

EDITORIAL

UNDERSTANDING EMERGING FROM INTER- SPECIES RELATIONS: HORSES, PIGS, INSECT HOTELS, PEAT BOGS IN ARTISTIC PRACTICES, INQUIRIES AND PROCESSES OF BECOMING TO UNDERSTAND IN RESEARCH-WRITING

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This thematic issue of *Research in Arts and Education* focuses on exploring research with species other than humans. In the original call, my co-editor Helena Sederholm and I named animals, plants, lichen, moss, and fungi as possible others, or rather partners with whom the artistic and arts-based research could be carried out. The first volume of this special issue was published in 2022. Almost a year later, we publish this second volume that has a particular emphasis on the contradictory, paradoxical relations humans have with other species, the natural processes that are part of human life as well as the conflicting and exploitative relations humans have built with particular species or places. The authors focus on personally built relationships and encounters with individual living or dead animals, while other authors bring attention to and investigate culturally built notions and contradictory practices that have become normative, dominant practices or perceptions. These articles and visual essays are characterized by posthumanist and postmaterialist orientations and although their strategies and approaches for research and art practices vary, their orientation can be characterized to be driven by exploratory criticality as well as deep reflection guided by sensitivity to arts and other epistemic traditions. As such, they are deeply involved in modes of increasing understanding with and through art.

The essays and articles in this thematic issue use video and audio recordings as well as the interplays of both; artworks created by authors themselves or others; and documentations of artistic practices in combination with interdisciplinary and intersectional theoretical contemplations to generate new understandings that might just otherwise remain implied or unworded. I argue that this processual coming-to-know research orientation characterizes one of the most significant values and contributions that postqualitative research processes can offer, as the authors in this issue not only present what they have learnt, but also allow us to experience these processes of regenerating renewed understanding together with them. Rather than offering solutions, they invite us to experience the presented paradoxical relations infused with emotions, feelings, and reactions resonating in our bodies.

The contributions to this special issue deal with essential questions pertaining to ontology and epistemology, raise questions concerning interspecies ethics and aim to understand most foundational elements of human life, such as our relationship with our own death or the killing of others.

The contributions present different approaches to art and artistic ways of being in/with/through research, which simultaneously entails being in relationship with one another or with others. The authors' and artists' contributions are intersectional in their approach. Although the contributions in this issue draw their themes and/or foci on particular species or individuals of a species, their connection to other themes and topics are prominent and lead to re-evaluating human ethics within the drastic changes now commonly acknowledged, such as discrimination of others, zoonoses, or climate crisis.

It is a notable connection between these articles how the authors are driven to explore and test prior ways of being and understanding. Both individually and as a collection, they assume a critical stance, directly or indirectly critiquing and confronting normative, disabling, harmful, and abusive human behavior, attitudes, and cultural norms. They are a collective call to perceive and see anew. Morag Colquhoun and Mari-Keski-Korsu have worked with particular horses with whom they are familiar, while Raisa Foster and Lauri Asanti do not identify the individual bird or a pig whose decomposing remains are placed at the center of their theoretical and ethical exploration of human-animal relations and humans' relations with death. Whilst some authors work with identified individuals, others do not, or they approach their topics with a broad-to-specific focus, all authors communicate a sustained and personal *relationship of care and passion for forming and articulating interspecies ethical relationships*.

Although Haraway (2008, 2016) is the most commonly cited author of this issue, I propose that critical animal studies is another relevant lens through which the reader could approach these texts (e.g., Aaltola & Ketola, 2015; Hakala, 2022, Kallio-Tavin, 2019; Nocella II, Sorenson, Socha & Matsuoka, 2014; Nocella II, George & Lupinacci, 2019)—even if the more specific goals of this framework, such as liberation of animals, is not explicitly articulated by the authors. It is clear, for example in the texts authored by Asanti, Keski-Korsu, and Colquhoun, that horses are not seen as mere representatives of their species or solely from human perspective, but as individuals or herds of individuals whose entanglements in human lives deserve and obligate a careful and ethically considerate study. Rather than focusing on interspecies integrity or liberation from human dominance, there is a *persistent curiosity* that seems to drive the authors' processes of coming to know, to understand, and

to communicate these understandings in a more layered manner than a solely text-based research text would do. Thus, I am inclined to credit the intentional and necessary presence of arts for this atmosphere and the authors' ability to successfully sustain their honest curiosity, weighing equally in the presented processes with a deeper sense of ethical responsibility and criticality.

Arts-based and artistic pedagogy of responsibility and care: While only Colquhoun's text directly addresses pedagogy and arts education, there is an underlying ethics and responsibility-driven contemplation that sustains throughout this thematic issue, making it easy to argue that epistemic and pedagogical inquiries have been constant companions, directly or indirectly, in authors' practices. Also, all the authors are joined in their curious, mutually investigative approach; they are not just studying the other but targeting most of their critical contemplation toward themselves while showing intrigue, care, and compassion for the other. This orientation communicates a deeper level of care and responsibility not just for one's actions as an artist and a researcher but overall. It also communicates a level of respect: Whereas pedagogical research sometimes seeks to discover the 'subject' or its dispositions, the authors' bi-focused or divergently focused inquiries demonstrate that research is not about the other but rather with the other. This resonates with ethically focused epistemic inquiries and pedagogies of responsibility in their quests for new or altered ways of being in relation with others. Through altering one's self to these direct or indirect relations, it becomes possible to see and understand things (a bit) anew. In their article, Foster discusses the notion of "ecosocialization" (Keto & Foster, 2021), whereas Ljokkoi's text could be read as contemplating public pedagogy. Also, Pusa, Haapalainen, and Sederholm's text could be easily adopted to demonstrate engagement and interest/inquiry-driven, arts-based, or thematical pedagogical processes. Perhaps it is my tendency to intentionally seek pedagogical potential in each contribution, but I would argue that while not openly stated, there is a strong pedagogical current running through the articles included in this issue.

The thematic issue is composed of roughly two types of contribution. The first four visual essays and articles utilize personal involvement with artistic processes. The authors elaborate on how their processes are entangled with interdisciplinary or intersectional theories and test out different approaches for redefining ontological and epistemological understandings that aim at

renegotiating their personal or interspecies relations more broadly towards an increasingly holistic ethical research orientation. The issue concludes with articles by Ljokkoi and Pusa, Haapalainen, and Sederholm, which in turn demonstrate how complicated issues embedded in different aspects and sectors of society are explored in relation to art and arts/DYI traditions.

Morag Colquhoun opens this thematic issue with an article-length visual essay, "Amantes (Lovers): Investigating Autonomy, Autopoiesis, and Polyrhythm with Horses" that investigates how horses as well as the author collectively and individually respond to the Afro-Cuban son clave rhythmic pattern Colquhoun creates by tapping the rhythms with clave sticks. Colquhoun explores the notion of autopoiesis and shared experiences of rhythm and contemplates the spontaneous relational dynamics between them. Mari Keski-Korsu's "Together to Know: In Search for Equus Spiritual Experience" looks into the possibility of different spiritual experiences, in this case, horses' spiritual or relational experiences, by using a video recording of horses interacting with their reflections in the mirror in the pasture, further contemplating on horses' experiences of self-awareness and their relationships with others.

Lauri Asanti's artistic and philosophical essay "Grounding the Predicament and the Possibility to Re-Orient, Unknown Pig" investigates relational ontology as a counter-approach to speciesism. Asanti questions the digestive habits of humans and the exploitation of animals for human consumption by juxtaposing a video of a decomposing pig's head and an audio recording of a child reading a text Asanti has written. Asanti calls themselves and the readers to carefully study the decomposing animal while listening to the narration as an invitation to examine cruelty towards animals. In "The Living Dying Body: Arriving at the Awareness of All Life's Interdependencies through a Video Artwork," Raisa Foster explores how artistic and theoretical study of death and dying may help humans to form connections and a sense of belonging to the more than human world as well as to learn to live acknowledging interspecies interdependencies.

In their article, "Worlding in an Insect Hotel," Kristiina Ljokkoi explores how humans intervene in the lives of insects and their environments by building habitats for them. While we are accustomed to humans inserting order and control in, for example, their pets' lives, we are perhaps less familiar with the complexities of humans' well-intended and

caring, but often misguided interventions on other species' lives. Ljokkoi presents a critical study of the popular practice of constructing DIY insect hotels that has gained popular and commercial attention in many countries; a practice that plays with a human need for care but is often carried out without comprehensive understanding of its unforeseen impacts.

Tiina Pusa, Riikka Haapalainen, and Helena Sederholm conclude this thematic issue by taking a deep and contemplative look at connections between peat bogs and their cultural and societal significance in their article "In The Bogs of Joukahainen and Väinämöinen – The Alchemies of Peat from Sacred to Profane and Back." The article presents a process of active, performative meaning-making with and through culturally significant places, traditions, the national epic *Kalevala*, and artworks from different time periods. Notably, Pusa, Haapalainen, and Sederholm focus on peat bogs that have often been overlooked for their rich metaphoric history and cultural significance, and by doing so, they manage to touch upon major cultural and historical phenomena that have influenced the developments of Finnish culture, policy making, and politics related to complicated problems such as the environmental crisis and the use of natural resources.

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