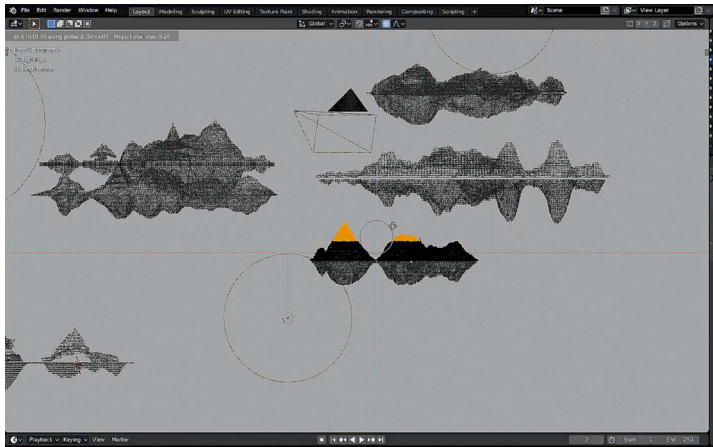
Courtesy of Glenn Loughran

As outlined previously, in archipelagic thinking, *relation* can be understood as the formation of *relationships* between islands and entities[45]. The emphasis on connection broadens our understanding of the Island beyond its representation as radically isolated and outside of modernity; however, more politically, *relation*, as defined by Glissant, can also be understood as the spaces and places of difference and hybridization where such connections are made, unmade, remade[46]. The traditional technology for *relating* between islands has been the ship, the ferry, and the boat. Historically, it is the ship that connects islands and continents, and within the context of the BA Visual Art, the ferry provides the relational dimension, in that it offers students the capacity to move between islands, work with island communities and study islands in the plural. However, due mainly to the extreme social isolation experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic, when it was no longer possible for students to move beyond a three-mile radius, Virtual Reality emerged as a relational supplement to the ferry. Although not without complications and tensions, the virtual environment far surpassed the computer screen as an appropriate space to develop embodied pedagogies around the exploration of environmental art, and while there were many technical questions around curriculum development, learning outcomes and assessment, one of the key issues emerging concerns the over-emphasis in VR education on technicity and training. To some extent this is because the questions being asked of VR education were still primarily economic, and it was clear that there was a greater need to explore the potential for VR to support non-instrumental forms of education based on critical dialogue, experience, and imaginative action.

Reflecting on this issue more broadly with the context of today's educational scene, Prof. Gert Biesta has called for a renewed focus on educational questions over economic or technical ones. For Biesta, educational questions are concerned with our capacity to live well with others in a world of depleting resources, because "Educational questions are fundamentally existential questions about how we try to exist as human beings, how we try to live our life well *in* and *with* a world that is not of our making"[47]. Reflecting on this need, Biesta has argued for a world-centred education based upon the interconnection between three

key dimensions: *qualification, socialization, and subjectification*[48]. To begin to think about how such an ethos might be instituted into curricular models of organisation is a challenging task; however, it is one that was explored in the development of the MA Art and Environment in West Cork.

World – Environment

Expanding on the BA Visual Art (BAVA) model on Sherkin Island, the MA Art and Environment was implemented across three islands in Roaringwater Bay in West Cork: Sherkin Island, Cape Clear Island and Whiddy Island. Navigating this chain of Islands, the MA Art and Environment aimed to utilize archipelagic thinking as a heuristic philosophy to support a world-centred art education in the Anthropocene. To support these ambitions, a curriculum framework was designed around three dominant modes of governance in the Anthropocene, outlined by David Chandler as *Mapping, Sensing, and Hacking*.[49] On the one hand, Chandler identifies each mode as providing a "distinct conceptualisation of governance in a world framed as complex, entangled and unpredictable."[50] And on the other, each can be mobilized to problematize ontological claims that "affirm" the Anthropocene. Where Mapping gathers historical and "empirical knowledge", Sensing engages with contemporary "creative assemblages" outside of empirical data, "emphasizing an intuitive, experiential response to the complexity of the environment".[51] Finally, Hacking encourages imaginative action and "new creative ways of engaging on the basis of repurposing, recompositing and finding the play in already existing arrangements and practices".[52]

As Elizabeth DeLoughrey has suggested, to understand the future of island culture in the Anthropocene, we must first understand the historical relation between continents and islands, "a shifting history between colonial power, economic expansion and environmental change."[53]. Engaging with the concept of Archipelagraphy across multiple geographical sites, the first module, *Mapping...the environment*, introduces students to the key historical themes, debates and conceptual frame-

works that have emerged in the environmental arts over the past fifty years. These histories explore aesthetic, social and political intersections between multiple disciplines and practices focused on the Anthropocene: biological and earth sciences, anthropology, visual art, design, and political activism. Alongside these analyses, students are introduced to Mapping as a "diagrammatic methodology", aiding further fieldwork on human and natural ecologies throughout the West Cork archipelago. These artistic methodologies introduce students to the interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary character of the environmental arts and provide artistic frameworks for critical mapping of crucial themes, concepts, and questions.

While students must 'cognitively map' areas of contemporary environmental art practice and discourse, mapping as an artistic research methodology enables students to build artistic frameworks for participatory fieldwork in the second semester *Sensing...the Environment*. Such fieldwork is essential to an eco-social art practice that engages with human and non-human actors in the environment. Within this context, the programme supports models of contributory research premised on collaboration, creativity, and intervention to systematically re-value knowledge acquisition through research activities outside of centre/periphery binary definitions of research. The incorporation of artistic methods into research is not meant to merely illustrate island culture but participates in the co-production of knowledge with multiple island communities through creative methodologies, opening up new spaces for dialogical exchange and providing a mechanism for the archipelago to be used as both a specific and a generalizable geo-historical framework for mapping local communities and environmental habitats on Islands.

Together, these modules form the basis of a praxis-oriented engagement with the environmental humanities on Sherkin Island and the West Cork Archipelago. Where students accumulate empirical knowledge in module 1 through cognitive mapping and aesthetic knowledge in module 2 through experiential, participatory fieldwork, in the third module, they are required to deliver a final project that "hacks" the local environment. Taking a transdisciplinary approach, the third module, *Hacking...the environment*, encourages novel forms of creative

disruption and critical intervention into any system, be it technological, social, economic, or environmental. Through this process, students are supported in developing large-scale interventions and events in an environmental context. These interventions are further presented through an archipelagic exhibition across multiple island sites with multiple communities and actors. Finally, to evaluate the efficacy of these interventions, students will utilize bespoke theoretical frameworks developed through the course and with critical stakeholders in the environmental context.

Where the dimension of qualification in education emphasizes the skills-based nature of education and its connection to market values, the social dimension aims to cultivate a sense of citizenry and community as an essential characteristic.[54] In acquiring qualification, students gain professional skills and attributes that help them develop a sustainable career in the visual arts. Qualification, in this sense, is gained through an interdisciplinary framework that enables students to develop intellectual skills, methodological skills, and artistic skills. Through this process, the students develop artistic research *in* and *with* island communities. As a result of this dynamic, there is often a reciprocal demand in the course, which informs its ethos of social engagement. Through socially engaged art modules, students develop new relational intersections between the arts, institutions, and localities. Finally, whilst socialization is an important aspect of student engagement, it is equally important that students are supported in their subjective capacity to develop critical thinking and speak back to the community and the world through the artistic practices they develop on the Island. Understood as the *subjective* quality in education, this dimension is central to the arts and the existential experience of becoming, growing, and forming oneself in the world.[55] Beyond the contemporary hegemony of qualification in educational discourse, this curricular approach supports students in their capacity for social engagement and subjective action in the world; and, as such provides an appropriate model of educational subjectivity for the Anthropocene, one which simultaneously introduces the world and the environment as an active agent in the formation of educational subjects.

CONCLUSION

Due to their heightened sense of precarity and vulnerability, islands and archipelagos are often seen as micro-representations of global ecological instability and possibility. From this perspective, they are central to any political, pedagogical or artistic engagement with climate change today. By transposing the theoretical framework of archipelagic thinking onto the methodological ground of artistic events, the *What is an island?* Project aimed to connect the essential characteristic of archipelagic thinking to artistic research through an emphasis on openness and worldliness. Central to this process, the B.A in Visual Art on Sherkin Island was presented as a long-standing model of sustainable arts education that has positively impacted educational, economic cultural developments on an island community. However, it is important to acknowledge within this context, islanders often treat such "interventions" with caution and suspicion. Navigating these tensions, the *What is an Island?* Project instituted a series of artistic research events aiming to expand on the model of the BA in Visual Art through dialogue and critical reflection with island communities. Through this process, the concept of the archipelago and archipelagic thinking emerged as a heuristic device for exploring the significance of islands, in the Anthropocene, in an *evental way*.

In the Anthropocene, art and its education have taken on a similar "evental" character, where artists and educators must now think across spatial and temporal scales, from a planetary 'shared sense of catastrophe' to more local historical and cultural contingencies.[56] These local/planetary contingencies were mapped out across the three geographical and spatial iterations in the *What is an Island?* Project. First through West Cork island event with its emphasis on relation and locality (2018), to the second iteration with its emphasis on climate change and globality (2019), ending with the final iteration's focus on networks and digital pedagogy (2020). While each event navigated different research thematics with expanded island communities, each was also percieved iteratively as steps towards a more structred and sustainable intervention through the development of an archipelagic Masters programme

on Art and Environment in the West Cork archipelago. Following this, the *What is an Island?* Project was instrumental in determining the educational focus on archipelgic thinking, digital studies and a world centered education in the Masters curriculum. By further addressing the lack of structural access to the Masters provision in the arts locally, the *What is an Island?* Project implemented a platform for knowledge-sharing across multiple island contexts, exploring socially engaged arts methodologies for navigating local and virtual environments. While such Initiatives usually start from social, economic, and culturally motivated research, they are rarely led by artistic research processes. At stake within this enquiry is the proposal that performative modes of exchange can support multiple registers across diverse communities.

Notes

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4   Joseph Pugliese: *Australia and the insular imagination: Beaches, borders, boats, and bodies.* Continuum-journal of Media & Cultural Studies – CONTINUUM-J MEDIA CULT STUD., 2011, p. 148.
5   www.whatisanisland.com. Accessed, April 8 2024.
6   The Anthropocene describes a new geological epoch in which human activity has significantly impacted the planet's climate and ecosystems. Ecologist Eugene F. Stoermer popularized it in the late 1980s, and atmospheric chemist Paul J. Crutzen in the 2000s.
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25   Thompson: Heuristic Geographies.

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27   M. Wilson: *F*ck you and your footnotes: On some tropes in the rhetorical situation of supervision.* Supervising Artistic and Practice-based Research. Utrecht Summer School. August 2023.

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34   Ibid. (quoted in), p. 6.

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Writing Horizontally

What Teaching, Artistic Research and Epistemology Might Have in Common

Lennart Krauss

Introduction

With the increasing significance of knowledge production in the art field *research*, *epistemology* and *education* seem to replace the importance of more traditional aesthetic categories like *genre, beauty* and *style*.[1] As Tom Holert points out, the art world in general, art education and related teaching approaches show a deep involvement with a global political economy of knowledge.[2] My text considers the following questions: When do we act epistemically in educational contexts? And when do we act epistemically in artistic teaching? One answer to this question might be the essay as a didactic form.

I want to tackle some of the inherent aspects of the essay as an episte-mological form in relation to educational contexts. First, I want to define the essay and show why my attempt will have to fail if I want to focus the essay epistemically. The specific and dynamic performance of the autho-rial "I" plays an important part in the reasoning of the essay and makes it impossible to carve a universal definition. While the form of the essay has its origins in literature, I will also discuss the form of the essay film, which has evolved in the previous century. "Through the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, the essayistic has increasingly taken the shape of photo-essays, essay films, and electronic essays that permeate the inter-net as blogs and other exchanges within a public electronic circuitry."[3]

Apart from the authorial point of reasoning it is the interstice between images, between image and sound, between different layers of the filmic language that constitutes the playground for the essay film's epistemological potential. Therefore, I will focus on one similarity of the essay in film and literature: the use of transgression as an epistemic and performative tool. Their reasoning is characterized structurally by the transgression of identity-based boundaries in its fragmented form. Furthermore, I will ask if these *acts*, these *act*ions are able to initiate educational moments. As a practice-based example I will end with the description of a teaching workshop that I presented in Basel at the University of Applied Sciences and Arts Northwestern Switzerland for the symposium "Teaching Artistic Strategies: Playing with Materiality, Aesthetics, and Ambiguity".

What could the essay be? And what does it do?

There are numerous attempts to define an essay[4]. One of the most famous definitions was given by Theodor W. Adorno, who has theorized the essay in his famous text "The Essay as Form"[5] as "indeterminate, interchangeable and heterogeneous", an experimental form that transgresses traditional genre boundaries by risking conjunctions between ideas that would not persist in the academic world (because of its artistic attitude) nor the artistic world (because of its scientific attitude).

Progress in understanding how the essay works can be made only by recognition of the contradictions and inconsistencies in the essay's content and its form, all of which are encoded by the writer and decoded (and constructed) by the reader. The overarching pair of opposites is fiction/nonfiction, including subject/object, science/art, referential/literary.[6]

As a "private form with an eye on the reading public" the essay takes its readers on a walk of thoughts. It is based on processual montage, while it "settles, tentatively, as product."[7] As a product it can be experienced over and over again. Using and opening multiple perspectives while privileging none, it willfully opens its studying perspective to a

progressive array of cogent observations. The essayist in this regard is a researcher, who deals with a certain topic that can emerge, disappear and oscillate in differing light. Max Bense described the essayist as someone "who turns his subject this way and that, questions, touches, inspects, and reflects upon it thoroughly; who approaches it from different angles, and collects what he sees in his mind's eye, and formulates in words what his topic reveals under the conditions established by writing."[8]

In doing so, essays reflect their own mediality, their authorial standpoint, the conditions, and traces of their composited fragments. The resulting argumentation is in any sense unstable and ambivalent. It drifts between the artistic and the scientific, the experiential and the intellectual, decentralizing common notions of knowledge and omniscient positions of expertise. Not just in textual mode, but also etymologically the essay is in essence an *act*.[9] *It does*.

This is also the reason why definitions have been very difficult and almost impossible. It is mainly due to the essay's diverse, flexible, self-reflective, and experimental form that it continues to be an undefinable non-genre, an un-methodological method. According to André Belleau, the essay is not a thought, an evaluation or weighting of ideas but a swarm of ideas-words.[10] No wonder defining the essay is problematic.

As a first approach to describe the term *essay* or *essayistic* as an adjective for visual forms of artistic research, we could first take a look at its etymological roots: the term *essay* derives from its Latin origins in the word *exegium* ("to weigh" or "a weight"), its accrual of the meanings "to try", "to attempt" in Romance languages. Following Michel de Montaigne, the metonymic sliding of the word "essai" in French derives from "a trial" or "an attempt" to name a specific "form of writing" introduced by Montaigne himself, which is *the essay*.[11]

These few definitions show the difficulty to define what the essay is: they are as broad as the essay appears in its form, tone and subject. Contrary to its claim to bend genre boundaries, the term "essay" is currently being used to describe certain textual or filmic forms in the means of a genre. It therefore *acts* as a genre which bends and surpasses its own boundaries. The epistemic essay is driven by an *epistephilia* of the

author who either strikes out on a journey of his own thoughts in confrontation with differing documents, artefacts, and materials or who experiments in a given setup or procedure. This inevitably produces non-propositional, non-representable knowledge. And it is also the reader of an epistemic essay who produces non-representable knowledge in practicing, experiencing, and thinking through the essay. Regarding educational and scientific expectations in institutional contexts, this presents severe recognition difficulties: knowledge regimes in the scientific realm are focused on representable knowledge that serve a specific purpose.[12] Hence, Tom Holert raises the question whether this "non-representability of certain vulnerable modes of knowledge should be preserved and protected or rather contested and eventually overcome."[13]

Writing yourself – The "I" as a departure for essayistic reasoning

In the first part of this text, we saw that the essay seems to be difficult to grasp by common definition tools. Since it acts differently, according to the differing thought constellations which it evokes every time we see, hear, or read essay texts, films, or sound pieces. In the second part we want to take a look at the centre of its epistemic origin: the subjective position of the "I" that reasons according to its own thoughts. Most, if not all, accounts of the essayistic also place emphasis on its personal, almost autobiographical nature. As literary critic and philosopher Georg Lukács put it, "the essayist must now become conscious of his own self, must find himself and build something of himself."[14] He wrote not in order to "pretend to discover things, but to lay open my self."[15] In the year 1580, after nine years of thinking and writing, Michel de Montaigne published his "Essais"[16], which coined the term. These essays describe a bond between a personal life and the surrounding events in sixteenth-century France. The multiple revisions that characterize these essays (1580, 1588, 1595) testify not only to the constant changes and adjustments of a mind as it defers to experience but also to the transformation of the essayistic self as part of that process. In the introduction, Montaigne states: "I

myself am the subject of this book".[17] The choice to write about oneself was quite unusual at that time and place, especially if one wouldn't consider oneself as an expert in a specific field. He finds that his identity, his "master form", as he calls it, cannot be defined in simple terms of a constant and stable self. Instead, he describes it as a changeable and fragmented thing and claims that the valorization and acceptance of these traits is the only guarantee of authenticity and the only way of remaining faithful to the truth of one's being and one's nature rather than to alien semblances.

The purpose of this endeavour was to gain a greater self-knowledge.[18] For Montaigne, his own "self-testing" was the motivation of his writing: the testing of his judgment, his mind, indeed of his whole being as it is pitted against various problems.[19] The essay proceeds by a paradoxical constitution of object by subject where both are the same: the essayist.[20] The self-reflexivity of the form and it's author is both inescapable and a source of apprehension: "My own excuse is that I ought in this to have more liberty than others, forasmuch as I write specifically of myself and of my writings, as I do of my other actions; that my theme turns upon itself; but I know not whether others will accept this excuse."[21] Montaigne puts his claim into practice by internalizing arguments and theories in his essays and by vulgarizing the rhetoric of his texts and the acquisition of knowledge. This concept guaranteed that the subject matter of the essay would be without limitation, infinitely open-ended, the generator of "numberless essays"[22]. An essayistic vision which consisted of a worldly, accessible literature, considered to be the vehicle of humanistic learning.[23] In doing so, the essay acknowledges and persuades its audience: by developing a persona intended by the writer and perceived by the reader to be trustworthy, intelligent, amusing, or whatever else will be persuasive. The presence of a "you" seems to be taken for granted as an indicator of "audience outreach." The presence of "I", however, is what is most significant: the benchmark of the essay's special means of persuasion which consists in the creation of the persuasive persona.[24]

Understanding in your own language – The "I" in the essay film

During the twentieth century, many filmmakers such as Robert J. Flaherty and Margaret Mead were using documentary films to portray foreign worlds. Practically, this meant entering a certain field, filming a subject, interrogating it, and producing a voice-over which articulates what can be seen in order to create a consistent explanation. As a form of research that has its origins in the colonial context and as a paternalizing way of representation, these documentary styles have been strongly criticized. The literary essay was rediscovered by filmmakers as a counter-language, an alternative way of representing reality and its contradictions. In their narrations, the notion that images and sound should serve as arguments within a body of evidence or convey participation in strong and authentic emotions is criticized or abandoned. Instead of tying the documentary to the values of representation, truth, or closeness to life, essayistic documentary forms emerged. They question the passion for the real through the contrapuntal compilation of heterogeneous material and techniques of imaginative generation or superimposition of reality traces. Contrary to the documentary conventions, the essay film develops an authorial cinema that is able to produce a variety of linguistic and discursive registers and that applies itself to a range of topics and disciplines, precisely as books do. Film critic and film director Alexandre Astruc predicted a liberation of expression: "The cinema will gradually break free from the tyranny of what is visual, from the image for its own sake, from the immediate and concrete demands of the narrative, to become a means of writing just as flexible and subtle as written language."[25] Cinema is "gradually becoming a language"[26] of an author who will be able to tell something about the world in a new way. Even though the voice-over continued to play an important role in many essay films of the 60s and 70s, it shifted its role of enunciating a "truth". A new way of language organization, a renunciation of selection and hierarchical organization of facts like it is taking place in the essay means an elimination of the traditional conditions for a judgment. As Umberto Eco writes in his text on the open work, "an action presupposes causal relations (and thus explanations), and tells us that fact B occurs by virtue

of fact A. Now, when one writes history (or, as in the narrative tradition, pretends to write it), a causal explanation is already a justification and at the same time a classification according to a certain order of (preconceived, L.K.) values."[27]

A different organization of ever shifting truth-producing narrations also implies a shift in the epistemic positioning of the authorial narrator. Through an author assumed to be invisible and a "voice" (i.e. subtitles, voice over etc.) a narrative-didactic figure is present. This authorial "voice" approaches the subject matter not in order to present a factual report as in the field of traditional documentary, but to offer an in-depth, personal, and thought-provoking reflection. At the level of rhetorical structures, in order to convey such reflection, the cinematic essayist creates an enunciator who is very close to the real, extra-textual author. The difference is minor, as the enunciator clearly represents the author's views and is their spokesperson, even if he hides behind a different or even multiple names or personas. The essay's authorial speaker may remain a voice-over or appear physically in the film. The text of a knowing individual assumes a humble or limited outlook to efface the authority its very existence claims; the 'first person observes' text assumes the third person; the I that speaks, it seems, so honestly to the reader is a created I: the third person ostensibly speaks for no one or for everyone, but actually seeks to make the invisible I persuasive. Eventually, the essay's contradictions multiply into opposing terms that, again, make the essay appear unclassifiable: subject/object; science/art; referential/literary; fiction/nonfiction. Reading or writing an essay is an act of negative capability. Several sets of opposites must be entertained at one and the same time. The resulting tension – important to the essay's particular sort of persuasion – is perhaps most dramatically represented in the use of person.[28]

As the essay combines a confrontation of the self with the commentary processing of worldly artifacts, it seems perfect for the use in school contexts. As an example of the educational use of the film essay in universities, I would like to mention the work of Michael Baute.[29] In some of his classes, he showed and thoroughly discussed a certain film. The students were then invited to create a video essay about a certain part

or certain motifs of the film. While creating these video essays on existing films, the students had to make precise decisions in a short amount of time. They had to learn how to relate to a film in the form of voiceover, subtitles and/or text panels that would represent their reading of the film as a commentary narrative. Various relations must be tried out, different procedures practiced. And then the question of the form itself arises: the linguistic form that is developed, the text, the commentary, is only an intermediate goal. After this process, as in any other film production, images and sounds have to be organized.

For the third part of my text, I want to further elaborate on the methods of montage – of the visual and linguistic reasoning inherent in the essay. I will introduce the notion of the interstice and its relation to thinking.

Methods of essayistic reasoning: Interstice, images of thought and transgressive events

When Gilles Deleuze was writing about "Here and Elsewhere" by Jean-Luc Godard, he introduced the concept of the *interstice*, which he described as a spacing "between two actions, between affections, between perceptions, between two visual images, between two sound images, between the sound and the visual."[30] In his conception of cinema as an image of thought, the interstice played a central role. It derived from a technological peculiarity. By breaking the sensory-motor linkages typical of the movement-image, the interval is set free. Through the interval, another technique is born: the irrational cut no longer links images to each other because their material, causal chains are broken and the fissures between them become larger.[31] In rhetoric figures of irrational cutting, the image which follows another one has to be chosen. The operation of choosing then induces an interstice between the two. "This is not an operation of association, but of differentiation, as mathematicians say, or of disappearance, as physicists say: given one potential, another one has to be chosen, not any whatever, but in such a way that a difference of potential is established between the two,

which will be productive of a third or of something new,"[32] recognizes film critic Laura Rascaroli. One recalls that, for Deleuze, the operation of thinking "is not to interpret or to reflect, but to experiment and to create."[33] Thinking, in this regard, is linked to the new, to the emergent, and is "not external to thought but lies at its very heart".[34] The space in which the new occurs is, in Deleuzian terms, an event that coincides with an act of speculation for the spectator.[35] Images are becoming radically external to each other and yet the confrontation between their inside and their outside produces something new, that is, a new *image of thought*.

As we have seen, the epistemology of the essay is perpetuated by the interstice which is able to produce images of thought. But there is a second component which seems to be crucial for the understanding of the essay's epistemic dynamic. Transgression is a characteristic that the essay film shares with the literary essay, which is also often described as a protean form. Using techniques of horizontal montage, the essayistic line of thought is not necessarily formed through causal connections, but rather through an ordering experience of seeing and hearing, through juxtapositions instead of hierarchizations or divisions. It *acts* between images in the essay film, between words, sentences, and paragraphs in the literary essay, but also *through* them. Essays seem to present a critical epistemology processed by aesthetic, rather than authoritative-persuasive practice. It thus enables a reassessment and reconfiguration of standard, dominant types of knowledge.[36] I would like to describe this by shifting the horizon of epistemic action: When we are essayistically engaging with the world, we are writing or filming or speaking horizontally. We are not diving into the depths of originality or universality, but we are wandering through a surface where everything can take place, everything can be seen and everything lies side-by-side. Its epistemology is the adjacency of things, where the epistemic viewpoint shifts from verticality to horizontality.

The educational essay?

As mentioned above, the essay does have its place in educational contexts, cf. Michael Baute's video essay seminars. In many countries, essay writing is used as an exercise in schools. The rather short text demonstrates the student's understanding of a certain subject. It serves as an interpretation in the etymological sense. But essayistic interpretations are not philologically hardened and sober, as Adorno writes.[37] Rather, the essay celebrates over-interpretation as opposed to the predictable verdict of calculating reason. Adorno's conception of the essay as a critique of the academic and scholarly appropriate argumentation is rather rare in this regard. Because "nothing can be interpreted out of something that is not interpreted into it at the same time. The criteria for such interpretation are its compatibility with the text and with itself, and its power to give voice to the elements of the object in conjunction with one another."[38] The essay in its epistemically driven form is a specific method of artistic inquiry, an oscillating form of constant change. It thus undermines the dominant division of labour into the aesthetic and the epistemological.[39] Educational visions of the essay foreground its ability to break the boundaries and conditioning effects of learning itself. It was Montaigne who had the idea of an essay-based, inclusive learning: "He thus initiated, for the immediate future, 'a worldly literature breaking with specialized learning, the literature of l'honnête homme [the cultivated gentleman]' (Hugo Friedrich, 1949), and for the long run, the destiny of the essay as a vehicle of humanistic learning."[40]

I would like to enhance Montaigne's conception with some reflections on methods in the educational vision of Roland Barthes, another prolific figure regarding the practice of the epistemic essay. For his teachings in the Collège de France, Barthes envisioned to "present" a discourse without imposing it, a discourse as a point of debate. For what can be oppressive in the realm of teaching is not the culture it conveys, he says, but the discursive forms through which we propose them. Therefore, his teaching aims to treat discourses in their power-relatedness. As a method, it can be directed only to the means that are suitable to thwart this power, to get rid of it or at least to reduce it. He is

convinced that in writing, as in teaching, the basic operation of *solving* consists in fragmentation, in digression. Or, to use a different word: in the *digression* which combines speaking and listening in performative acts that rely on each other.[41]

Acting in between – A teaching workshop in Basel

For the symposium "Teaching Artistic Strategies: Playing with Materiality, Aesthetics and Ambiguity" at the University of Applied Sciences and Arts Northwestern Switzerland Basel, I conceived a workshop where I tried to initiate educational experiences through the practice of the essay. It was a workshop with a small group of symposium participants and the team. It was held in the main building in a multifunctional seminar room. The room was prepared with a huge table on which I spread out dozens of postcard-sized b/w images. It was my personal image archive consisting of photos of thinkers, pictograms, symbols, signs, and motifs that I used in lecture performances or presentations. Before we looked at these pictures, we played an associative game: one person starts with a term and responds to it, i.e. "When I hear fruit, I say sour." When another person of the group has an association in response they continue, i.e. "When I hear sour, I say my boss." After we played for ten minutes, we proceeded to the next step. The group was invited to look at the pile of pictures. I invited the workshop members to pick one image which caught their attention and would provide the starting point of a personal essayistic reflection. In thinking about possible connections and relations, textual "voice-overs" arose, like a personal layer which complements the images and creates links between them. These sentences or words could be written on empty cards, starting with "I…" to emphasize the subjective authorship. More and more links between the image and individual thoughts and experiences were found and a short series of images arose. The operation of selecting is not random, but follows a tentative-fumbling order, beginning with the slow observation of images. The following speculations about possible relations, however, only become fruitful when a relation emerges in the material juxtaposition.

For at first it is not yet a pictorial knowledge but the assumption of a potential relation. In contact with the images, unforeseen references arise, things that are not expected, but which nevertheless, or precisely because of this, harbor epistemic potential. When orders emerge from the images themselves, a different narrative can be told, and a structurally divergent story emerges. After finishing, the participants were asked to pin their narration on the wall, so that every person of the group could see what the other ones had created.

Fig. 1

Courtesy of Lennart Krauss

Turning vertical into horizontal writing

Teaching as a mono-directional way of transmitting knowledge from the knowing to the unknowing, as it has been conceived in recent cen-

turies, is based on the solidifying relation of terms, concepts or ideas with/as images. It seems to be precisely the mobilizing, destabilizing performance of the essay that tells us something about the authors, documents, material, and media involved. If we want to ask about the educational "gain" of essayistic practice, we could list experiences of media-reflexivity and probably knowledge about our self. Beyond that, it is also the self in its epistemic ability to act through transgression, interstice and its own flexible position of authorship that is empowered to engage with the world. We interact with it playfully, acting *evidently* in modes of "thinking with" and "thinking through" as opposed to "thinking of" and "thinking about". To put it simply: a shift from vertical into horizontal writing.

Notes

1   Dragana Stojanovic describes knowledge production in the art field as an educational turn: Stojanovic, Dragana: *Educational Turn in Art. Turning Art into the Production of a New Knowledge*, Zbornik Akademije Umetnosti, no. 5/2017: 56–64.

2   Holert, Tom: *Knowledge Beside Itself. Contemporary Art's Epistemic Politics*. Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2020, p. 8.

3   Corrigan, Timothy: *The Essay Film. From Montaigne, After Marker*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011, pp. 13–14.

4   If not further explained, I use "the essay" to describe the essay as a specific epistemic form. "An Essay" should comprise the wide range of essays in varying domains (epistolary essay, feuilleton essay etc.).

5   Adorno, Theodor W: 'The Essay as Form', in Rolf Tiedemann, eds.: *Notes on Literature*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1991, 3–24.

6   Gordon, Eleanor Risteen: *The authority of the essay. Philosophical, rhetorical, and cognitive considerations of person*. Chicago: University of Illinois. https://www.proquest.com/openview/514640dbbcb3b 5caf8be5eec7184ce6b/1?pq-origsite=gscholar&cbl=18750&diss=y. Accessed 11 January 2023, p. 7.

7   Aquilina, Mario: *The Essay at the Limits. Poetics, Politics and Form*. London: Bloomsbury, 2021, p. 1.

8   Bense, Max: 'On The Essay And Its Prose', in Nora M. Alter & Timothy Corrigan, eds.: *Essays on the Essay Film*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2017, 49–59, p. 52.

9   Adorno calls it an "aesthetic act", see Theodor W. Adorno: 'The Essay As Form', in Nora M. Alter & Timothy Corrigan, eds.: *Essays on the Essay Film*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2017, 60–82, p. 59.

10   "*L'essai n'est pas une pensée, une évaluation des idées; c'est un essai d'idées-mots*", Belleau, André: 'Petite Essayistique'. *Liberté* 25, no. 6 (1983): 7–10, p. 9.

11   Aquilina, Mario: *The Essay at the Limits. Poetics, Politics and Form*. London: Bloomsbury, 2021, p. 2.

12 Institutionalized contexts of education act similarly. In the school system it seems to be representable, documentable knowledge that is being processed through teaching strategies which result in quantifiable assessments.

13 Holert, Tom: *Knowledge Beside Itself. Contemporary Art's Epistemic Politics*, p. 257.

14 Lukács, Georg von: 'On The Nature And Form Of The Essay', in Nora M. Alter & Timothy Corrigan, eds.: *Essays on the Essay Film*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2017, 21–40, p. 37.

15 Montaigne, Michel Eyquem de: *The Essays of Michel de Montaigne*. London: Bell, 1700, p. 254.

16 The words *Essai* or *coup d'essai* originally meant the apprentice artisan's work as distinct from the master's, by extension it came to mean "probing", "trying out", "testing" or "trial", cf. Montaigne, Michel de: *Les Essais*. Paris: Gallimard, 2007.

17 Montaigne, Michel de: *The Complete Essays*. New York: Penguin Books, 1993, p. 27.

18 Chevalier, Tracy, eds:. *Encyclopedia of the Essay*. London: Fitzroy Dearborn, 1997, p. 1202.

19 Ibid., p. 1203.

20 Gordon, Eleanor Risteen: *The authority of the essay. Philosophical, rhetorical, and cognitive considerations of person*, p. vi.

21 Montaigne, Michel: 'Michel de Montaigne (Ft. Charles Cotton) – Essays of Michel de Montaigne (Chap. 3.13)'. https://genius.com/Michel-de-montaigne-essays-of-michel-de-montaigne-chap-313-annotated. Accessed 26 May 2023.

22 Chevalier, Tracy, eds.: *Encyclopedia of the Essay*. London: Fitzroy Dearborn, 1997, pp. 1203–4.

23 Ibid., p. 1203.

24 Gordon, Eleanor Risteen: *The authority of the essay. Philosophical, rhetorical, and cognitive considerations of person*, 2.

25 Astruc, Alexandre. 'The Birth of a New Avant-Garde: La Caméra-Stylo', in: Peter Graham, eds.: *The New Wave*. London: Secker and Warburg, 1968, 17–23, p. 18.

26   *"By language I mean a form in which and by which an artist can express his thoughts, however abstract they may be, or translate his obsessions exactly as he does in the contemporary essay or novel. That is why I would like to call this new age of the cinema the age of caméra-stylo (camera-pen). This metaphor has a very precise sense. By it I mean that the cinema will gradually break free from the tyranny of what is visual, from the image for its own sake, from the immediate and concrete demands of the narrative, to become a means of writing just as flexible and subtle as written language."* Ibid.

27   Eco, Umberto: *Das offene Kunstwerk.* Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2016, p. 354.

28   Gordon, Eleanor Risteen: *The authority of the essay. Philosophical, rhetorical, and cognitive considerations of person.* 4.

29   Baute, Michael & Katja Kynast: 'Lektüremöglichkeiten schaffen, Autor*innenschaft generieren. Ein Gespräch zwischen Michael Baute und Katja Kynast zum studentischen Videoessay', in: Egert Bee & Julia Gerko, eds: *Experimente Lernen, Techniken Tauschen. Ein Spekulatives Handbuch*. Weimar: Nocturne, 2020, 313–32; Baute, Michael & Stefan Pethke: 'Sehen Sprechen Herstellen Gespräch über Seminare zur Produktion filmvermittelnder Filme', in: *Nach Dem Film* (blog), 2013. https://www.nachdemfilm.de/issues/text/sehen-sprechen-herstellen. Accessed 11 January 2023.

30   Deleuze, Gilles: *Cinema 2. The Time-Image*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1989, p. 180.

31   Rascaroli, Laura: *How the Essay Film Thinks,* New York: Oxford University Press, 2017, p. 9.

32   Deleuze, Gilles: *Cinema 2. The Time-Image*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1989, p. 179–80. Emphasis in the original.

33   Rodowick, David Norman: *Gilles Deleuze's Time Machine*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1997, p. 198.

34   Deleuze, Gilles: *Foucault*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988, p. 80.

35   Rascaroli, Laura: *How the Essay Film Thinks,* p. 11.

36   Holert, Tom: *Knowledge Beside Itself: Contemporary Art's Epistemic Politics*, p. 258.

37   Adorno, Theodor W: 'The Essay as Form', in Rolf Tiedemann, eds.: *Notes on Literature*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1991, 3–24, pp. 4–5.

38   Ibid., pp. 3–4.

39   Ibid., p. 16.

40   Chevalier, Tracy, eds.: *Encyclopedia of the Essay*. London: Fitzroy Dearborn, 1997, p. 1203.

41   Barthes, Roland: 'Lecture in Inauguration of the Chair of Literary Semiology, College de France, January 7, 1977'. *October* 8 (1979): 3–16, pp. 14–15.

Researching and Reshaping Human-thing Constellations
Neo-material Thinking as a Principle for Teaching in the Arts

Annemarie Hahn

In this article I propose a teaching sequence in which the idea is to observe one's own placement within different human-human and human-thing constellations in order to better understand how we act and interact, how we include and exclude. These already multileveled constellations have become even more complex since the Internet. Thinking digital culture and inclusion together has been a particular concern throughout my research. I am interested in taking a closer look at current societal conditions in order to conceptualize more inclusive art-educational approaches. This means not only considering the conditions of human actors, but also paying attention to material and spatial ones as well as the media-cultural conditions that determine collective agency. The aim is to produce less exclusion of single actors and thus to achieve a more strongly developed educational justice. Against this backdrop, I raise the following questions in relation to an art-pedagogical practice that seeks to recognize and generate social and material entanglements with an exploratory gaze: Who is actually connected to whom and with what, and in what way? What influences our everyday actions? Who has what capacity to act under what circumstances? And who or what is it that actually acts?

With these questions I try to understand what mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion are involved in social structures and materialized

practices in art education. This approach will probably lead to the necessity of reconceptualizing subjectivity, in its usual understanding as an individual entity in the context of digital culture and inclusion.

Contemporary art education could be about relating oneself to people, things, and social structures, learning to see one's own privileges and capacities to act, and using this knowledge to become competent to act in an aesthetic and political sense, oriented towards the future. However, art-educational theory and practices – at least in the German-speaking discourse – still often focus on the education of singular subjectivities, especially when it comes to art education in lower grades as the primary school, but also in higher education.

This focus is notable insofar as a shift in subject positions has been apparent in creative and artistic fields for some time. It is a shift from the singular subject to networks of human and non-human actors, as described, for example, in actor-network theory since the late 1980s,[1] or with a stronger political and feminist agenda in neo-materialist approaches, such as Karen Barad's agential realism[2]. These developments are also present in the visual arts, both in production and distribution and the discourses associated with them. The 9th Berlin Biennale in 2016, curated by the DIS Collective, is probably particularly relevant to this, but so is Documenta fifteen in 2022 with its decided focus on collectivity. A re-location of the subject and its agency can also be seen in certain approaches in educational science and dis/ability studies[3].The network character of digital cultures is, as I will illustrate in the course of this text, at least an amplifier, if not a trigger of today's societal human-thing constellations.

Researching and reshaping human-thing constellations

The task proposed in this article attempts to make one's situatedness visible in the sense of Donna Haraway[4] in order to enable reflection on positioning and the social, cultural and historical influences on one's own thinking and acting. Against the backdrop of digital cultures and thus constantly changing human and non-human actors, this task aims to

better understand and thus potentially realize the conditions of current inclusive cultures. Why and how digital culture and inclusion are interrelated will become clear in the following by illustrating current cultural practices and also why the recognition of the interconnectedness of human and non-human actors is central to this.

For art-educational teaching, I consider it an important starting point to examine and reflect on the conditions under which existing spaces of action have emerged and new spaces of action, that is, the building of access[5] in the sense of questioning all social forms of inclusion and exclusion mechanisms, can be created. Connections between different human actors come into play, but also spatial and material actors, also in their interconnectedness through more or less visible digital infrastructures.

To address this aspect in school contexts, I have developed a teaching sequence, which was experimented at the symposium "Teaching artistic strategies" in May 2022 at HGK Basel. It is intended to encourage an examination of the influence that all manner of things have on human action in general and aesthetic action in particular. It provides clear directions for groups to explore these relationships collaboratively and to develop speculative future scenarios against the backdrop of digital culture and gives brief instructions on how to examine who is involved in what constellations. The purpose is to understand what mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion are involved in social structures and materialized practices. The teaching sequence consists of three parts that build on each other and can be designed to be of varying length or short duration. I plan it for either a whole workshop day, or for 3 double lessons that are not too far apart in time. Other adaptations are of course imaginable.

The first exercise is about raising awareness about the ubiquity of digital culture in the sense of Stalder. In the second exercise, observations on the interactions of human, spatial and material actors will be made on the basis of various concepts and very different approaches. Finally, in exercise 3, small groups will work on future scenarios based on the concepts developed in the second part.

Exercise 1: Digital entanglements

We live in a digital condition. I borrow this term from Felix Stalder,[6] who in 2016 described how our culture, our politics and our everyday life are shaped by the digital. In his conception, digitality is not a term used for any kind of digital tool, be it hardware, apps or the Internet in its physical dimension. Rather, digitality is a cultural dimension shaped by digital infrastructures. The digital condition is mainly observable in three characteristic forms: referentiality, communality and underlying algorithms.

By *referentiality*, Stalder means the use of existing cultural expressions for the production of new ones, as a method by which individuals can inscribe themselves in cultural processes and constitute themselves as producers.[7] In a way, this can also be said historically about different longer existing forms of cultural production, but with the Internet, the amount of accessibility has increased so much that more people are involved in cultural production globally and simultaneously. So, what we are talking about here is a new quality of referentiality. *Communality* is understood as a new form of coming together, namely as associations of people who exchange and produce new knowledge and action through informal but structured exchanges and are held together by the common interpretation of their own practice. According to Stalder, these communities form the actual subjects that produce culture in the sense of shared meaning.[8] Finally the aspect of *underlying algorithms* describes what is probably the largest and at the same time the most difficult aspect of digital culture to observe. It sorts the amount of existing data into accessible information. Under conditions of big data, we would be blind without algorithms.[9] But this sorting is also never neutral and thus carries biases with it, which in turn structure society. What Stalder describes is that cultural action today is always based on logics of networking, which are significantly shaped by the Internet. Klein et al. very adequately describe the Internet as the ubiquitous infrastructure of our reality.[10]

This infrastructure, which shapes our reality, in turn has a significant impact on our understanding of subjectivity. The way in which people can act in society is conditioned by the respective media infrastructure

and also the way in which they are situated as individual or collective actors. Jörissen and Meyer state in 2015 that changes in mediality lead to changes in subjectivity and thus, with recourse to Luhmann, make clear the influence of the leading media on societies and their subjects.[11] This leads me, with Herlitz and Zahn, to the assumption that with the new structural characteristics that emerge in digital cultures, the classical constructions of subjectivity can no longer be described.[12]

This demonstrates the necessity of understanding and describing subjectivity against the framework of changing media cultures.

The ubiquity of digital culture is the aspect that the first part of the teaching proposal offered here goes on to address.

As described above, digital culture is not bound to tools, but is a condition of our culture, even if this is not always visible. This first exercise is about identifying the underlying digital infrastructure in everyday activities. For this, I propose three levels of reflection because it is likely that the less visible or less direct effects of digital culture will only become apparent by looking more closely.

In their introduction to *Post-Internet-Arts Education*, Klein et al., referencing artist Hito Steyerl[13], describe the impact of digital culture on realities that were once non-digital as follows:

> "Now, however, the internet has also left the screen: Every image we upload can come back as a like or an annoyance with implications for life offline. The seemingly absurd thing about this is that you don't have to be online yourself to experience the effects of a shitstorm first-hand. But even a love found online can very well transfer into the physical."[14]

This example shows that the binary opposition of analogue and digital is insufficient in many cases. For the first part of the task, you need index cards, pens and tape and about half an hour's time. The specific task I propose is the following:

> *Take some time to observe yourself closely in your present environment. Move around while observing, look out the window, look at the other people here.*

What is influenced by digital culture and what is not? Write each of your observations on a card and pin it on the wall.

The next step is to continue this observation in the surroundings. I suggest a silent walk. This walk is designed to challenge preconceptions through observation. For example, if students note in the first step that writing a letter is not digital, they might see on the walk that paper suppliers deliver their goods to paper merchants who have ordered on the Internet, or that postmen use digital devices to record the delivery of mail, or that the idea of writing a letter instead of an email could be an active counter-design to email.

The concrete task for this would be:

Take a half-hour walk in the environment. Try to do this without talking to other people. Observe what is digitally influenced and what is not. Take notes.

In a third step, the observations from the walk are compared with the terms from the first round and discussed in plenary.

Look at your observations from the walk and check whether the terms you wrote down in the first step are still correct. You can now change or add to them.

Exercise 2: Intra-actions of human, spatial and material actors

The sensitization to digital cultures and their influence on everyday actions is now to be applied to the situation within material and human actors. I consider this link relevant, because on the one hand the omnipresence of digital culture is still not sufficiently thought of in material terms, and at the same time intrasubjective interconnectedness is reinforced by the digital, even though it would be observable in its absence.

Nevertheless, alongside arts education, there are theories that we can use to address this problem. I propose using neo-materialist

approaches as a perspective, especially since they allow us to look at human actors in interweaving with other human and material actors. Neo-materialist approaches offer a changed relationship between humans and things by negating a fundamental separation of human and non-human actors and thus questioning the supposed ontological and epistemological distinction that defines humans as something other or even superior.[15] However, they do not explicitly deal with media-technological questions and thus also not with their effects on societies, which means that their theses are not per se bound to digital conditions. It seems to me, though, that it is not surprising that neo-materialist theories are now becoming more popular, especially since the traditional attributions of the autonomous subject are being challenged under digital conditions. Social processes can be described more precisely with human-human and human-thing relatedness. In which connection is who to whom and through what? Which material actors ensure that social togetherness functions? What would a dinner be like with a table that seats too few people? Or what would a school timetable be like without the invention and existence of clocks? Digital-technological networks embed human relations into even more complex structures and thus into multi-layered processes of participation, which make the idea of an individual subject separated from the world and things, as explicitly questioned in neo-materialist approaches, less likely.

Karen Barad's approach of *Agential realism* does not look at individual actors, but at *phenomena*. The concept of phenomenon is used differently by Barad than, for example, in the traditions of the humanities, such as phenomenology[16]. Phenomena are understood as the smallest ontological unit, which do not consist of independent objects with predetermined boundaries and properties. They are, as Barad describes it, "ontologically primitive relations" because their relations do not exist before the relation but are only brought about by it[17]. Since the relations do not arise before but in the phenomenon, presuppositions only arise in the phenomenon and are therefore not causal, i.e. not a before-and-after or if-then relationship, but are to be understood as processual and can be reflected upon as such. For Barad, these processes are not to be understood as interactions of two or more entities that are originally separate

from each other. She invents the term *intra-action* to make it clear that the entities only emerge from the process.[18]

Describing phenomena in this sense, i.e. looking precisely at the respective processes in which humans are repeatedly interwoven with things, situations, spaces, other humans, etc., is the starting point of this second exercise.

The leading question is now about examining ones specific situatedness and trying to make visible the constellations in which one is interwoven in the present moment. The leading question for that part is:

Which humans and which things and which human-thing constellations lead to our being included in this current situation against the backdrop of digital culture today?

To approach this question the students are given various observation tasks that sensitize them to the socio-material conditions that they are embedded in. These observations are documented with different materials and media and will be used to be worked on further in future scenarios in the third part of this teaching sequence.

I propose to offer observation tasks concerning different aspects of cultural and community life. In the following you find my selection of tasks on the topics *Ability, Language, Being here, Room, Un/visibility, Clothes, Safety and Weather*. It is important when working on the assignments to ensure that the students give their information on a completely voluntary basis in a safe space.

> #ABILITY: Which paths have you already taken today? Which ones are you planning to do? Think about your bodily condition. Which paths were easy to take, where did you have difficulties, where did you perhaps even take a diversion?
> Draw a map on the paper provided and mark where things were easy and where they were not easy.
> #LANGUAGE: Imagine, you were not able to speak and understand the English or German language. Which of your actions today would you have needed help with? How would you have claimed it? Write

down, as precisely as possible, each of the aspects that come to mind on a separate card.

#BEING HERE: You are here today and not elsewhere. Why is that? Write on one card 5 reasons that have brought you here. Then cross out one reason that you wish had led you somewhere else.

#ROOM: Take some time to observe the room. What do you like, what not? What furniture, light situation, wall structure, room dimensions, etc. helps you, to be in the situation, which not? Make a sketch.

#IN/VISIBILITY: In which situation today did you feel more exposure than you would have liked to? In which one would you like to have been more visible? Write a micro-screenplay on a sheet of paper that reverses the situation.

#SAFETY: Safety is a very important feeling for acting. Do you feel safe? If yes, try to formulate what led to that feeling. If you don't feel safe, try to explain why that is. Use the cards to explain your thoughts.

#WEATHER: How has today's weather influenced your present situation? Try to understand as precisely as possible your current situation in relation to the weather. Use the cards to explain your thoughts.

#COLLABORATION: Who or what has helped you with something today?
Gather all the people and things that have helped you today around a table. What would you like to eat with them? Write a recipe.

#ELECTRICITY: How many electric plugs have you already used today?
Draw the invisible power lines between them on the attached paper.

#SOUND: Try to focus on your auditory sense. How does it sound right now? Does it sound pleasant?
What song comes to mind? Write the title, the notes or the first lyric line on a card.

#HUGGING: Did you want to hug someone today? Did you?
Write a short poem on a card.

Exercise 3: How to imagine a less exclusive future

In the last step of the teaching proposal, the materials created are to be critically questioned in terms of discrimination, with the aim of uncovering adjusting screws for potential futures. Which aspects of the specific situation contain which mechanisms of power and thus of inclusion and exclusion? The task is now to develop future scenarios on the basis of the research in order to imagine and potentially realize new and expanded access strategies. This is where thinking about digital culture and neo-materialist approaches come together with inclusive thinking.

Inclusion is often associated with the demand to enable educational justice for each individual. In educational contexts, inclusion aims to teach different individual subjects together without discrimination. This demand is at odds with the current education systems, which are permeated by notions of normativity and thus by excluding mechanisms. However, inclusion does not necessarily mean that individuals, in a normative sense, have to improve their abilities in order to better participate in society. It could also be understood to mean that social structures expand so that prevailing notions of normativity are invalidated. It is not the individual actors who need to transform, but the barriers that create inclusion and exclusion. We are therefore confronted with structural challenges.[19]

I follow a broad concept of inclusion that takes into account the structural dimensions, as discussed in cultural dis/ability studies[20], also from a power-sensitive perspective[21]. This shifts the focus: away from the individual subject of support, towards structural characteristics of discrimination[22]. With Mai Ahn Boger, I understand inclusion as a synonym for differential justice, with which theories critical of sexism, racism, ableism and classism are negotiated together.[23] Inclusion is thus not a field concerned only with the inclusion and exclusion of people with disabilities, but with any form of exclusion based on difference-based criteria. Understanding inclusion beyond subject orientation and conceptions of individuality enables a broader view of the diverse entanglements of people, things, spaces and technologies.

This method is inspired by design thinking[24] approaches. The aim is not to predict the future or to produce forecasts in any form. Rather, it is about imagining possible futures in order to identify the variables that can be worked on at present. The point is not to formulate concrete visions. This is because visions regularly project an ideal image of society into an uncertain tomorrow and thus claim interpretive sovereignty over the many development possibilities that the future holds. Scenarios are more plural and optional, i.e. much more vague. But they are also more flexible and adaptable to events that we cannot predict today.[25] This understanding follows Elena Esposito's description when she writes that although the future is never present, it only exists in the present, as its projection. "When we talk about the future, we are actually always talking about the present: its way of dealing with the existing possibilities, its openness and its limitations. Every present has its future, from which what is real at a later time is developed."[26] We cannot know at present what the present will be in the future. But we can invent as many scenarios as possible about how the future could be in order to influence it from the present – knowing that this remains an uncertain undertaking. In the last part of this teaching, the students will work on such scenarios for a more inclusive future on the basis of the concepts worked on beforehand, in order to make them imaginable. These future scenarios can only be partial and never consider all aspects that the future will bring. But they can help to develop ideas of potential futures in order to have an impact on them at certain points.

> Think about how the situations described could be a little less exclusive. Build a scenario for the year 2045 with whatever material you have. Think big. Everything is possible for now.

An alternative approach would be to map the different results of the students. It would be conceivable to draw a map of the different human-thing constellations. Such a map would certainly not be comprehensive, but it could lead to intriguing discussions. Certainly, the various intra-actions in Barad's sense, i.e. how reality is the coexistence of humans and things, would become clear.

Either way, both conflations can lead to understanding or at least imagining the respective situatedness beyond the idea of singular subjectivity. This in turn could lead to students getting an idea of the degree to which their actions happen with and through things. And that, speculating further into the future, can lead to understanding the conditions under which people can act as they do, or not. Subjectivity would then no longer be bound only to bodies, but to bodies, things and circumstances.

What has to be done next

The teaching proposal "Researching and reshaping human-thing constellations" was tested for the first time among teachers of art education at the symposium Teaching Artistic Strategies at the HGK Basel and then tested and further developed with students of the HKB Bern and the Akademie der Künste Wien. I assume that the majority of the tasks can also be carried out with younger students. It has not yet been practised with people explicitly affected by discrimination. Before I do this, I ask affected persons and experts for advice.

The teaching proposal is intended to contribute to opening up an exploratory space with art teaching activities in which inclusive futures, i.e. a higher degree of differential justice, can first be imagined, in the optimistic belief that imagined futures hold potentials for influencing the future in the present. The focus is explicitly not on the development of the individual, but on the shaping of actor constellations in which human and material actors play a role against the backdrop of digital culture. The aim is to understand, on the basis of the students' everyday life and through close observation, who is in fact connected to whom and to what and in what way? What influences our everyday actions? Who has what capacity to act under what circumstances? And who or what is it that actually acts?

Although this proposal provides very concrete steps to design a teaching sequence or workshop, this can only be a small aspect of working on issues of inclusion and digitality in the context of school and higher education. This assignment focuses on the present with the aim

of acting into the future, neglecting historical components that are also important to understand how power mechanisms within educational systems have emerged and become so entrenched that they seem largely natural.

What would be desirable is a set of teaching proposals that, at different levels, aim to explore and understand current realities with the aim of shaping possible less exclusive futures.

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Imagining new ways of representing refugees – Teaching proposal

Elsa Gomis

Imagination is not an innate talent. This is the revelation that I had at the age of 11. The director of my school in a small village in Southern France had managed to secure funding for a small publication. I was proud. One drawing I had made had been selected by her to be part of our little book. It represented a distinguished rooster wearing a large red cloak. Once the book had been published, I was very disappointed: I realized that the rooster I was so proud of happened to be a pale copy of Disney's Uncle Scrooge. Something I thought I had created out of my own imagination was mimicking a famous comic character. Since then, I kept this insightful event in mind. Later, when visiting Scotland as a teenager, I understood that the image of the forest I always had in mind was more the Scottish emerald hardwood forests disseminated in Disney's version of Snow White and the Seven Dwarves and of Robin Hood, than the dryer garrigue version of the forest I had always known in Provence. When I was teaching art in primary schools years later and asked the pupils to create 'imaginative drawings' of humans, I was then not surprised to see them reproducing the appearance of manga characters with big disproportionate heads and enormous eyes.

If imagination is not a unique construct given *ex nihilo* to individuals and results from the imprint in the minds of the intense and repeated circulation of same images produced by a dominant visual regime, one's situatedness vis-à-vis such a regime is key. In my case, it is that of a white privileged woman. I must acknowledge this positioning when reflecting on the origins of my imaginary. When studying the collective imag-

inary of migrations via the Mediterranean during my Critical PhD by Practice in Film Studies, I observed that a narrow range of visual motifs (rubber boats, life jackets and survival blankets) was encapsulating refugees in mainstream media images. European border regimes impact the way Westerners picture fellow humans fleeing their homelands in what Nicholas De Genova coined as "Border Spectacle": an aesthetic that reifies migrant "illegality" "in an emphatic and grandiose gesture of exclusion".[1] This aesthetic conveyed by mainstream media images composes a collective imagination that imprints other visual fields (contemporary art, cartography, fashion) and influences migratory policies.[2]

How to build an educational proposal that allows bringing awareness of the insidious influence of media imagery on our consciences? How to ethically apply this teaching proposal to the contemporary human odysseys of those considered "illegal"? I decided to create a teaching proposal with two goals:

- Revealing the impact of mainstream images of migration in the minds.
- Finding alternative means to visually portray contemporary migrants.

After introducing the teaching strategy rationale, the present article introduces the chosen teaching scenario and discusses it. Challenging mental representations of refugees carried by mainstream media (1), is materialized by an attempt to deconstruct the gaze in 30 minutes (2) that raises ethically complex issues (3). The concluding remarks suggest a potential follow-up to extend the reflection on the dominant visual regime portraying contemporary refugees.

Teaching method rationale: challenging mental representations of refugees carried by mainstream media

Today's mainstream images of migration capture refugees in spectacular photographs portraying them in ways that strike the imagination.[3]

These images show refugees as masses conveying either a sense of threat or of pity.[4] For understanding how these circulating images compose a collective imaginary that affects border policies,[5] I borrowed the theoretical framework of the field of visual anthropology. Represented by Hans Belting in particular, this subfield of social anthropology considers man not only as a political animal, but as *homo pictor*: a being who shapes images, who produces images and who understands the world in images.[6] Today's Western border regimes evolve in what Nicholas Mirzoeff defines as "visuality", an organization that produces "a visualized deployment of bodies and training of minds, organized so as to sustain both physical segregation between rulers and ruled, and mental compliance with those arrangements".[7] Mainstream images of contemporary migration fall in the framework of visuality, as they perpetuate physical segregation between viewers by showing refugees at a distance, grouped in human masses, especially when framing dark-skinned people.[8] How can Western countries' education raise awareness on visuality? The following teaching proposal relies on the concept of critical pedagogy according to which "the production and organisation of knowledge is related to forms of authority situated in political economy, the state, and other material practices".[9] Having in mind that education curricula reflect forms of authority from which also stems visuality, challenging the collective imaginary of migration thus implies interrogating the production of knowledge, not only throughout the pedagogic processes used during the teaching session, but more broadly, by evidencing the cognitive framework in which this imaginary is rooted. In practical terms, the teaching strategy returns to leverage one drawing exercise, literally connecting the mind and the hand, to meta-communicate about the authorities of power that suture mainstream portrayals and thus individual mental projections on racialized others. In this regard, the teaching strategy used in the crash test course experimented on participants of the Teaching Artistic Strategies conference fits into a decolonial approach as it aimed to bring awareness of the impact of dominant visual culture on the consciousnesses. Organized by the Academy of Art and Design, University of Applied Sciences and Arts Northwestern Switzerland, the aim of this conference was to experiment with such

teaching strategies by proposing to participants to test them on others during the conference. Drawing on Zavala for building my proposal, I have assumed that if decolonial thought "makes visible that which is concealed by Modernity, namely, the cultural logic of colonialism",[10] decolonial teaching strategies allow revealing the impact of ideological imagery on the learners' conceptions through a transformative process. The process that can therefore feel disturbing for Western students as it can highlight the integration of an oppressive visual heritage.

In this context, I thus shaped my teaching experiment within the scope of arts-inquiring pedagogy, defined by Savin-Baden and Wimpenny as "the use of inquiry within the teaching of art, of whatever sort, to ensure that students develop critical abilities in the class room".[11] Used to illustrate and explicate a social problem (Savin-Baden and Winpenny), this teaching strategy constitutes a process one undertakes "to transform prior understandings and misunderstandings through the manipulation of material and symbolic tools and the reconstruction of social and cultural meaning".[12] These manipulations are explained in the following section.

Teaching scenario: an attempt to deconstruct the gaze in 30 minutes

The arts-based inquiry pedagogy approach is assimilated to practice-based research, the type of research I implemented during my Critical PhD by Practice.[13] During my research, I considered artistic practice, in my case filmmaking, as a formal laboratory to visually delineate the collective imaginary of migrations via the Mediterranean and experiment with alternative ways of portraying refugees. Before leaving for Malta's archipelago to direct a feature documentary titled *The People Behind the Scenes*, I analysed mainstream images disseminated on Google Images under the keywords *migration + Mediterranean*. A narrow range of visual motifs such as rubber boats, life jackets and survival blankets were repeatedly appearing in press photography reporting on the so-called "crisis". I searched for artworks related to this topical issue

and found that these motifs had been widely reused by contemporary artists such as Banksy,[14] Gandolfo Gabriele David,[15] Arabella Dorman,[16] Alex Seton[17] or Bianca Argimon.[18] I then looked at couture houses' creations produced in the aftermath of the 2015 "crisis" and discovered that the survival blanket material had been part of Givenchy[19] and Celine[20] designs. Because of these motifs' presence, the artworks and the fashion pieces that incorporate them lag behind media images to which they content to be echo chambers.[21] Being intensely repeated, these few motifs reinforced migrants' objectification and visual, if not spatial, confinement in Western imaginary. The use of art inquiry within teaching was therefore intended to ensure that students develop critical abilities towards stereotyped images of people considered "illegal", so that this way they could be drivers of social change. As artistic practice is the core of my research,[22] I considered it the most appropriate way to exercise one's critical ability. Beyond its advantages regarding time and cost, I thought that a drawing exercise involving the hands would be the best way to quickly manifest the complexity and challenges inherent to the representation of refugees. "With them [the hands] man becomes aware of the difficulty of thought" as art historian Henri Focollion stated.[23] From there, the teaching ark develops in a three-steps process: 1. Ask participants to make a first drawing out of a visualizing exercise. 2. Propose associating definitions of words with mainstream images to trigger reflection. 3. Ask for a second drawing and for comments on the difference between their initial and final pictures.

I decided to proceed as follows for the 30-minutes slot I had been allocated during the conference.

Teaching script

All students were provided with drawing material prior to the beginning; the mainstream images were displayed blank side up on the whiteboard; a timer should be at hand to check the timing of the activities. All the teaching material is provided in the appendix.

1st activity (1 minute)

Script: "I propose that you close your eyes for a minute and that you let the image arise that you see when you hear the word *refugee*."

2nd activity (5 minutes)

Script: "Thank you. Now, can you please make a drawing, as specific as possible, of the image you pictured on the paper in front of you? You have 5 minutes."

3rd activity (8 minutes)

Script: "Thank you very much for this. For me the collective imaginary of migration is this: the images that come to mind, all the images that we inherit, that are transmitted down the generations and that arise in our minds when we hear about refugees.
I am going to gather all drawings here on my table for now and we are going to delve more concretely into the topic."

Pick up all the drawings.

Script: "I am now going to provide you with:
4 words related to migration: refugee, asylum seeker, economic migrant, migrant.
4 definitions of these words (see appendix),
4 stories of migration (see appendix)."

Write on whiteboard or display a slide indicating:
"Please match...

1. The words and the definitions
2. The definitions and the stories
3. The stories with the images on the whiteboard."

Turn over the 4 images previously displayed blank side up on the white-board.

> Script: "You have around 7 minutes by pairs for this and then I will ask some of you to share their findings with the rest of the group."

4th activity (8 minutes)

> Script: "What did you find out? How do you explain the matches you did?"

> "For the last moment of this teaching demonstration, I would like to ask you to make another drawing, this time representing the image that you saw when reading these stories of migration. You are free to choose the one you want and have 7 minutes for making this drawing and for giving it a title. We will then reflect altogether on your creative productions.
> Display drawings from the 2nd and the 4th activity side by side."

5th activity (8 minutes)

> Script: "What do you think of these exercises? What did you learn? What has changed since the beginning of the course?"

The drawings produced during the first session pictured the following images:

> The death of the little Aylan Kurdi; a group of life jackets gathered in a rubber boat; a hand-written note indicating "dark-skinned person with a vest on an inflatable boat in the sea floating in huge waves holding the rope which is attached to the side of the boat which is shaking by the many movements of other people holding each other, frightened (not) to arrive where they wanted to go"; someone cross-ing a barbed-wired fence; a family of farmers sadly looking at a gi-gantic flower drawn on the ground; a written note indicating "I sim-ply cannot take me back"; a map of the world connecting continents

with lines of flux and including two suitcases, one closed and one opened; a barbed-wire fence above a back-pack, a lying child and a stretch of water; a pair of boots; someone covered by a survival blanket; a mass of people crammed into an inflatable boat; a temporary camp close to the sea with two tents and someone wrapped in a sleeping bag.

The drawings produced after activity three were the following:

A desk covered with papers, a typewriter, a coffee cup and an ashtray titled Leftover work; a bundle of cash titled The farmer from Ghana; a family portrait of a couple and a toddler; a digital short message sent at 1:30am and saying "Don't worry"; a family of six carrying luggage and walking side by side; a young back-packer and a pair of flip-flops; four smartphone screens showing a man looking at a woman and a child; a series of short messages including several emojis, a Google map, a Facebook page with a window indicating "Apply now" in capital letters; a woman with a child talking to a group of people on her smartphone; a small key pointing towards a lock bearing the word Security; a fruit above a cultivated field followed by flames and by the same field, devasted by the fire, titled Broken root … Fruit from another land; the face of a young woman surrounded by floating written pages and stamped envelopes.

Observations on the students' productions

A general observation of the first series of drawings seems to confirm the initial assumption made at the beginning of the teaching proposal: they reflect media images of the migratory "crisis" (the photograph of the little Aylan Kurdi, masses of people crammed into rubber boats, temporary camps, survival blankets) and allegorical motifs of exile such as suitcases, barbed-wired fences, and shoes. One drawing also resonates with mainstream cartographies of streams of people symbolized by lines connecting territories. The second series of drawings offers a greater variety of representations that can hardly be summarized in *categories* but seem to offer a *closer* look at refugees' lives. The proximity is not only

achieved through the chosen distance to the pictured elements (bodies and faces are bigger and more detailed), but also with the degree of intimacy with refugees' lives that they provide (the personal messages and private screen views). Inspired by the migrants' stories read during the third activity, this second series of drawings also focuses on the reasons motivating these journeys and on the lives that have been left behind (the abandoned desk, the poor harvest, the bundle of money). In sum, reading and reflecting on the few documents provided between the two drawing sessions seem to have triggered less archetypal representations and to have conveyed more complex ideas about contemporary refugees. While the first series of drawings is in general mirroring illustrative media coverage of the "crisis", the second series offers a reflection on this geopolitical situation by relying on emotions. By their variety and the polysemic readings that they suggest, they better express the complexity of the real-life situations leading to departures. The second series of pictures also approaches more accurately feelings and experiences inherent to migration that cannot be encapsulated by legal and administrative definitions. The sense of exile and of distance from the loved ones is emphasized in almost all drawings whereas in the first series, the focus was essentially put on the very act of border crossing. The positioning of the participants seems to have shifted throughout the teaching session: from the external point of view of the host populations to actual feelings that the refugees are likely to experience. Connecting human stories to administrative categories and mainstream press photography would thus have created empathy with the refugees. This seems to be confirmed by the reluctance of some participants to reproduce the images that came to their minds during the initial visualization exercise, which one of them refused to do (and wrote "I simply cannot take me back"). Another also admitted at first being ashamed of this first vision but willing to sincerely acknowledge it by complying with the instructions. Here, the pedagogical path followed seems to achieve the first goal of the course – to reveal the impact of mainstream images of migration in our minds.

The two drawing exercises involved the hand through the act of drawing in two distinct ways. First, by connecting it to a mental con-

struct resulting from a visual culture, second, by making it emerge from a short reading and a reflection. While the first drawing was just reproducing a narrow set of images crystallized in the mind by their mere repetition, the second series of drawings witnesses a displacement: that of projecting themselves into the refugees' stories. The first series of drawings provides evidence on the way mainstream images have rubbed off in our minds: the hand has obeyed the brain. The second series reflects a more complex displacement: from the brain (the connecting and exercises), through the heart (the emotions triggered by these activities) to the hand. Evaluating this teaching session would thus return to analyse the differences between the two drawings made by each participant. The transformation between them is symbolically the path they made to put themselves in the place of the refugees. Empathy is a displacement towards the other, as identification is. While the first drawing requested equals a Pavlovian reflex of restitution, the second one expresses their emotional response to the refugees' fate. In an interview conducted on the occasion of the DVD release of his box office success *Welcome*, French director Philippe Lioret raises the notion of identification.[24] He does not estimate that the triumph of the film (one million viewers just in France), lies in its social and political dimension. Based on one hundred public screenings, and on his own writing of the scenario, Lioret argues that the audience simply sees it as a story about people: "The film touches the heart first and then moves to the brain. A political pamphlet would engage the mind without involving any feeling, any emotion, and have less impact. When you involve the emotions first, and then engage the mind, it has more impact. That's why the film was such a word-of-mouth success".[25] Emotions conveyed by the refugees' stories would have created more feelings of identification than those generated by media images. Being chosen by press agencies for their spectacular (the human masses) or decorative (the vivid and shiny colours of the life jackets and survival blankets on an azure field) qualities, these images would provide a sense of astonishment devoid of thoughtfulness. During the second drawing session, the reflection that arose from the reading of written words moved the hearts of the participants and consecutively led to representations in which the refugees were shown as subjects with

mixed human emotions (facing difficult decisions, feeling lost, feeling lonely, being uprooted, missing a loved one). The teaching strategy used to bring the participants to this second series of drawings corresponds to the second goal of this experiment which is to find alternative means to visually portray contemporary migrants.

On a wider scale, this teaching experiment could be applied in media and humanitarian studies as a tool to support practitioners in the making of more respectful and inclusive images. Quoting Henry-Armand Giroux, art and visual culture education scholar Elizabeth Garber argues that "Social justice education can also be thought of as guiding students to know themselves and their worlds, and to live and act as part of community and society as critical citizens, employing 'the principles of justice, liberty, and equality' in creating a radical democracy".[26] I believe that teaching strategies providing effective tools to renew mainstream representations of racialized others can lay the ground for radical democracy by creating empathy. This intention should, however, be accompanied by thorough ethical reflections.

Teaching method discussed: Ethically complex issues raised when trying to undermine a dominant visual regime

The four definitions that I gave belonged to a lexical field used in Western European policies. These words are used in countries positioned as dictating stakeholders in migratory regimes. Moreover, these definitions gain an increased legitimacy when given in a teaching situation in which power dynamics are implicitly present between the teacher and the students.

In practice, concrete examples could have helped participants to better contextualize the meaning of the four given words especially when used by the various actors operating in the field of migration (e.g. international organizations, NGOs, journalists, and asylum seekers, see suggestions in the appendix). This leads me to ask myself: am I entitled, as a white privileged woman, to address the issue of representation of racialized others?

The day after the teaching session, one participant shared with me her doubts on this question which she had also been confronted with during her own research. I fully acknowledge not having a direct experience of contemporary forced displacements to draw on for shaping the present teaching proposal. At a structural level, teachers with refugee background could contribute to decolonializing the curricula by bringing a framework of knowledge from which I did not benefit. In the meantime, does this mean that it would have been better not to provide this teaching? I do not think so. Rather, I consider it more constructive to raise these questions than not even attempting to question Western mainstream representations. These representations dominate European languages in the media and from there, in policymakers' speeches. As an example, the use of the term *flow* to qualify migrants' arrivals mirrors endless queues of refugees in press photography. It is reflected in the words of former British PM David Cameron who talked about "a swarm of migrants crossing the Mediterranean".[27] A key for getting out of this schizophrenic dilemma is perhaps to consider mainstream images as "temporal industrial objects".[28] For Bernard Stiegler, philosopher and theorist of the effects of digital technology, such objects are songs, pieces of music, speeches, films, TV series, radio and television programmes, commercials, video games, etc. which are characterized by an existence intimately linked to time and its flow.[29] Taking the example of popular songs to which he listened when watching the French film *Same Old Song*, Stiegler observes: "The songs *fashion me* long before I cite them. I recite them without knowing that I am citing them, without realizing it. They are interlaced with the time of my consciousness, and without my being aware of it, except when, as in *Same Old Song*, I realize that in fact *every-one*[30] knows the songs, me included. And that, as such, this 'every' is a 'one' rather than a 'we'[31]: I belong to this neutral, impersonal, and yet so intimate, 'one'".[32] Questioning a memory transmitted across generations that composes a collective imaginary (that Stiegler designates with the term *epiphylogenesis*) is thus necessarily an uncomfortable exercise.[33] However, as an imagined community is a visually constructed community that underpins the coexistence of people, I follow Stiegler when he states, "The most important political question,

and perhaps the only one, if ever a question can still be political, [is] that of the aesthetics of the 'we'".[34] If images circulating online are temporal industrial objects that fashion our imaginaries, what about the family images among which one grew up? My filmmaking experience in Malta unexpectedly encouraged me to explore in this direction.

When making the film *The People Behind the Scenes*, I experienced the impact of my own imaginary of migration on my cinematographic choices. When I looked at my digitized family archives after the shooting, I realized that I had unconsciously chosen to film situations that had been precisely filmed by my grandfather in Algeria, the land in which my parents and grandparents were born. As these family archives constitute *my* imagination of exile, I instinctively left in search of images that were present in my memory. In this regard, the film is an act of contestation against the rhetoric of objectivity generally attached to migration research as I decided to acknowledge the influence of my own imaginary of migration and to consider myself as an "implicated subject" to create what Rothberg coined as "long-distance solidarity" and as new "alliances" with today's migrants.[35] For this reason, and to detect the potential kinship of the drawings with her family memories, I have tried to understand why two drawings made by one participant seemed different from the rest of the productions. What both drawings had in common were representations of a cultivated land. The participant came from Latin America and seemed to have been inspired by her intimate imaginary of migration. The drawings she produced apparently result from the imprint of her own background experience of exile rather than the mainstream circulating images of migration.

Conclusion: Potential follow-ups

As a conclusion, I would like to open lines of thought to further explore teaching methods aimed at renewing the collective imaginary of migration. These questions deal with issues of care:

- How to handle these issues with students having the same back-
  ground as the marginalized populations seen in mainstream media
  images?
- How to deal with graphic images, often in media images about
  refugees' deaths at the borders, likely to offend the students?

In the meantime, expanding knowledge on the genealogy of Western
visual culture seems essential to fully grasp their scope and influence,
not only on policymaking, but on the production of knowledge. "To resist
requires a background of understanding of how power works" states
Elisabeth Graber.[36] Quoting Giroux, she adds that it also requires a
background of understanding how "the production and organization of
knowledge is related to forms of authority situated in political economy,
the state, and other material practices".[37] It also necessitates a constant
self-reflection that goes along with the acknowledgment of uncertainty,
fragility and doubts.[38] With this spirit in mind, I will carry on analysing
artworks that experiment with alternative visual means for portraying
contemporary refugees, in particular through the *New Imaginaries of Mi-
gration* webinar series that I have led at the Maison Française of Oxford,
for considering art, not as the echo chamber of mainstream images of
migration, but as a cutting-edge equipment to contend with today's
"aesthetic of the we".

Appendix

a refugee   is a person who, "owing to a well-founded fear of being perse-
cuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particu-
lar social group, or political opinion, is outside the country of his nation-
ality, and is unable to or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself
of the protection of that country."

> Article 1, 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees.

asylum seeker: "An asylum-seeker is someone whose request for sanctu-
ary has yet to be processed. Every year, around one million people seek

asylum. National asylum systems are in place to determine who qualifies for international protection."

<div align="right">UNHCR definition.</div>

economic migrant: "A person who leaves their country of origin purely for economic reasons that are not in any way related to the refugee definition, in order to seek material improvements in their livelihood."

<div align="right">UNHCR Master Glossary of Terms.</div>

migrant: "Any person who is moving or has moved across an international border or within a State away from his/her habitual place of residence, regardless of (1) the person's legal status; (2) whether the movement is voluntary or involuntary; (3) what the causes for the movement are; or (4) what the length of the stay is."

<div align="right">The UN Migration Agency (IOM) definition.</div>

Four stories of migration

a) I was very reluctant to come here to live. I had an interesting job, I loved working for a museum in Zagreb, then I met my (British) husband at an exhibition and we moved to Camden. I knew it would be difficult for me with a young child and not knowing anyone.

Croatian interviewee, female, aged 56. From, Gayle Munro, Transnationalism, Diaspora and Migrants from the former Yugoslavia in Britain, Routledge, 2016.

b) Boochani was born in Ilam, Iran in 1983. He has described himself as "a child of war", referring to the 1980s war between the Iraqi Ba'athists and "Iranian zealots" fought largely in his Kurdish homeland in western Iran. He graduated from Tarbiat Modares University and the Tarbiat Moallem University (now named Kharazmi University), both in Tehran, with a master's degree in political science, political geography and geopolitics. He began his journalistic career writing for the student newspaper at Tarbiat Modares University,

before working as a freelance journalist for several Iranian newspapers such as Kasbokar Weekly, Qanoon, and Tehran-based Etemaad as well as the Iranian Sports Agency. He wrote articles on Middle East politics, minority rights and the survival of Kurdish culture. In secret, he taught children and adults a particular Kurdish dialect from the region of Ilam, regarded as their mother tongue. He co-founded and produced the Kurdish magazine Werya (also spelt Varia), which he regarded as his most important work,[5] and which attracted the attention of the Iranian authorities because of its political and social content. The magazine promoted Kurdish culture and politics; Boochani felt it very important for the Kurdish city of Ilam to retain its Kurdish identity, language and culture. As a member of the Kurdish Democratic party, outlawed in Iran, and the National Union of Kurdish Students, he was watched closely.

In February 2013, the offices of Werya were raided by Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps which was founded after the 1979 revolution to protect the country's Islamic Republic system and to quell uprisings of "deviant movements" and had previously threatened Boochani with detention. Boochani was not in the office that day, but 11 of Boochani's colleagues were arrested, several of whom were subsequently imprisoned. After publishing news of the arrests online and the news spreading globally, Boochani went into hiding for three months and on 23 May 2013, fled Iran and made his way to Indonesia via Southeast Asia.

From the Wikipedia page of journalist Behrooz Boochani.

c) Haqyar worked as a manager for an international NGO in Heart province in the northwestern corner of Afghanistan, enjoying a healthy salary and a comfortable home in Herat with his wife and four children. The family hoped to move to Germany at some point, where Haqyar's brother- in-law lived […] Then one day insurgent militants from the Taliban movement captured and brutally murdered one of Haqyar's colleagues. Terrified that he would be next,

Haqyar and his wife quickly found a buyer for their house, selling it in two days for a quarter of what they'd paid for it. They packed up their things, including several of Haqyar's German-language textbooks, which they'd need when they arrived in Germany, rounded-up their four children, and left. They travelled over the mountains into Pakistan, then to Iran. There hadn't been time to obtain official documents.

From Sonia Shah, *The Next Great Migration*, Bloomsbury, p. 20.

d) Osei, the farmer from Ghana.
   It was essential for him to let people know that he did not want to leave: "I never thought of leaving my country. I owned my own farm. I was born there and my father before me. We weren't very rich but I had enough to feed my family… Like every year, after the harvest, I burned my field, but this time the wind blew the fire on a neighbour's field. He filed a complaint, and I was ordered to pay 600 euros. As I couldn't pay, I decided to go to Libya to work. In the region, a lot of men go to work there. That way I would be able to pay my debt and pay for my children's education, so that they wouldn't be in the same situation as me. But when I got there, it didn't happen like that. I was arrested, locked up in a basement. They demanded $15,000 for my release. I couldn't pay that kind of money. Who would I ask?! So, I managed to escape with others, but after that I had no choice but to cross the sea. I raised 500 euros because I couldn't go back. I never thought I would go so far away from my family…

From *Les naufragés de l'enfer. Témoignages recueillis sur l'Aquarius*, Marie Rajablat, Digobar, 2017, translation Elsa Gomis.

refugee: "The refugees of Manus Prison were being held indefinitely without charge, but in many ways they have also been denied entry into

communities of thinkers and planners and are only able to function in limited roles when working towards their liberation."

Omid Tofighian, in *No Friend But the Mountains* by Behrooz Boochani.

asylum seeker: "A charter flight to remove asylum seekers who recently arrived in the UK on small boats is due to take off despite last-minute high court actions in the early hours of Wednesday morning and other interventions which have led to at least 19 people not boarding the plane."

Diane Taylor, The Guardian, 12 August 2020.

economic migrant: "Distinguishing economic migrants from those with a genuine claim for protection and returning them to their country of origin will be essential if a large and growing flow of economic migrants is to be avoided."

Migration Watch UK website.

migrant: "The United Kingdom has not faced anywhere near the scale of migrants coming to Europe as other countries because we are out-side Schengen and retain control of our borders. And in Calais, we have worked together with the French to strengthen security to deter migrants from trying to enter Britain."

David Cameron, UK-France Summit, 3 March 2016.

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14   In his dystopian attraction park Dismaland, Banksy included a migrant boat pond piece.

15   The artist and designer originating from Palermo exhibited 66 flags made from lifejackets' fabric as alert signs in Marseilles' ancient port in 2017. He also organized a workshop with exiles in which they were asked to paint, on this same fabric, what represented hospitality for them.

16   In an artwork called *Falling*, the British artist displayed life jackets and a rubber boat in St. James's Church, Piccadilly, London, in December 2015.

17   In *The Island*, an exhibition from the Newcastle Gallery, the Australian artist made a series of marble sculptures representing lifejackets to question the Australian asylum policy.

18   The young fashion designer created *Euroflot*, a lifejacket pinned with European flags that was exhibited from 24 November 2017 to 7 January 2018 in Palais de Tokyo in Paris and that has been put up for sale online.

19   *Madame Figaro*, Défilé Givenchy Printemps-été 2017 Prêt-à-porter, published 2 October 2016, Accessed 25 November 2022: https://madame.lefigaro.fr/defiles/givenchy/printemps-ete-2017/pret-a-porter-0/117056 'The guests playfully drape themselves in the available survival blankets, with the exception of celebrities Kim Kardashian, Courtney Love and her daughter Frances Bean Cobain, Irina Shayk and Gigi Hadid, who want to look their best in front of the swarm of paparazzi' (personal translation).

20   A survival blanket was displayed on the Maison de Couture's website in 2018.

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Dichotomous Keys as Way of Seeing

Teaching Botany Out of Context and Other Ways of Questioning the *Artistic* in Artistic Research Strategies

Vanessa Graf

Dichotomous keys: A first encounter

Imagine this: You are an art student, a designer, an artistic-scientific researcher perhaps, and you are invited to a workshop at a school for art and design. You are here to try your hand at teaching and learning a variety of different artistic strategies, but when you enter the workshop room, you are instead outfitted with an unnamed plant, a jeweler's magnifying glass, and a large book containing rows upon rows of text couplets listing plant characteristics. *The plan for today is to identify the plant before us*, the instructor starts, *using a staple method in the natural sciences: species identification using a dichotomous key.*

Introduction

The instructor in question would be me, a PhD student well into their second year of an artistic-scientific graduate program at the FHNW Academy of Art and Design, and the workshop a 60-minute speculative teaching scenario on artistic strategies. Granted, to consider the strategy of plant IDing with a dichotomous key artistic would be a stretch in most circumstances; indeed, I myself was taught the method in a starkly

different context, namely the early semesters of an undergrad degree in biology. Still, I jumped at the opportunity to examine ID keying in this setting. It represented fitting grounds to test a theory that had slowly formed throughout my cross-education in media theory, art, and biology: that perhaps the word *artistic* could cautiously be dropped from *artistic-scientific research*, its strategies recognized as research methods in their own right. I used the invitation to experiment with short, 60-minute teaching workshops, not to try my hand at a specific teaching style or pedagogical method, but rather to ask a broader question: What if we not only taught *artistic* research strategies to would-be artistic researchers – but research strategies, point-blank?

Rothmaler's Exkursionsflora von Deutschland, page 56.

Image of the plant seen through the microscope.

Courtesy of Vanessa Graf

Photograph by Gabriela Aquije

Choosing a single research strategy for this purpose out of the wide variety of methods existent in the different sciences proved challenging, not least because the workshop scenario was limited in time and scope – and research strategies typically can take a lot longer than an hour to impart. I finally decided on plant identification through botanical ID keys, both as a matter of practicality (the basics of the method can easily be taught in a short amount of time) and personal preference (as a biology student, I had instantly taken to this systematic and often fascinating way of seeing our surroundings – and hoped my workshop participants, with their trained eyes as artists and designers, would feel the same).

Species identification is a cornerstone competence in many of the natural sciences, most notably biology and ecology, and dichotomous keys are central to the undertaking. They consist of long lists of couplets describing (plant) characteristics in highly standardized technical terms, inviting the researcher or student to make an informed choice to pass from one trait to the next until ending at the exact genus and species name of the organism under examination. The use of such a key requires a well-trained eye, grounded knowledge of technical vocabulary and (plant) biology, as well as the ability to accurately match the characteristics on the live organism to the traits described.

As I hoped to show through the embodied experience of identifying a plant in the detailed, specialized study of traits indiscernible to the untrained eye, the careful, applied practice of a scientific method can be reminiscent of employing artistic strategies – and vice versa. If an artist's work is carried out with the specific aim of research or knowledge production, why keep so strictly to teaching *artistic* methods only? By proposing a workshop that was not focused on a particular teaching method, but rather a different approach to teaching research strategies in art and design altogether, I was curious to see whether this impression would be shared by other artistic-scientific researchers.

This essay further reflects on this dissolution of expressly *artistic* into simply research strategies, starting with a short description of my workshop and teaching setting at the 2022 *Teaching Artistic Strategies* symposium. In the second part, the historical development, uncertainties, and dissonances of dichotomous keys and plant identification manuals are

briefly examined, contextualizing the felt assonances between plant ID keying and working as an artistic-scientific researcher beyond personal experience. Reflecting on case of dichotomous keys and the outcomes of the workshop, the essay concludes with a tentative verdict on the usefulness of a distinct category of *artistic* strategies (as opposed to other strategies in research) – and what this would mean for teaching them to the next generation of practice-based students and researchers.

The how of it all: Head in the Cloud, Hands in the Dirt

The series of workshops at the 2022 *Teaching Artistic Strategies* symposium was centered around teaching practices of artistic-scientific researchers: What could, what should teaching artistic strategies in and for research contexts look like? In short, 60-minute experimental teaching settings, participants took turns sharing their practices as teachers and stepping into the shoes of students. My workshop was entitled *Head in the Cloud, Hands in the Dirt* – a play on the combination of my own artistic-scientific research in media science (on metaphors such as the Cloud used as stand-ins for large-scale computer network infrastructures) with my formal training as a student of biology.

In preparing for the workshop, I had been going on walks through the neighborhood of the FHNW Academy of Art and Design in Basel to encounter local plant species. I was looking for one plant family in particular, *Lamiaceae* or the mint family, as it is called by its trivial name, so when I chanced upon an abundance of spotted dead-nettles (*Lamium maculatum* L.), I carefully picked up a few specimens to bring to the workshop. Participants were split into small groups of three to four people and presented with one of the specimens, as well as LED-equipped jeweler's loupes. A copy of the 21st edition of Rothmaler's field guide to botanical identification, *Grundband: Exkursionsflora von Deutschland*[1], was projected onto a wall, alongside translations into English. Wherever the textual descriptions were bordering on becoming too technical, complex, or simply unfamiliar to participants, illustrations taken from Schmeil-Fitschen[2] were provided as additional reference points.

Whereas usually beginners in botanical identification would go through the tedious, but often rewarding process of learning the highly technical vocabulary, abbreviations, and scarce illustrations used in the field guide, alongside being taught more profound plant physiology, the time constraints and specificities of the workshop setting called for more flexible methods. Participants were thus invited to engage in the identification of the plant before them in a collective and participatory manner, being guided through using the dichotomous key provided while simultaneously encouraged to discuss any unclarities in vocabulary, form, or plant physiology that might arise.

I had specifically chosen a member of *Lamiaceae* for the workshop, mainly because of its four key characteristics shared across the plant family: its four-sided stem, oppositely arranged leaves, dorsiventral blossoms, and a fruit that is split into four parts, more accurately called *eremocarp*. Each of these characteristics had the potential to reveal a different way of seeing to workshop participants not used to plant identification by dichotomous key or the careful examination of small and often overlooked plant traits, while at the same time being easy to spot once one knows what to look for. Through the practical experimenting with this systematic, technical, and highly standardized method of identifying different organisms, I hoped that participants would experience first-hand the link between ways of seeing and ways of knowing that is often highlighted as a central element of artistic-scientific practice, but far from unique to the field. It was the spark that had initially incited me to think about research strategies in the field of art and design being labeled expressly *artistic*, and I used the workshop as a testing ground to see whether my thoughts on the topic would resonate with my peers.

Before discussing the results of the workshop, however, it is worthwhile to take a moment to briefly examine the historical roots of dichotomous keys, which, at their onset, were heavily debated. The uncertainties and dissonances integral to the establishment of this particular method speak to a long, troubled process of conceiving a research strategy fitting its subject – labour that most artistic-scientific researchers of today will be more than familiar with.

Turbulent histories of well-established presents

Dichotomous keys have a firm and well-established hold on plant identification and, by extension, species ordering, on today's community of botanists and ecologists. Indeed, the importance of ID keys to the field and the framing of knowing how to use them as a key competence of any self-respecting biologist is often emphasized[3]. However, a short look at the historical roots of the method speak to the uncertainties, positionalities, and precarities inherent in this (as in any) scientific strategy, no matter how widespread and standardized it might appear decades later.

In her essay on identification keys, historian Sara T. Scharf traces the beginnings of botanical keying back to the first half of the 19th century and outlines the heated discussions around the development of the method[4]. At the height of colonial expansion, in what was termed the age of "discovery", a new need to communicate across larger distances and the ever-growing number of different plant species known to the Western scientific community led botanists at the time to search for a standardized approach to botanical identification. The best strategy for the task was far from clear, and soon, two factions emerged: Proponents of the so-called "natural method" argued that plants should be grouped by visual similarity and identified by their overall visual appearance, whereas defenders of the "artificial method" chose a more systematic strategy and ordered plants by traits in indexes, forgoing visual similarities entirely.

Only scarcely hidden underneath these debates was a deeper philosophical concern for the "correctness" or "truth" of the order of the plants. Many botanists at the time believed that a (Christian) God had intended a specific order of species on Earth[5], and that instead of meddling with this divine order, humans should instead only try to correctly discern and truthfully reproduce this order in their field guides and manuals. Finding the best-fitting manner to group and identify organisms was a quest for true, divine knowledge – how specimens were ordered, classified, and made identifiable in these first versions of plant ID manuals either made possible or obfuscated seeing the divinely intended order of things.

These developments not only represented a shift from a variety of ragtag, local, place- and context-based classifications and identifying schemes to a supposedly universal, divinely intended "truth", but also to a more global and standardized system of plant identification in general. The process included complex debates and numerous iterations of the layout and design of the new field guides, leading to the gradual and at times controversial development of many of the key components of modern-day ID manuals and keys. The way botanical information was presented on a page was thought to reflect the reality of a natural order of plants, and everything from the deliberate use of white space to guide the eye, standards of text indentation, and the visual arrangement of large descriptive blocks was up for discussion. The link between lived environment, text, and field guide layout was further reinforced through the "use of standardized terminology, the order in which features of specimens are presented, the order in which descriptions of species or of higher taxa are arranged, and, often, systems of cross-references" [6]. Another point of concern was the use of illustrations, or rather, the lack thereof: budget constraints and crude printing techniques led to the proliferation of text-based identification manuals instead of richly illustrated guidebooks.

Ultimately, the search for a fitting research strategy in the field of botanical classification and identification asked a simple question: How do we develop a method that best understands and captures the plants (the world) around us? Which practices grasp (divine) "truth", how is knowledge produced and translated to text and paper, and how do the strategies we use shape our views of what there is to be known? More than just a personal feeling of kinship between methods that I experienced in my training as both a biologist and artistic-scientific researcher, this brief look at the history of botanical identification reveals a more in-depth affinity between research strategies, whether they are labeled *artistic* or not. Why, then, are we so often invited to think of them, learn them, employ them, and eventually also teach them as separate?

Conclusion: Teaching ~~artistic~~ strategies

In the debriefing session after my workshop, many participants voiced a shared feeling of resonances between ID keying and their own practices, if not in the specificities of the method, then in the way that particular (and oftentimes skilled) attention is required for a specific type of seeing, a specific type of knowing. To me, it was encouraging feedback after having tried teaching a method from my training as a biologist with my peers in art and design for the very first time – and affirmation that even though they might come from vastly different fields, different types of research strategies do not necessarily need to be kept contained in their original contexts of origin.

It was equally fascinating to observe the nuanced differences between how artists and designers, unique in their practices but nevertheless all well-trained in visual understanding and perception, engage with botanical identification, as opposed to biology students. One example which might illustrate this point is which plant traits workshop participants were struggling to see clearly and, in contrast, which concepts came to them easily. Not used to having to look very closely at the sexual reproductive organs of plants, for example, it took quite a while for most participants to spot the four distinct capsules of the *eremocarp*-type fruiting body – an organ quite familiar even to beginner botanists. At the same time, being trained in art and design, the concept of a dorsiventral symmetry in the blossoms of our sample plant was immediately clear across the room. I had started out this workshop with the question of what would happen if we not only taught *artistic* methods, but simply research strategies to artists and designers, and by the end of it started to see a little bit of the answer: A fascinating cross-pollination of ideas, skills, and knowledges; a shared feeling of methodical affinities; and perhaps a growing understanding that in teaching strategies for research in art and design, it is not only the *how* that counts, but also the *what*.

If teaching botany (or any other research strategy) out of context is one side of this coin, then the other must no doubt be to take what has so far been labeled *artistic* strategies in research seriously as research strate-

gies, point-blank: to consider them as one of many, instead of methods in constant opposition, in the weird seclusion zone labeled artistic-scientific research. To extend this confidence in ~~artistic~~ strategies to teaching entails teaching them as, with, or alongside other research strategies, no special labelling required. My 60-minute slot at the *Teaching Artistic Strategies* was an experiment in how teaching for and in research in art and design could look like if this was the case – if, instead of teaching *artistic* strategies, we simply taught *research* strategies, whether that be painting, interviewing, writing, ID keying, statistical analysis, or else. The series of workshops at the symposium, taken in its entirety, was one larger-scale example, allowing for botanical identification to exist on the same theoretical and practical plane as critical debugging or associative image-story-telling, to name just two of the other ~~artistic~~ strategies experimented with during the teaching scenarios.

I like to believe that it is in a context and company as cross-disciplinary and openminded as this that experimental, ~~artistic~~ strategies can establish their full potential and provide a meaningful contribution to a wider scientific discussion on how knowledge is constituted, created, and established. In the same vein, I hold on to the idea that being taught and teaching research strategies that are not expressly *artistic* to researchers in art and design can only serve to better our research. In the end, *teaching ~~artistic~~ strategies* for research is about learning how to match (or, in many cases, create) the best-fitting strategy or method to a given research endeavour – and as curious researchers, why would we limit ourselves to what is considered *artistic* only?

Notes

1   Eckehart J. Jäger, ed.: *Rothmaler – Exkursionsflora von Deutschland. Ge-fäßpflanzen: Grundband*, 21st ed. (Berlin Heidelberg: Springer Spek-trum, 2016).

2   Otto Schmeil et al.: *Die Flora Deutschlands und angrenzender Länder: Ein Buch zum Bestimmen aller wildwachsenden und häufig kultivierten Gefäßpflanzen*, 97th ed. (Wiebelsheim: Quelle & Meyer Verlag, 2019).

3   During a field trip in the second semester of my biology studies, for example, two of my professors not only highlighted the impor-tance of correct species identification for any scholar in the natu-ral sciences, but explicitly made note of the increased employability of anybody who can reliably ID a large number of organisms. For a discussion of the importance of identification keys that is more than anecdotal, see for example: Steve Tilling, "Keys to Biological Identification: Their Role and Construction," *Journal of Biological Ed-ucation* 18, no. 4 (December 1984): 293–304, https://doi.org/10.1080 /00219266.1984.9654660; Thomas Edison E. dela Cruz, Ma. Victoria B. Pangilinan, and Rodrigo A. Litao, "Printed Identification Key or Web-Based Identification Guide: An Effective Tool for Species Iden-tification?," *Journal of Microbiology & Biology Education* 13, no. 2 (De-cember 3, 2012): 180–82, https://doi.org/10.1128/jmbe.v13i2.426.

4   Scharf, Sara T.: "Identification Keys, the 'Natural Method,' and the Development of Plant Identification Manuals," *Journal of the History of Biology* 42, no. 1 (2009): pp. 73–117.

5   This discussion is not unique to dichotomous keys. For an interest-ing example on the conceptualization of life on Earth as a ladder or tree, reflecting anthropocentric hierarchies and ideals, see: Hejnol, Andreas. "LADDERS, TREES, COMPLEXITY, AND OTHER METAPHORS IN EVOLUTIONARY THINKING." In *Arts of Living on a Damaged Planet: Ghosts and Monsters of the Anthropocene*, edited by Anna Tsing, Heather Swanson, Elaine Gan, and Nils Bubandt, 87–102. University of Minnesota Press, 2017. http://www.jstor.org /stable/10.5749/j.ctt1qft070.9.

6   Scharf, Sara T.: "Identification Keys, the 'Natural Method,' and the
     Development of Plant Identification Manuals," p. 83.
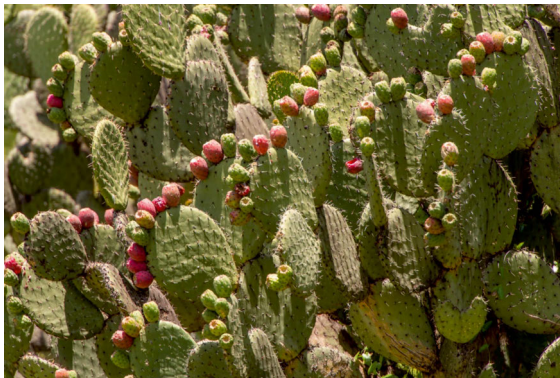
Opuntia's Ubiquity
Learning Situatedness from Artists

Thomas Laval

"The plant will have nourished the mind which contemplates the blooming of its flower."
Luce Irigaray, Elemental Passions (London: Athlone Press, 1992), p. 6

Fig. 1: Opuntia cactus

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The relationship we, as human beings, have with nature has been set as a major theme investigated by contemporary artists. If the background of this interest must lie in the forever more acute climate crisis we are living through, the multiplicity of approaches led to an extensive body of works not only scrutinizing what is vanishing under human threat but also what is still flourishing, and the way we integrate it in our lives. In Michael Marder's delineations of vegetal ontology for the conceptualization of plant-thinking, our social integration of plants would refer to *the human thinking about plants*.[1] Whether we think of Taryn Simon, who questions the innocence and political significance of flowers in masterly bouquets displayed at major international political meetings, or conversely of Lois Weinberger, who, in his installations in public spaces, accords a place of choice to ruderal herbs, each one of them singularly nuances and complexifies the understanding of our relationship to the botanical world.[2] Acknowledging this growing interest from contemporary artists during these last twenty years, numerous publications have highlighted the intertwinement between visual arts and plants, targeting precise angles of approach in order to analyse how artists have been looking at it and what kind of use they make of plants in their works.[3] In this article we propose to unfold some ways of thinking about plants by providing a closer attention to a cactus used by two contemporary artists, Fareed Armaly and Mariana Castillo Deball. In one of their projects each one of them specifically articulates the opuntia – a variety of cactus also called nopal in Spanish, prickly-pear cactus in English and Sabra cactus in Palestine and Israel – in relation to two very different contexts. The ultimate goal of this article is to unfold the plural and complementary relevance of situated research in art as a fruitful artistic strategy to be taught.

Artist and curator Fareed Armaly, born in the United States in 1957 of Lebanese-Palestinian descent, and artist Mariana Castillo Deball, born in Mexico City in 1975, have nothing in common, except for two details. They do not belong to the same generation, they grew up in different geographical, artistic, and political contexts and their practice is fundamentally distinct from one another, in form as in content. The only arc allowing to link their respective work is that they are both

artists-researchers, which we can define as follows: an artist-researcher combines creative art practices with research methods and approaches to investigate, explore, and produce new knowledge or understanding within their field of interest. This approach integrates artistic production and critical reflection and often involves collaboration with other disciplines and actors. Artistic research interweaves the practical and experimental aspects of art-making with critical analysis, inquiry, and research methodologies.[4] The aim of artistic research is not only to create innovative works of art, but also to contribute to the advancement of knowledge and understanding of the artistic, cultural, and social issues. Research-based art can take many forms, from visual arts, music, performance, theater, film, and media arts to interdisciplinary fields such as design, architecture, and urban planning. In general, the goal is to create new knowledge and insights, not only for the art world but also for society as a whole.[5]

The second and more crucial common point between the two artists on which we will elaborate in this article is their singular use of the opuntia cactus in one of their works: in *From/to* (2002) by Fareed Armaly and *The painter's garden* (2018) by Mariana Castillo Deball in collaboration with Tatiana Falcón. We will first introduce the two projects to highlight the way in which the opuntia is mobilized in relation to a particular context and use. The specific relationship of the plant with the milieu in which it grows will lead us to draw a parallel with local knowledge and its travelling ability, as a means to position oneself in art-making. Finally, we will conclude with the complementarity of artistic voices enabled by the intersubjective character of situated knowledges and will open the debate on how to escape the anthropocentric token when art-making relies on the botanical world.

From/to

Fareed Armaly, takes the history of Palestine as the subject of his project *From/To*, first presented in 1999 at the Witte de With Center for Contemporary Art (now Kunstinstituut Melly) in Rotterdam and in a new form on

the occasion of the eleventh edition of Documenta in 2002, directed by Okwui Enwezor.[6] For this project, the surface of a stone is digitized to be considered as a symbol of the world, of architecture and of weapons – in reference to the First Intifada known as the Stone war (1987–1993) – and the stone motif is projected in its vectorized form onto the first floor of the Documenta Halle.[7] It forms a grid bridging the different spaces of the installation, a schematic map on which are inscribed the names of Palestinian camps and territories. Visitors would walk on this map therefore establishing a parallel with the displacement of populations from camp to camp. As a curator more than an artist, Armaly collaborates with designers, architects, historians, geographers, photographers, and filmmakers – in particular Palestinian filmmaker Rashid Masharawi (born in 1962 and raised in the Shati refugee camp) – allowing him to link different types of knowledge attached to the question of Palestine to reveal the subjective and incarnated mediation of their respective conditions.

The *From/To* installation is composed of four sections, divided in four rooms, and bearing the following titles: *Waiting*, *Checkpoint*, *Home Movie*, and *Media-Geography*.[8] Besides Masharawi's film in the *Waiting* section, visitors could encounter an opuntia, the Sabra Cactus, which sat potted in front of the introductory text to this part of the installation. The opuntia is considered as an actor and a witness of the shape-shifting ideological forces associated with Palestine and Israel: in the presentation text, Armaly draws on scholar Carol Bardenstein's article where she analyses how the opuntia, among other products of the flora in the region, serves to anchor narratives of cultural identities in dissonance, as differently shaped for Israelis and Palestinians.[9] In the article, Bardenstein points out how the sabra cactus first serves as a geographical marker for the Palestinian populations expelled at the creation of the State of Israel. The plant, still present on the outskirts of Palestinian homes that were destroyed, acts as a witness to the past, a vestige that now borders an empty space.[10] At the same time, the opuntia is instrumentalized as a symbol of Israeli autochthony. Since the 1930s, the plant has been used as a symbol to designate a Jewish person born in Palestine, later Israel, and the traits of its character: hard and thorny on the outside, but soft and sweet on the inside.[11] Consequently, whether it is the only trace allow-

ing the memory of a past associated with a definitively modified place or whether it serves as a support for projections related to an identity discourse, the opuntia as mobilized in *From/to* silently testifies to the divergent memorial and cultural negotiations associated with the same geographical territory that finds embodiment in a plant: at the same spatial scale, two imbrications of a fundamentally different nature-culture relationship and projection are associated with this cactus.

In Tlilli In Tlapalli

Relative to a very different context, Mariana Castillo Deball also convokes the opuntia, in a work that takes the form of a garden. It was set up in 2018 in the courtyard of the Amparo Museum in Puebla, Mexico, on the occasion of the exhibition *In Tlilli in Tlapalli, Imágenes de la nueva tierra: identidad indígena después de la conquista* [which would translate as *In Tlilli in Tlapalli. Images of the New Land: Indigenous Identity After the Conquest*].[12] Conceived by historian Diana Magaloni and Mariana Castillo Deball, the exhibition consisted of an intervention on the origins of Mexican history based on pre-Hispanic documents, some of which were presented in the exhibition in their original form and others in a facsimile form. At the center of the exhibition is the question of the status and content of these indigenous documents, the majority of which are kept in European libraries and remain inaccessible to the majority of the population, and to the Mexicans in the first place, who are their heirs. Within this framework, the constitution, use and history of pre-Hispanic colors was a special focus. Colour samples were recreated from the chemical analysis of the pigment as well as from their recipe and description indicated in the Florentine codex: an ethnographic research study also known as the *General History of Things in New Spain* written by the Franciscan friar Bernardino de Sahagún in the sixteenth century. The historical documents presented and the work on the history of colours formed the basis for Mariana Castillo Deball's interventions, in drawings, paintings and sculptures in the exhibition. To offer a different translation of this work on pre-Hispanic documents and colours Mariana Castillo Deball

designed the *The painter's garden* in collaboration with Historian Tatiana Falcón.[13] The garden consisted of a collection of trees, wild plants from the rainforest, shrubs, lichens and insects, all of which serve to make pigments and dyes. To organize and give shape to the garden, Mariana Castillo Deball and Tatiana Falcón classified the plants according to the colour they produced, following the colour orientation of the four directions of the universe described in the first page of another codex, the Fejérváry-Mayer codex, which represents a *Tonalpohualli*, a ritual Aztec calendar of 260 days formed by the combination of twenty names of days (veintenas) and thirteen numbers of days (trecenas).[14]

There we find the opuntia, the scene of a symbiosis with a parasitic insect, the Dactylopius coccus, better known under the name of superfamily Coccoidea or Cochineal, from the Spanish "cochinilla". The cochineal lodges on the racket-shaped sides of the opuntia, called cladodes, forming small whitish clusters. After three to four months, only the female insects are harvested to be dried and ground. The powdered cochineal is then mixed with a binder to make the famous carmine red color, in variations that range from vermilion to purple, to be used to dye fabrics and carpets. In an article that contextualizes the presentation of the garden, Tatiana Falcón relies on the description of the commercial importance of the cochineal Bernardino de Sahagún made in the Fejérváry-Mayer codex: "It is the fine red (grana); this red is very well known in this country and beyond, and there is a great trade in it as far as China and Turkey. Almost all over the world it is esteemed and highly valued."[15] However ancient, the way in which the opuntia and the cochineal nesting on it are used today is the same as the one attested in the codex. In the same article, Tatiana Falcón makes a tribute to master colourist Manuela Cecilia Lino Bello (1943–2017), whom she had met a few years before the exhibition in Hueyapan, in the forest of the Sierra Madre Oriental in Mexico. During their encounter, Lino Bello showed her the different traditional dying techniques she had been using for a long time already. Among them is the making of different shades of reds in the same process described by Sahagún half a millennium ago. Besides the time bridge regarding the technique in use, we should here note the know-how associated with the opuntia and the cochineal which

is still evident today in Hueyapan, Mexico, providing the cactus with a specific situatedness.

Situating knowledge in art as positioning oneself

Whether in Palestine or in Mexico, an opuntia is irreducibly always different in its form and biologically identical. The cultural meanings assigned to the plant are above all contextual, in other words, situated. In the first case the cactus serves as an identity marker for a conflicted territory, and in the second it serves as a host for a parasite from which a pigment is produced according to an ancestral know-how still evident today in rural Mexico. The very different understandings of the opuntia reveal the material and historical setting, and associated social interests, which enter into the very lineaments of knowledge-making surrounding the plant. Doing so, the opuntia highlights the equation of local knowledge in which it is caught up. As coined by the English philosopher Gilbert Ryle and popularized by the American anthropologist Clifford Geertz (1983), the notion of local knowledge refers to the twofold idea that all knowledge is geographically and historically delimited, and that the local conditions of its production affect the nature of the knowledge produced.[16] In this sense, in both cases the cactus serves quite different purposes, each corresponding to the issues specific to the context in which the plant is seen growing. In this perspective, knowledge is not freely floating above one's head, neither does it come from heavenly inspiration, but from engaging in particular kinds of perceptions and practices that are historically and geographically grounded. With this in mind, this acceptance of knowledge is close to Donna Haraway's situated knowledges in which she counterpoints the impossible "god trick" performance of traditional sciences that would guarantee a neutral objectivity, against an omniscient vision constructed from absent referents, deferred signifieds, and duplicated subjects. The overlap of these two projects with Haraway's theory is nonetheless limited as her approach is shaped by a feminist endeavour to knowledge making, in her own words corresponding to "a doctrine of embodied objectivity

that accommodates paradoxical and critical feminist science projects".[17] However locally coined, knowledge travels, taken in complex circuits of exchange, transfer and accumulation. As a consequence, knowledge performs its locatedness elsewhere than where it originates from, in our cases in the exhibition space of the documenta Halle and the Amparo Museum. This phenomenon of decentering, which could be compared to what Deleuze and Guatarri have called *deterritorialization*, does not, on the other hand, cancel the situated character of knowledge.[18] Both local and situated knowledges are defined with a common characteristic of being always marked by the situations in which they were crafted – even when travelling to different contexts.[19]

This contextuality of travelling attached to the cactus invites focusing on the perspective of situating knowledge in art making, in a pedagogical approach. First, we should leave behind the disarray situated and local knowledges suffer from in the context of the Humanities. Sociologist Julie Patarin-Jossec notes how in abandoning a universalist methodology, discourse and ambition, some scholars find such situated approaches in danger of drowning in particularisms, making any transcendental research endeavour impossible.[20] This quite debatable stance ultimately reflects the eternal questioning between universalism and relativism inherent to the sciences aiming at the understanding of human-kind and society. Nonetheless, this invalidation hardly applies regarding the epistemological constitution of the artistic field. Approaches, methods, and concepts pertaining to academic disciplines in the Humanities, even if sometimes mobilized by contemporary artists, are not governed by the same parameters once placed in the field of the arts, understood as an open-ended interdisciplinary practice-based area. And if some authors find the use of methodologies and the research conducted by artists dangerous both for the arts and academia, it is, to say the least, vain to discriminate such endeavours as the arts are not constituted as an academic discipline, nor are they calibrated by the same epistemic parameters.[21]

On the contrary, instead of a limiting or even dangerous device, we should consider the possibilities offered by situating research in the process of art making. If we take the example of Fareed Armaly, born in

the United States in 1957 of Palestinian descent, theoretical discourses and literature on identity politics in the 1980s in the United States, especially via Edward Said, "felt more than just 'new', and were significant" for him.[22] Saïd would be the one to problematize and analyse the complex issues of identities related to diaspora and local politics in Palestine, following the creation of the State of Israel. He would then be a figure unfolding the questions related to the historical, political and cultural heritage of the artist. Therefore, Armaly's collaborative *From/to* project for the documenta inherits from the impact such postcolonial theoretical discourses had on him and translates the positioning of the artist in relation to the diasporic status of his family as an incarnated investigation on the theme of Palestine, and that can be traced in the opuntia. In the case of Mariana Castillo Deball, the opuntia is used to situate a dyeing know-how still in use today within Mexican rural communities. In doing so, the artist anchors the discourse to a local scale and a specific use, as a counterpoint to a wider understanding of the opuntia, commonly taken as a national emblem in Mexico, among other uses.[23] Both cases illustrate the articulation of knowledge orchestrated by the artists to contextualize and situate their position and choices embedded in their works, visible through their mobilization of the opuntia. Stating the importance of situating one's approach in the process of art making therefore allows clarifying the assumptions from which discourses are elaborated about the subject matter at hand. In this perspective, when working on the elaboration of an artistic project, one could and certainly should ask the following questions: where am I culturally and socially speaking from in relation to the topic I am tackling? How does this position inform and permeate my approach to making? How can my artistic proposition be interpreted in relation to dominant or hegemonic discourses?[24]

Intersubjectivity as complementarity, towards plant-thinking

These questions invite reflection on how one can choose a position, in the process of articulating knowledge, to practice refining the tools, language, forms, and concepts which will constitute the aesthetico-epis-

temic rhizome to be found *in fine*, in the work. These choices rest on the eminently subjective character of *making* in a creative practice, and the intersubjectivity that characterizes local and situated knowledge allows the coercion of both.[25] Rather than a brake on the value of the scientific discourse that would lose an alleged universalist objectivity, the intersubjective character of situated epistemologies allows the articulation of the artist's subjectivity in practice, enabling a particular crafting of his or her vision and positioning. To come back one last time to our cases studies, the two uses of the opuntia in these projects end up being complementary: Castillo Deball's project allows tracing over a longer period of time the use of the cactus for dyeing purposes, from the moment when it began to be exported worldwide, when the repercussions of this use and export, although mute in Armaly's project, are nevertheless what allowed, centuries later, the opuntia to be found in the conflictual relationship highlighted by the artist.[26] The situatedness of the two projects, by the intersubjective dimension that characterizes them, leaves the door open to the complementarity of the artistic voices. The perspective proposed by the artists on the opuntia constitutes a piece of the gigantic puzzle of the social relationship we have come to establish with this plant, thus allowing the terrestrial and artistic ubiquity of this cactus. It then takes a revealing aspect of the nature-culture relationship humankind have been forging with it for decades and centuries. This cactus is a witness but also an actor of the negotiations we operate with nature in a relationship revealing its anthropocentric mediation. The thorny snowshoes of the opuntia refer to the needs and traditions of human beings in certain places, as much as to the way in which knowledge was established around this plant. The question to be asked with a reflective pedagogical aim following our reflection remains: how to invite a terrestrial plant into an artistic process without it being confined to a utilitarian role?

As introduced at the beginning of the article, the analytical path we proposed through the projects of these two artists is inscribed in a human-plant relationship corresponding to what Michael Marder simply names *humans thinking about plants*. This thought configuration seems the most obvious possible given its anthropocentric essence. Neverthe-

less, in an enterprise of deconstruction of western metaphysics, it is to be placed in a wider ontology of plant-thinking which, according to Marder, consists of three other modes of thought:

(1) the non-cognitive, non-ideational, and non-imagistic mode of thinking proper to plants (what he calls "thinking without the head;")
(2) the human thinking about plants;
(3) how human thinking is, to some extent, de-humanized and rendered plant-like, altered by its encounter with the vegetal world; and finally,
(4) the ongoing symbiotic relation between this transfigured thinking and the existence of plants.[27]

As a conclusion, this categorical delimitation invites us to take a step back. Our framework of *thinking about plants* – which, as we have seen, enables the articulation of a local or situated knowledge in which the artist's singularity and positioning are combined – must also invite other modes of thinking, following the delineations described by Marder. What the plant reveals first and foremost when *thinking about plants* is the contextual imbrications, we confer upon them and that manifest themselves in the discourse we have on them. Plants, in this anthropocentric acceptance, tell us more about ourselves as socially and culturally determined individuals than they do about the nature of the plant itself, understood in the full breadth of its ontology. In consequence, to complexify and nuance our relationship with the botanical world in a strategic pedagogical aim, we need to embark and engage in an adventure into the unknown, leaving aside our own metaphysics in an attempt not only to *think about plants*, but create enabling conditions of a *non-cognitive, non-ideational, and non-imagistic mode of thinking proper to plants*.

Notes

1   Marder, Michael. *Plant-thinking, A Philosophy of Vegetal Life*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2013, 10.

2   Taryn Simon's work on flowers is compiled in Simon, Taryn. *Paperwork and the Will of Capital*. Berlin: Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2016. Lois Weinberger's exploration of ruderal herbs commonly called "weeds" is at the origin of a rich body of works comprising drawings, photographs, text objects, films, organic works in permanent evolution and installations in the public space, notably: *Portable garden*, 1994; *Cut,* 1999; or *Spur*, 2015.

3   We will note in particular the work of Giovanni Aloi, founder in 2006 of the scientific journal *Antennae: The Journal of Nature in Visual Culture*, notably numbers 17 and 18 of 2011 dedicated specifically to plants. And from the same author, Aloi, Giovanni. *Botanical Speculations: Plants in Contemporary Art*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars, 2018; Aloi, Giovanni. *Why Look at Plants? The Botanical Emergence in Contemporary Art*. Leyden: Brill, 2018 and Aloi, Giovanni, and Michael Marder, eds. *Vegetal Entwinements in Philosophy and Art, a reader*. Cambridge: the MIT Press, 2023.

4   In that respect both Armaly and Castillo Deball have shown dedication to knowledge-making and -sharing through editorial endeavours throughout their career. One example for Fareed Armaly is his exhibition *Brea-kd-own* held at the Palais des Beaux Arts in Brussels in 1993, and especially his work for the exhibition catalogue that functions as a theoretical and visual essay. Based on interviews with local political and cultural actors, journalistic and administrative archival documents and theoretical notions and concepts, he proposed various essays that punctuated the sections of the exhibition and engaged with the history and functions of the Palais des Beaux Arts. As for Mariana Castillo Deball, she is the founder and editor of the journal *Ixiptla,* relying on a strong anthropological inflection and published in the context of exhibitions or artistic event by Berlin based publishing house Bom dia, boa tarde, boa noite.

Most often it comprises essays by anthropologists, archaeologists, historians, artists and writers.

5   For extensive studies on artistic research see Borgdorff, Henk. *The Conflict of the Faculties: Perspectives on Artistic Research and Academia*. Leiden: Leiden University Press, 2012; Schwab, Michael, ed. *Transpositions. Aesthetico-Epistemic Operators in Artistic Research*. Leuven: Orpheus Institute Series, Leuven University Press, 2018 and Bauer, Ute Meta, Florian, Dombois, Claudia, Mareis, and Michael, Schwab. *Intellectual Birdhouse. Artistic Practice as Research*. London: Köenig, 2012.

6   Extensive documentation of Fareed Armaly's the *From/to* project in its documenta iteration is available at http://fromto.withthis.net/ , a website created and administered by the artist and serving as a digital archive.

7   For further details on the stone symbol associated with the first Palestinian Intifada see David A. McDonald's chapter titled *The First Intifada and the Generation of Stones (1987–2000)* in his book: McDonald, David A. *My Voice Is My Weapon: Music, Nationalism, and the Poetics of Palestinian Resistance*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2013.

8   The space of the documenta Halle in which *From/to* was presented in 2002 was divided into four sections, each bearing the title of the film commissioned to Rashid Masharawi it contained. The *Waiting* section included a film by Rashid Masharawi, as well as the *Sabra Cactus* sub-section with an introductory text behind it. Along the space of this chapter were three rooms in which the other three sections of the installation were located: *Checkpoint*, *Home Movie*, and *Media-Geography*. *Checkpoint* comprised Masharawi's film, depicting a crowd of Palestinians and their cars, suddenly blocked at the Qalandia checkpoint, and two essays on the subject of mapping were presented: *Charting Palestinian Territories and Power: FROM land control TO flows control* by sociologist Sylvie Fouet and *Israel/Palestine: Cartographic Manipulations* by cartographer and geographer Philippe Rekacewicz. The *Home Movie* section included Masharawi's film, in which a Palestinian couple share, aloud, their memories over the announcement of the invasion of Beirut in 1982.

It also comprised an installation gathering plenty of old postcards from Palestine entitled *Dealing with the Past, Creating a Presence: Picture Postcards of Palestine* by Arnelies Moors and Stevan Wachlin, as well as an essay entitled *A Guiding Thread* by anthropologist Stephanie Latte Abdallah. The *Media-Geography* section included two films intended to dialogue with one another: *Journey through Palestine* from 1897 by the Lumière brothers of and *The Dupes* from 1972 by Tewfik Saleh.

9   Bardenstein, Carol. "Threads of Memory and Discourses of Root-edness: Of Trees, Oranges and the Prickly-Pear Cactus in Israel/Palestine." *Edebiyat: Journal of Middle Eastern Literatures*, no. 8 (1998): 1–36.

10   *Ibid.*, 11.

11   *Ibid.*, 14.

12   *In tlilli* means black, and *In tlapalli* means red, in the Nahuatl language; *In tlilli* also means black ink, and *In tlapalli*, red paint; and together *In tlilli in tlapalli* is a metaphor for ancient writings and paintings, such as codices and as indicated by the *Online Nahuatl Dictionary*, Stephanie Wood, ed. (Eugene, Ore.: Wired Humanities Projects, College of Education, University of Oregon, ©2000–present): https://nahuatl.uoregon.edu/content/tlilli-tlapalli. Accessed November 28, 2022. The introduction to the exhibition as well as documentation and photographs are available on the Museo Amparo website at: https://museoamparo.com/exposiciones/piezas/188/in-tlilli-in-tlapalli-ima-genes-de-la-nueva-tierra-identidad-indi-gena-despue-s-de-la-conquista. Accessed November 28, 2022.

13   This garden has since been presented again, identically, on the occasion of the artist's monographic exhibition at the Museo Universitario de Arte Contemporaneo (MUAC) in Mexico City from October, 16 2021 to May, 1 2022.

14   "The first page of the Fejérváry-Mayer Codex represents, in the center, Xiuhtecuhtli, the fire god with red skin, from which four jets of blood or lava flow. The colors indicate the four cardinal points, yellow representing the north. Each quarter is composed of

a tree, a bird and two deities." León-Portilla, Miguel. "El tonalámatl de los Pochtecas (códice Fejérváry-Mayer)." *Arqueología Mexicana*, no. 18 (1998): 18–107. As the *Online Nahuatl Dictionary* states, the *Tonalpohualli* corresponds to: a count of days, a Mesoamerican calendar (to use European labels); tonalpohualli is the term used in association with the count of 260 days; the 365-day count was the cempollapohualli. *Online Nahuatl Dictionary*, Stephanie Wood, ed. (Eugene, Ore.: Wired Humanities Projects, College of Education, University of Oregon, ©2000–present). https://nahuatl.wired-humanities.org/content/tonalpohualli. Accessed November 28, 2022.

15   Falcón, Tatiana. "El jardín del píntor/The painter's garden." In *Amarantus*, edited by Castillo Deball, Mariana, 150–204. Mexico City: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México/Museo Universitario de Arte Contemporáneo/RM, 2021.

16   Geertz, Clifford. *Local Knowledge, Further Essays in Interpretive Anthropology*. New York: BasicBooks, 1983.

17   Haraway, Donna. "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective." *Feminist Studies 14*, no. 3 (1988): 575–599.

18   The concept of deterritorialization is here understood in the sense given by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari in *Anti-Œdipus*, first published in French in 1972, and from which it was applied to the displacement of social, cultural, economic and political practices, as well as of persons, objects, languages, traditions and beliefs in relation to their originating bodies, and even understood literally, for geographical territories and their respective relations. Deleuze, Gilles and Félix Guattari. 1972. *Anti-Œdipus*. Trans. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem and Helen R. Lane. London and New York: Continuum, 2004. Vol. 1 of *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. 2 vols. 1972–1980. Trans. of *L'Anti-Œdipe*. Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit.

19   Gregory, Derek, Ron, Johnston, Geraldine, Pratt, Michael, Watts, and Sarah Whatmore, eds. *The Dictionary of Human Geography*. Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009: 422 and 684.

20   Patarin-Jossec, Julie. "Comment ne pas construire un discours scientifique. Note exploratoire sur les *épistémologies féministes* du point de vue." *Zilsel* (December 2015). https://doi.org/10.58079/vds1

21   As an example, philosopher Carole Talon Hugon has recently published an essay in which she attacks artistic research denouncing the alleged danger that research-based art would have for the academic disciplines as for the art itself, see: Talon Hugon, Carole. *L'artiste en habits de chercheur*. Paris: PUF, 2021.

22   Correspondence with the artist on June 8, 2021.

23   According to the founding myth of Mexico-Tenochtitlan, an eagle perched on a nopal cactus or opuntia to devour a snake which led the deity Huitzilopochtli to instruct the Mexica to establish their city where this scene took place, the actual location of Mexico City. The representation of this myth is depicted on the national coat of arms and found on the Mexican flag. For an expanded survey on Mexican symbols see: López de Escalera, Juán. *Diccionario Biográfico y de Historia de México*. Mexico City: Editorial del Magisterio, 1964. In addition, the nopal cactus is widely used in food, livestock, art, construction, science, which gives this plant a transversal impact on the Mexican population.

24   Questions along those lines within a pedagogical framework can be found in Paul Thek's teaching notes during his teaching at the Cooper Union in the late 1970s and early 1980s, where he pushed his students to take the measure of their cultural and social positioning. See: Paul Thek's *Teaching Notes*, a questionnaire created by the American artist Paul Thek to teach the 4-Dimensional Design Class under his charge at Cooper Union in New York between 1978 and 1981. http://classes.dma.ucla.edu/Fall16/173/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Thek-Teaching-Notes.pdf. Accessed November 28,2022.

25   Patarin-Jossec, Julie. *Ibid*.

26   For the economic importance and manufacture of cochineal throughout centuries see: Achim, Miruna. "COCHINEAL." In *New World Objects of Knowledge: A Cabinet of Curiosities* edited by Thurner, Mark, and Juan Pimentel, 177–182. London: Institute of Latin American Studies, University of London Press, 2021. For an

account of the importance of cochineal in art history see: Phipps, Elena. "Cochineal Red: The Art History of a Color." *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin*, Vol. 67, no. 3 (2010): 4–48.

27   Marder, Michael. *Ibid*, 10.

Teaching More-than-human Invitation in Artistic Research and Pedagogy

Selena Savić

Attention to *more-than-human* in artistic and design research spans a wide range of concerns: from problematizing inclusion or authorship, to addressing environmental destruction. It raises the question on who is invited to act and how. More specifically, attention to more-than-human *invitation* problematizes human-centeredness in practicing and teaching art and design, engages with uncertainty in exact sciences, and offers to rearticulate the notion of performativity in humanities. These broad gestures are centered around core ideas explored in posthumanism and feminist new materialism[1], which, together with other post-anthropocentric philosophical frameworks[2] and approaches to studies of culture,[3] unsettle human-centeredness and foreground the problems of indeterminism and uncertainty in exact sciences[4]. The notion of performativity is important as a concept that demonstrates the materiality of theory and language, by connecting materialist concerns in studies of literature and philosophy of language[5] to materialist concerns in gender theory[6]. This text is a proposal to pay attention to the *more-than-human* by observing the directionality of invitations: where they come from, where they go and how they are received.

The reflections presented here are based on a workshop with doctoral students on the topic of more-than-human invitation. The workshop proposed a method based on stories, which integrates the questions of inclusion and anthropocentrism into a teaching agenda in art and design, and offers a possible mode of transferring new materialist research concerns into teaching.

To rethink invitation through a more-than-human lens requires a decentring of the act of inviting. Invitation as a concept, and as a social practice, is the key by which matters of difference and inclusivity are settled in specific contexts. One can actively extend an invitation to another, such as inviting a friend to dinner. And yet, it is equally important to be attentive to invitations we (do not) receive, as it happens in diverse forms of exclusion and discrimination. Rather than apprehending invitation as something that we send out, an extension of subjective desire or individual politeness, the core idea of this chapter is to recast invitation as that which has to be noticed, that which we might hope to receive. Inspired by contemporary articulations of good relations by Max Liboiron[7], noticing and entanglement by Donna Haraway[8], of posthumanism by Rossi Braidotti[9] and of natural philosophy by Michel Serres[10], this text paints three scenes in which invitation plays a role:

1. The house of Ancient Greek poet Agathon where the banquet described in Plato's *Symposium* took place in 416 BC and guests were invited to give discourses of praise;
2. The Galerie Schmela in Düsseldorf where Joseph Beuys performed *How to Explain Pictures to a Dead Hare* in November 1965, to which a dead animal was invited while audience had to remain outside;
3. The fishing wharf in Newfoundland, Canada, where researchers from the anti-colonial laboratory for pollution research, CLEAR, collected fish guts samples in 2015 and noticed different perspectives on the guts' disposability.

These three scenes problematize invitation and hospitality, while speaking of contemporary themes such as protocol, contract and social clues. Following a posthumanist sensitivity to articulation and difference, this chapter proposes an artistic pedagogy as a way to unfold the intricate implications of being invited, and engage with practice-based research methods such as storying[11]. The participants were invited to translate the scenes in terms of their research and tell each other stories in small groups. Each scene discussed in this text is an opportunity to reflect on the capacity to notice an invitation in a specific context, to articulate the

research agenda as a story and to develop an engaged understanding and affective connection to a concept. The stories demonstrate the changing notion of the human, when human is considered to be the one who is included in society. They also reshape the position on posthuman, non-human and more-than-human invitation by mixing in one's own experience of having been invited.

The chapter proceeds with a consideration for *invitation* in the context of contemporary posthuman and post-anthropocentric theory, which problematizes the centeredness of invitation with the human. It continues to a detailed reflection of the teaching workshop at which storying as a practice-based method was used to unfold three distinct modes of inviting. Finally, the chapter develops into a set of associations with participants' research practices and outlooks of engaging with stories for their teaching efforts.

On invitation

Having the capacity to invite another is a clear recognition of an active, actionable agency that characterizes a modern subject. Such a subject can but does not have to be human. Extending such a perception of agency, Bruno Latour proposed to take into account the agency of hybrids – monsters, cyborgs, tricksters, collectives, imbroglios and other premodern (quasi) subjects.[12] This inspired ontologically-minded philosophical accounts of flat and object-oriented ontologies (OOO), pioneered by Graham Harman[13], Levi Bryant[14], Timothy Morton[15] and others. Such a take on objects as quasi-objects[16], while expressing a desire to think outside of dualist structures of subject and object, which OOO share with certain feminist and posthumanist thinkers, leaves behind an important complication, namely that quasi-objects are always already quasi-subjects too. The omission risks absolving objects and humans of human subjectivity, and "provides for the capital-S Subject to come back with a vengeance", as Iris van der Tuin observed.[17] Latour was aware of the mutual implication, which we can locate in his *Conversations on Science, Culture and Time* with Michel Serres.[18] Serres extensively wrote

about quasi-objects, as entities that create relationships between living and inert things.[19] Quasi-objects are not merely passive, they are at the same time quasi-subjects: like a ball in a game of football, objects establish and organize our relations with them and with each other. The quasi- in subjects and objects is the key to extending the perception of agency, and can be read as an intensity, rather than a binary distinction.

In human-decentring gestures, paying attention to invitation of the other plays a key role. The scepticism towards human primacy in sociology emanated from efforts to study and accurately convey the complexity of large technical systems[20] extending into and picking up from post-anthropocentric considerations in philosophy and history of science. With attention to non-human perspectives, Bruno Latour's ambition was to account for this complexity and consider people with other living non-living things as ontologically indistinguishable. In feminist theory, Donna Haraway's motivation to challenge human-centric thinking and her interest in more-than-human (while still partial) perspective extends from the writing on the Cyborg[21] to later articulations of kinship in Chthulucene.[22] Rossi Braidotti's theory of nomadic subjectivity that resists methodological and other nationalisms, characterizes a process of critical relocation in one's own situatedness.[23] Environmental destruction, and ongoing political crises can be read through the question of who or what gets to be considered human, why are they in the centre, in the centre of what, and how to decentre this view without absolving oneself of responsibility.

Invitation can be a key to read the materiality and directionality of teaching artistic research. In an article for Educational Philosophy and Theory journal, education scholars Stephanie Springgay and Zofia Zaliwska[24] discussed the use of feminist new materialism in education as a methodology that seeks to emphasize the materiality of matter in research, of both what and who participates in knowledge production. They wrote of learning to be affected, as an invitation to becoming something else. In the context of art and design, research and teaching implicate the researcher/educator on multiple levels which can be productively addressed through stories and their characters.

Storying as method

In this article, I present the teaching and learning experience from the workshop held within the international *Teaching Artistic Strategies* symposium in May 2022 in Basel, in presence of 10 participants, from different doctoral programmes in art, design and art education research. I will introduce the stories we engaged with in sufficient detail to enable a discussion on the way each story articulates the notion of invitation and further speculate on adopting a non-binary thinking tradition and a posthuman understanding of human.

The three scenes that will be introduced in the further text problematize invitation differently, and yet all potentially speak to contemporary experience in terms of protocols, contracts and (social) clues. At the workshop, the participants were invited to brainstorm and tell a story from their research based on the leitmotif in the scene presented. The storying of Plato's Symposium invited articulations on praise, Joseph Beuys exhibition scene invited articulations of an explanation, and CLEAR lab's sample collecting at the fishing wharf scene prompted the participants to speak about methods of search. All accounts were related to participants' research projects. The workshop offered a situated and contextualized way to teach contemporary positions on posthuman, non-human and more-than-human invitation in a non-comprehensive, practical way.

This teaching gesture starts from the intuition that engaging stories can prompt deeper reflection and an affective connection to a concept. Confirming this intuition, there is a sustained interest in the way stories facilitate learning and understanding in educational research. In her introduction to the translation of Jacques Ranciere's *Ignorant Schoolmaster*, Kristen Ross wrote of storytelling as an 'emancipatory method' which presumes an intellectual equality between the teacher and student, between the writer and reader.[25] Canadian scholars Michael Connelly and Jean Clandinin[26] traced the interest in the narrative method of inquiry back to ancient Greek theory, over John Dewey's work on knowledge and experience, to more recent references in the domain of psychology and education such as Donald Polkinghorne (*Narrative Knowing and the Hu-*

man Sciences, 1988) and Lakoff & Johnson (*Metaphors we Live by*, 1980). They explored and documented the use of narrative inquiry for school curricula and relations among teachers and education scholars. With regard to invitation, they highlighted the importance and ethical charge of negotiating the constitution of a situation, a shared narrative unity. An interest in interdisciplinarity, the way concepts travel across disciplines and knowledge they transport, prompted Mieke Bal's cultural analysis of narrative and her proposition for narratology as a method of inquiry.[27]

In practical terms, it has been argued that a story successfully connects macro-facts to our lived experience.[28] As an example from exact sciences, Alistair Martin-Smith developed roleplay and narrative strategies to teach certain aspects of quantum theory.[29] On the artistic side, artist and educator Heather Barnett developed a participatory performance *Being Slime Mould*, which invites groups of people to engage with non-human notions of collective intelligence, following simple principles based on which we understand slime mould to move and search for food.[30]

In *Staying with the Trouble*, Donna Haraway challenged human-centric thinking by interweaving personal experiences and the stories of artists and scholars[31]. Haraway suggested stories can be formative of practices as a tool for creating awareness and a call to action. Education and pedagogy scholar Heather Greenhalgh-Spencer problematized the direct import of Haraway's storytelling in teaching, in the sometimes unreflected aspiration to bring attention to important topics such as ecological harm, when these stories could have a side-effect of blurring the lines between fact and fiction in destructive ways.[32] Specifically interesting for the present discussion on teaching more-than-human invitation is Greenhalgh-Spencer's account of the ways in which she used stories in her classroom. Greenhalgh-Spencer found that integrating factual narratives on electronic waste mismanagement in her classes on the use of technology for educational practice could both create affective connections and desire for change, as well as further entrench negative stereotypes and oppressive discourses around people who are systematically more affected by e-waste. Max Liboiron signalled the slip in directionality of "inviting" versus "being invited" by the kin

as a problematic consequence of assuming privilege and access to such choices. They wrote on the necessity to remaining open to consider both endangered animals as well as plastic toxins our 'kin' when addressing concerns for environmental protection. Similarly, the concern for more-than-human invitation discussed in this article encourages openness to the directionality of invitations and to articulating difference and inclusion through situated, story-based pedagogies.

Praising: On symposium and love

> "Listen then," Eryximachus said. "It was our resolution before you en-tered that each of us in turn, beginning on the left, should make as fair a speech as he could about Eros, and eulogize him. Now all the rest of us have spoken; and since you have not spoken but have drunk up, it is just that you speak. And after your speech prescribe for Socrates whatever you want; and then let him prescribe for him on his right, and so on for the rest."
> Plato, Symposium, 385–370 BC (214c)

The banquet described in Plato's *Symposium*[33] takes place in the house of Ancient Greek poet Agathon in the year 416 BC. Aristodemus, philosopher and a student of Socrates, arrives to the dinner uninvited. Having encountered Socrates by chance, bathed and well dressed, Aristodemus is urged to join him on his way to the dinner party at Agathon's house. Agathon is celebrating the prize he received for his tragedy at the Lenaean festival[34] the previous day. Aristodemus hesitantly accepts to accompany Socrates, who keeps falling behind, lost in thought, and urges Aristodemus to go ahead. As a result, Aristodemus arrives at Agathon's house without Socrates and is welcomed in alone. Socrates is still standing on a neighbour's porch and will not come in until he has finished thinking. When the meal is over, guests are invited to confer to the symposium each giving a discourse. One guest, Eryximachus invites others to present eulogies in praise of Love, starting with Phaedrus, another guest. The discourses they present are on a spectrum of positions

on love. Agathon encourages Socrates to join him on his couch so that he may share in the wisdom. But wisdom, Socrates reminds him, cannot be simply passed on by sitting next to him.

Invited, Included, Interrupted

People who speak at the *symposium*[35] are invited by the host. Michel Serres reminds us that the *Symposium* is an allegory, mimicking the feast of the gods.[36] The guests do not speak as themselves, but with the responsibility to represent a profession. People speak as allegories of their professions, a timeless, secularized form of the divine. They present place-holder positions. The relation of the host and the guests articulates the social contract that characterizes what it means to be human: the one who is able to receive an invitation, even if they failed to do so like Aristodemus, and show up uninvited. By giving a discourse, the guests earn their place at the table. Otherwise, they would act as "parasites", eating next to the host, only taking and giving nothing back. Aristodemus however, did not get to give his discourse because of interruptions and changes in the protocol. Serres' book *The Parasite* can be read as a re-reading of Plato's *Symposium*[37]. In it, Serres offered a series of images of parasitic relations, starting with the country mouse who parasites on the city mouse, who parasites on the tax collector, who parasites on society. While tracing these parasitic chains we must notice the directionality of benefits: city mouse invites the country mouse to admire his lifestyle; the tax collector wants to appear generous by inviting many guests to the table. In reality, every host is always also parasite, Serres demonstrated.

Explaining: On art and dead animals

"The idea of explaining to an animal conveys a sense of the secrecy of the world and of existence that appeals to the imagination... The problem lies in the word 'understanding' and its many levels which cannot be restricted to rational analysis. Imagination, inspiration, intuition and longing all lead people to sense that these other levels

also play a part in understanding. This must be the root of reactions
to this action, and is why my technique has been to try to seek out
the energy points in the human power field, rather than demanding
specific knowledge or reactions on the part of the public"
Joseph Beuys, quoted in Caroline Tisdall, Joseph Beuys, 1979

The Galerie Schmela in Düsseldorf was a small, underground space
where Joseph Beuys performed his avant-garde piece, How to Explain
Pictures to a Dead Hare (German orig. Wie man dem toten Hasen die
Bilder erklärt) in November 1965. Beuys spent three hours explaining
his art to a dead hare. Beuys' head was covered with honey and gold leaf
suggesting access to power and spirituality of these natural elements,
to wisdom but also rebirth. The hare was invited to participate in this
explanation alone. The animal was not alive, but dead. Beuys carried the
animal in his hands, offering it a tour of the show and letting it touch the
paintings. He then sat down and thoroughly explained it all to the dead
animal while holding it carefully in his arms. During the performance,
the audience remained locked outside the gallery where the explanation
takes place. The performance was visible only from the doorway and the
street window.

Knowing, Living, Communicating

The exhibition in Galerie Schmela was Beuys' first exhibition in the art
world context. The present account of the performance is based on art
historians' writing, such as that of Claudia Mesch,[38] Martin Müller[39]
and Gene Ray,[40] Beuys was a controversial West German artist born in
Krefeld, who spent most of his career teaching and practicing art in
Düsseldorf. He became known for propagating the absurd and the irony
with which one must confront the art market, while at the same time
offering a hopeful position towards restoring life and good relations.
The hare was a broader object of Beuys' shamanistic interest in an ani-
mal alter ego, as he was also known to wear a hare foot on the vest and
even rabbit droppings in his pockets. The hare was for Beuys a model of

thinking, connected to myths of invention and writing (Greek Hermes and Roman Mercury) and the Egyptian hieroglyph auxiliary verb 'to be.'

Mesch explicitly theorized the action as a pedagogical method concerned with the desire and metaphor of knowledge. Positioning himself next to an electronic device that resembled a receiver, and then connecting an animal bone to the device, Beuys staged a form of mystical communication powered by the animal itself. For Mesch, this depicts a quest for explanation of the world, to the hare and to himself, in which Beuys establishes a metaphor of knowledge beyond rationality, inclusive even of a (dead) animal.[41] The dead hare is an external organ of humanity.[42]

Searching: On plastic, guts and kin

> "I can never tell what most people mean by kin or Land, especially because both are usually positioned as inherently good (which is weird if you have any experience with family members or weather, to name two obvious manifestations of kin and Land that can be monumentally shitty and even dangerous)."
> Max Liboiron, Pollution is Colonialism, 2021 (p.178)

At a fishing wharf in Newfoundland, recreational fishers were filleting their catch. Members of the CLEAR laboratory from Memorial University of Newfoundland in St. John's were at the wharf too, looking for discarded cod guts to use as samples in their research. Fishers usually discard the guts into the sea at the wharf, because of the legal ban to process cod while at sea. According to his own account, as well as the summary of this experience in Max Liboiron's book *Pollution is Colonialism*[43], Charles Mather, member of CLEAR lab, had a formative experience on complexity of Land relations while attempting to obtain the guts here. While considering these guts, something that will not have any use to humans, the researchers were surprised to encounter a person who was seeking to take the guts for food. Instead of generating data in the lab, the guts were given to this person because they clearly needed them more. Even as an isolated event, this encounter complicated the ethics of sample collec-

tion but also demonstrated the necessity to commit to humility in scientific research practice. It taught Mather, who was paying attention, about the impossibility to take resources and their disposability for granted.

Assimilation, Appropriation and Good Relations

The CLEAR lab's object of research is the presence of plastic in fish guts. The specific engagement of the lab is with methods to measure plastic pollution and act upon it, challenging the focus on permissible emissions which frames pollution and land's assimilative capacity as a manageable phenomenon.[44] Liboiron holds that the very understanding of pollution as "assimilable" carries an extractive relationship to land, which is supposed to serve as a sink for discarded stuff.

But how did pollution get there? Was it invited? Can plastic be our kin? Haraway's take on kin in *Staying with the Trouble* affirms the possibility and urgency of kinship with nonhuman and of collective practices of thinking, making, and copulating.[45] Max Liboiron however, offers a critique of recent claims in social sciences and humanities calling to extend kinship to "nonhumans". These invitations almost always work selectively: "They almost always mean albatross and almost never mean plastics."[46] For Liboiron, who references the work of Aileen Moreton-Robinson and Darryl Leroux, already hinting at the possibility to invite or choose kin instead of being invited by the kin is a sign of Whiteness. Multiple levels of appropriation and domination are at work here: exclusion of plastic as undesirable kin, inclusion of animals as a way to extend the definition of kin and by proxy appropriating the Indigenous term itself. Liboiron characterises this as "rude".

Any act of polluting is at the same time an act of appropriation. Michel Serres wrote about this co-incidence in his book about the ways in which pollution communicates power and hegemony.[47] The world is our host, and we appropriate it by filling the air with fossil fuel emissions, releasing toxicants in water or saturating markets with products we do not need; we turn the world into objects that can be owned, into property. Instead of placing ourselves at the centre, Serres suggests to reserve the centre for things, and consider ourselves within them,

like parasites.[48] While it is important to remember that saying "we" in context of pollution tends to obscure differences in responsibility and access to resources, Serres' proposal could be read as a call to suspended judgement over entitlement. To be a parasite is to live off of the nutrient and energy of the host. Being a parasite and polluting is not the same, but they both manifest in appropriation and subversion of resources, eating the world next to one another.

Associations

Plato's *Symposium* is the first of three images we revisit in terms of invitation. In Ancient Greece, only free, adult men could be explicitly included. It is very hard to relate to the concepts of freedom and inclusion as it was practiced 2500 years ago. In the class at the *Teaching Artistic Strategies* symposium, we tried to recognize these concepts in our current research practices through the original *Symposium* proposition: by giving a short discourse of praise from a professional position. As an exercise, participants were invited to deliver a short account on the appeal their research topics or methods have for them as researchers. They worked in small groups of three to brainstorm and come up with stories. The result was a joint realization of the responsibility when speaking in placeholder terms, holding the place for own research topic and everything that is implied in it. This strictly social endeavour of giving praise in front of others hints at the centredness of praised values in human society.

Reiterating the previous invitation to present a position, the people present in the class were invited to explain the object or topic of their research to each other in pairs. An explanation must remain open to being understood in terms of the other. The dead hare in Beuys' performance was dead and deaf to his words perhaps, but Beuys kept talking. At the same time, the performance setup, in which only the dead animal was invited to attend, rendered the audience deaf to the explanation. The explanation was explicitly and solely meant for the dead hare, it was articulated in dead hare's terms, or rather in terms of how Beuys understood the being of this dead animal. The explanation in Beuys' performance is

intimately linked to invitation as a quality differently realized in the case of the animal and the human audience. In our workshop, explanations invited the participants to adopt the receptive but inaccessible position of the hare, as well as to concentrate on the explanation that is so close to the explainer's knowledge that it moves towards inaccessibility to the listener.

Finally, taking distance from praise and explanation as human-oriented protocols, participants were invited to conceptualize their research as search, and articulate searching methods that would remain sensitive to more-than-human invitation. They worked in groups to reflect on connections and distance they take from their research topic, context, and material conditions. This was specifically based on a critical understanding of kin, and on practicing to pay attention to the myriad of materialities that are entangled in our research topics and methods. The participants presented short accounts on search methods, spelling out what they consider as data (or datum – given) in their research, and critically reflecting on that.

Conclusion

More-than-human invitation requires unsettling and decentring the act of invitation from something that we send out, an extension of subjective desire or individual politeness, to that which is noticed. We increasingly exercise this question on whom or what can be invited in attempts to re-hearse non-anthropocentric ways of worlding, challenge human excep-tionalism and embrace a posthuman perspective. These efforts testify to an increasing interest and necessity to invite and work with more-than-human. Framing these relations in terms of invitation aims to provide critical distancing from the simplification of "kin" against which Max Li-boiron warns.[49] We do not get to choose our kin, they insist, and yet we can pay attention to the relations with both the animals and the plastic animals ingest. In this text, as well as in stories and practices it describes, we exercised to pay attention to the *non-human* by observing the direc-tionality of invitations. The attempt to do this through stories is part of a

method, and intuition, that enables and fosters a shared narrative unity and explores how engaging stories can prompt deeper reflection and an affective connection to the concept of invitation.

Stories, however, are not neutral. Haraway's critique of the doctrine of objectivity positions it as simply a story, one that loses track of its mediation.[50] Haraway also affirmed the way out of such tricks through telling different stories, or storying otherwise.[51] Heather Greenhalgh-Spencer argued for telling the truth with stories, through critical fiction and narrative inquiry. She was sceptical towards Haraway's eliding of differences between facts and fiction. Because climate change is so widely doubted by the US public, she stressed that "There are political implications for creating slippage between fact and fiction."[52] (p. 48) Fiction-induced beliefs are strong and may be persistent even after the reader is given true information. The use of stories in this text aspires to provoke and inspire an affective connection to more-than-human invitation, but distances itself from their "explanation" or such didactics. Rather than turning to something 'other' for instructions and storying otherwise, I suggest that we look at knowledge that is available and close to us and speculate on ways it matters.

Notes

1   Posthumanism and feminist new materialism as discussed here is mainly informed by the work of Rossi Braidotti, Karen Barad, Iris van der Tuin and Felicity Colman. See Rosi Braidotti: "Posthuman, All Too Human: Towards a New Process Ontology," *Theory, Culture & Society* 23, no. 7–8 (December 2006): pp. 197–208, https://doi.org/10.1177/0263276406069232; Karen Barad: *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007); Rick Dolphijn and Iris Van der Tuin: *New Materialism: Interviews and Cartographies* (Open Humanities Press, 2012), https://doi.org/10.3998/ohp.11515701.0001.001; Vera Bühlmann, Felicity Colman, and Iris van der Tuin: "Introduction to New Materialist Genealogies: New Materialisms, Novel Mentalities, Quantum Literacy," *Minesota Reveiw*, no. 88 (2017), https://doi.org/10.1215/00265667-3787378.

2   Post-anthropocentric philosophical frameworks are a vague association of theories that aspire to de-center the human, such as Bruno Latour's ANT or Graham Harman' OOO, with posthumanism as discussed in previous endnote; see Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory*, Clarendon Lectures in Management Studies (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2005). Graham Harman, *Object-Oriented Ontology: A New Theory of Everything*, Pelican Book 18 (London: Pelican Books, 2018).

3   See narratology and cultural analysis, Mieke Bal: *Travelling Concepts in the Humanities: A Rough Guide*, Green College Lectures (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002).

4   See for example Isabelle Stengers: *The Invention of Modern Science*, Theory out of Bounds, v. 19 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000).

5   John Langshaw Austin: *How to Do Things with Words*, Volume 234 of Oxford Paperback, The William James Lectures 1955 (Oxford [Eng.]: Harvard University Press, 1962).

6   Barad: *Meeting the Universe Halfway*.

7   Max Liboiron: *Pollution Is Colonialism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2021).

8   Donna Haraway: *When Species Meet*, Posthumanities 3 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008); Donna Haraway: *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene*, Experimental Futures: Technological Lives, Scientific Arts, Anthropological Voices (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016).

9   Braidotti: "Posthuman, All Too Human"; Rosi Braidotti, *Nomadic Subjects: Embodiment and Sexual Difference in Contemporary Feminist Theory* (Columbia University Press, 2011).

10   The natural philosophy of Michele Serres percolates through his entire oeuvre; two core books for the understanding of nature discussed in this chapter are Michel Serres, *The Parasite*, trans. Lawrence R. Schehr (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982); Michel Serres, *The Natural Contract*, Studies in Literature and Science (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995).

11   Haraway: *Staying with the Trouble*.

12   Bruno Latour: *We Have Never Been Modern* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1993).

13   Harman: *Object-Oriented Ontology*.

14   Levi R. Bryant: *The Democracy of Objects* (Ann Arbor: Open Humanities Press, 2011).

15   Timothy Morton: *Hyperobjects: Philosophy and Ecology after the End of the World*, Posthumanities 27 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013).

16   Michel Serres introduced the Theory of the Quasi-Object in his 1982 book, *The Parasite.*

17   Iris Van der Tuin: "Diffraction as a Methodology for Feminist Onto-Epistemology: On Encountering Chantal Chawaf and Posthuman Interpellation," *Parallax* 20, no. 3 (July 3, 2014): 231–44, https://doi.org/10.1080/13534645.2014.927631.

18   Michel Serres and Bruno Latour: *Conversations on Science, Culture, and Time*, 5. print, Studies in Literature and Science (Ann Arbor, Mich: Univ. of Michigan Press, 2008).

19   The notion of quasi-object and subject pervades Serres' entire work; a clear and specific take can be read in Michel Serres, *Angels. A Modern Myth*, trans. Francis Cowper (Paris: Flammarion, 1995).

20   Bruno Latour: *Aramis, or, The Love of Technology* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1996).

21   Donna Haraway: "A Manifesto for Cyborgs: Science, Technology, and Socialist Feminism in the 1980s," *Australian Feminist Studies* 2, no. 4 (March 1987): 1–42, https://doi.org/10.1080/08164649.1987.99 61538.

22   Haraway: *Staying with the Trouble*.

23   Braidotti: *Nomadic Subjects*; Braidotti: "Posthuman, All Too Human."

24   Stephanie Springgay and Zofia Zaliwska: "Learning to Be Affected: Matters of Pedagogy in the Artists' Soup Kitchen," *Educational Philosophy and Theory* 49, no. 3 (February 23, 2017): pp. 273–83, https://doi.org/10.1080/00131857.2016.1216385.

25   Jacques Rancière: *The Ignorant Schoolmaster: Five Lessons in Intellectual Emancipation* (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 1991). Introduction.

26   F. Michael Connelly and D. Jean Clandinin: "Stories of Experience and Narrative Inquiry," *Educational Researcher* 19, no. 5 (June 1990): 2–14, https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X019005002 listed in footnote 1 on page 12.

27   Mieke Bal: *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative*, 2nd ed (Toronto; Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1997).

28   William Cronon: "A Place for Stories: Nature, History, and Narrative," *The Journal of American History* 78, no. 4 (March 1992): 1347, https://doi.org/10.2307/2079346.

29   Alistair Martin-Smith: "Quantum Drama: Transforming Consciousness through Narrative and Roleplay." *The Journal of Educational Thought* 29 (1995): pp. 34–44.

30   Heather Barnett: "Many-Headed: Co-Creating with the Collective," in *Slime Mould in Arts and Architecture*, ed. Andrew Adamatzky, River Publishers Series in Biomedical Engineering (Denmark: River Publishers, 2019).

31   Haraway: *Staying with the Trouble*.

32   Heather Greenhalgh-Spencer: "Teaching with Stories: Ecology, Haraway, and Pedagogical Practice," *Studies in Philosophy and Education* 38, no. 1 (February 2019): 43–56, https://doi.org/10.1007/s11217-018-9628-1.

33   Plato, *Plato's Symposium*, ed. Allan Bloom, trans. Seth Benardete (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001).

34   The Laenian festival was an annual event in Athens with a dramatic competition.

35   In the tradition of ancient Greece, the symposium was the key social institution, a forum for men of respected families to debate and discuss.

36   Michel Serres: *The Five Senses: A Philosophy of Mingled Bodies (I)* (London; New York: Continuum, 2009); Serres, *The Parasite*.

37   Vera Bühlmann: *Mathematics and Information in the Philosophy of Michel Serres*, Michel Serres and Material Futures (Bloomsbury Academic, 2020).

38   Claudia Mesch, *Joseph Beuys*: Critical Lives (London: Reaktion Books, 2017); Claudia Mesch and Viola Maria Michely, eds., *Joseph Beuys: The Reader* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2007).

39   Martin Müller: *Wie man dem toten Hasen die Bilder erklärt: Schamanismus und Erkenntnis im Werk von Joseph Beuys* (Kromsdorf: Verlag und Datenbank für Geisteswissenschaften – VDG Weimar, 1993).

40   Gene Anthony Ray, ed.: *Joseph Beuys: Mapping the Legacy* (New York: D.A.p., 2001).

41   Mesch: *Joseph Beuys*.

42   Ray: *Joseph Beuys*, 110.

43   Liboiron: *Pollution Is Colonialism*.

44   Liboiron.

45   Haraway: *Staying with the Trouble*.

46   Liboiron: *Pollution Is Colonialism*, 196, footnote 101.

47   Michel Serres: *Le mal propre: polluer pour s'approprier?*, Nouvelle éd., Poche le Pommier (Paris: Éd. le Pommier, 2012).

48   Serres: *The Natural Contract*.

49   Liboiron: *Pollution Is Colonialism*.

50   Donna Haraway: "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective," *Feminist Studies* 14, no. 3 (1988): 575, https://doi.org/10.2307/3178066.

51   Haraway: *Staying with the Trouble*.

52   Greenhalgh-Spencer: "Teaching with Stories," p. 48.