

Repeat, Revisit, Recreate—Two Times Year of the Horse

ABSTRACT

The popularity of various re-makes, re-constructions and re-enactments has been much discussed in recent years. In traditional performance art, however, repetition is mostly shunned. The fascination with returning to classical performance art pieces could be understood in terms of nostalgia for the avant-garde as a historical phenomenon, the radical gestures of which we can only rehearse with a historical interest for want of any real innovation or critical force in the current situation. But what about revisiting one's own work? Is that not the ultimate evidence of total stagnation, even stultification of what might have remained of a critical impetus?

This paper does not discuss the topic of re-performance in principle, but approaches the issue from a personal perspective related to a specific artistic research project, recreating *Year of the Horse* (2003) twelve years later, by performing *Year of the Horse—Calendar 1-2* (2015). By revisiting blog posts documenting the project this text tries to shed light on the process of repetition, to demonstrate the multi-directional and dispersed character an artistic research process can assume, and to find possible threads to follow in the future. Thus repeating and revisiting are strategies and methods for both this study and the work discussed.

ANNETTE ARLANDER

Annette Arlander is an artist, researcher and a pedagogue, one of the pioneers of Finnish performance art and a trailblazer of artistic research. At present she is Visiting Professor at Stockholm University of the Arts. Educated as a theatre director (1981), with an MA from Helsinki University and a DA from Theatre Academy, Helsinki (1999), she was Professor of Performance Art and Theory 2001-2013, creating the MA programme in Live Art and Performance Studies, the first Head of the Performing Arts Research Centre (Tutke) 2007-2009, and Professor of Artistic Research 2015-2016 at the Theatre Academy Helsinki. Her research interests include artistic research, performance-as-research, site-specificity and the environment. Her artwork involves performing landscape by means of video or recorded voice, moving between performance art, video and environmental art. For publications see <https://annettearlander.com>.

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

2. Arsem, Marilyn. *Manifesto - THIS Is Performance Art*. Infracrion, Venice 2011. <http://infracrionvenice.org/this-is-performance-art.html> (Accessed 2011-06-24).

3. Marina Abramović. *Seven Easy Pieces*. 9-15 November 2005. Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum <http://pastexhibitions.guggenheim.org/abramovic/> (Accessed 2016-04-08).

4. Marina Abramović. *The Artist is Present*. 14 March-31 May 2010. <http://www.moma.org/calendar/exhibitions/964?locale=en> (Accessed 2016-04-08).

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

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

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

8. Ibid, pp. 13-15.

THE POPULARITY OF VARIOUS FORMS OF RE-MAKES, re-constructions and re-enactments has been much discussed in recent years, for instance in the anthology *Perform, Repeat, Record—Live Art in History*.¹ In traditional performance art, however, repetition is mostly shunned.² The recent fascination with returning to classical performance art pieces could be understood in terms of a nostalgia for the avant-garde as a historical phenomenon, the radical gestures of which we can only rehearse with a historical interest, for want of any real innovation or critical force in the current situation. But what about revisiting one's own work? Is that not the ultimate evidence of total stagnation, even stultification of what might have remained of a critical impetus? Recreations like for example Marina Abramović's *Seven Easy Pieces*,³ or the performances of her iconic works from 1970s by younger artists in her exhibition *The Artist is Present*⁴ can be defended as attempts at transmitting experiential knowledge of important works otherwise lost to a younger generation; as a way to promote the understanding of performance art among a larger public; or dismissed as purely commercial or canonising gestures. Some feminist critics contend, however, that the practice of re-staging performance works is crucial in engaging with issues surrounding the politics of representation, since "retracing repudates the notion of masculine genius locked into a linear structure of constant innovation, progression and advancement" and "questions what has been omitted from the dominant canon of modernist discourse".⁵

This paper is not discussing the topic of recreation or re-performance in principle, but approaches the issue from a personal and practical perspective related to a specific artistic research project. The aim is to describe repetition in the context of recreating a previous work by revisiting the same site in order to document changes taking place in the landscape, that is, the experience of recreating the first work in the series *Animal Years* called *Year of the Horse* (2003) and performing *Year of the Horse—Calendar 1-2* (2015) as an epilogue to the series. The whole project is briefly described in another context.⁶ By revisiting blog posts documenting the last part of the project, the text will follow the structure of a research diary, a calendar, resembling the way in which the artwork was produced. Returning to these notes I hope to shed light on the process of repetition, to demonstrate the multidirectional and dispersed character that an artistic research process can assume, and to find possible threads to follow in the future. Thus repeating and revisiting are strategies and methods both for the work discussed and for this study. Before focusing on my example, a few words about different approaches to repetition and re-creation in performance.

Repetition, Recreation and Performance

In the introduction to their anthology *Performing Archives / Archives of Performance* Gunhild Borggreen and Rune Gade note how these two seemingly contrasting concepts are increasingly blurred: "New ways of understanding archives, history, and memory emerge and address theories of enactment and intervention, while concepts

of performance constantly proliferate and enable a critical focus on archival residue.”⁷ Starting with Richard Schechners’ understanding of performances as actions, Marvin Carlson’s observation that performance as a metaphor has moved scholarly focus from the “what” to the “how” of culture, and Jon McKenzies’ claim that performance is today not only an analytical tool but also a disciplinary instrument (“perform, or else”), they rehearse the debate concerning the ontology of performance with regards to documentation. Since Peggy Phelan’s well-known claim in 1993 that performance’s only life is in the present, and performance’s being becomes itself through disappearance, various responses have criticised and complicated this ontology, including Philip Auslander, who deconstructs the opposition between live and mediated forms, and Rebecca Schneider, who maintains that archives disappear as well, while performances do remain and form bodily techniques of remembering.⁸ Following Diana Taylor, who, in her influential discussion of the archive and the repertory, politicises the idea of considering performances as ephemeral, they note the need to “take seriously the repertoire of embodied practices as an important system of knowing and transmitting knowledge.”⁹

Another aspect they refer to is the increasing popularity of practice as a methodology: “Parts of performance studies known as PaR (Performance as Research) use creative practice as a methodological approach in its own right, and thus emphasize a mutual response between doing and knowing in the scholarly process.”¹⁰ In passing they mention that “[r]evisiting a performance is also relevant for artists who may wish to reflect on their own performance in order to evaluate and sharpen key issues, or consult other artists’ works for consumption, inspiration, or collaboration”,¹¹ an observation relevant for the concerns of this text. For them “there is not only a close relationship between research and performance—since many scholars are practising artists themselves, and many artists engage in critical theorising about the way in which they do or perform—but also because the distinct categories of artwork and research can no longer be upheld.”¹² As scholars they stress “[i]n-depth knowledge of what is conceived as the ‘original’ performance” as “a pre-requisite for reenactments, whether in battle reenactments as part of Living History, or in artistic reenactments of one’s own or others’ performance artworks of the past.”¹³ Reconstructing, or rather recreating a historical work based on remaining sketches, descriptions and fragments can be a way to better understand the work, and to investigate one’s artistic legacy, although it will necessarily result in an interpretation, as we realised when creating a reconstruction of the futurist opera *Victory over the Sun* in Helsinki in 1988.¹⁴ In the case at hand knowledge of the “original” was of less importance, since there was no attempt at exact reconstruction, while revisiting the same site was crucial.

In music and theatre the idea of re-enactment or recreation is perhaps of less importance, since the work is supposed to live on in the script. In art forms less reliant on notation, like dance and live art, re-enactments are often legitimised with archival aims or outreach; how else to keep the works alive and share them with new generations? With canonical works questions of “fidelity” to the original can become a

9. Taylor, quoted in Borggreen and Gade, p. 15.

10. Borggreen and Gade, p. 12.

11. Ibid.

12. Ibid.

13. Ibid.

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

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

16. Ibid.

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

18. Widrich, Mechtild. Can Photographs Make it So? Repeated Outbreaks of VALIE EXPORT'S Genital Panic Since 1969. In Jones and Heathfield, pp. 98-100.

19. Arsem.

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

concern. In general, scores are open structures for interpretation, as are theatre plays or musical compositions. For instance, regarding Fluxus event scores, which anyone can perform from the notation, “[t]he artist gives birth to the piece, but the interpreter gives it its voice.”¹⁵ The distinction between a musical and a painterly sensibility in understanding events can be useful in understanding recreations as well:

*Performance art is signature art: the creator does it, and without the artist, the work is no longer itself. Only Beuys can have done a Beuys performance. The same is generally true of happenings: only Vostell can have done a Vostell happening. And of those Fluxus artists like Knizak or Higgins who created happenings as well as events, their event scores are open to all, but their happenings were essentially restricted to creation under their personal guidance.*¹⁶

Thus performance art is painterly rather than musical; it cannot be re-interpreted and performed in the same way as musical works or theatre plays. Many happenings, however, share the problems of transmitting a form through a script with traditional forms of choreography, as Andre Lepecki has pointed out in describing his redoing of Allan Kaprow's *18 happenings in 6 parts*.¹⁷ With performance art the question can arise as to what actually is re-enacted—the description of an event, the photograph of it, or perhaps a rumour, as in the case of Marina Abramović re-performing Valie Export's Genital Panic as part of her Seven Easy Pieces.¹⁸

The text “Manifesto—THIS Is Performance Art” written by Marilyn Arsem in January 2011, in conjunction with Infr'Action Venezia, is an example of the critical attitude towards re-enactments among many “old-school” performance artists. The text is “conceived for a time when performance art's true and intrinsic qualities are being confused by notions of live art and re-enactment, and is drowning in the unclear matter of its opposite: the staged, the theatrical, the spectacle.” The main headings are strong claims: performance art is now, performance art is real, performance art requires risk, performance art is not an investment object, performance art is ephemeral. There is a clear statement concerning re-enactments: “Re-enactment of historical work is theater, not performance art.” Moreover, all archiving of past performances is questioned: “The record of performance art resides in the bodies of the artist and the witnesses.”¹⁹ This manifesto is written by an artist respected by the international performance art community, which probably shares many of its views.

As a contrasting example, Anthony Howell, one of the forerunners of British Live Art, considers repetition as a key term in his theory of performance art; repetition is one of the primaries of action, together with stillness and inconsistency. Mimicry is for him one form of repetition, often related to representational theatre, while copying is another, which not only mimics, but also multiplies the original. Representation is a conscious repetition; representational theatre is a theatre of the conscious mind, while performance art is an art of the unconscious, Howell maintains, referring to Gilles Deleuze, who considers repetition to be the unconscious of representation.

There is “an inverse relation between repetition and consciousness, repetition and remembering, repetition and recognition.”²⁰ Freud assumed that we repeat because we repress, and later suggested the death instinct was connected with repetition, as a psychic equivalent to gravity.²¹ According to Howell, repetition is associated with obsession, which is “a method for salvaging comfort in a painful situation”,²² although “[r]epetition may seem to annul the progress of time by constantly returning us to the scene of some previous experience, as if one trod water in the river of life.”²³ Life is maintained by repetitions, like the heartbeat, the breath, sleeping, eating, walking and so on. Moreover, “repetition can confer value by maintaining that some particular act is noble enough to merit being repeated.”²⁴ This is relevant in the context of re-creations as well.

21. Ibid, p. 37.

22. Ibid, p. 30.

23. Ibid, p. 36.

24. Ibid, p. 37.

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



1. *Year of the Horse-start-2002-a.* (video still)



2. *Year of the Horse-start-2002-b.* (video still)



*3. Year of the Horse-start-
2014-a. (video still)*



*4. Year of the Horse-start-
2014-b. (video still)*

Two Times Year of the Horse

In the year 2002 I decided to document changes in the environment by visiting the same place on Harakka Island, in Helsinki, performing for camera approximately once a week for an entire year, which resulted in the video *Year of the Horse* (2003) [see images 1 and 2]. This led to a series of works called *Animal Years* (2003–2014), twelve one-year projects based on the Chinese calendar performed and videoed on the same island.²⁵ To accentuate the idea of cyclical return I decided to revisit the place where I began again in 2014, this time only once a month. Thus I sat on the same rock, with the same scarf, albeit in front of a new camera and with new image proportions, once a month to create *Year of the Horse—Calendar 1–2* (2015) [see images 3 and 4]. I also wrote blog notes after each session.

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

Take the same scarf and return to the same site.
Place the camera in the same spot and choose the same framing.
Perform the same action in front of the camera.
Repeat this procedure once a week for a year.
Repeat the same procedure the following year in another place on the island.
Choose another scarf, another spot for the camera, another action or gesture to repeat.

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

25. I have discussed the project for instance in Arlander, *Performing Landscape for Years*, pp. 27–31.

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

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

28. I have discussed the work in Tuulikaide—Eräänlainen alku / Wind Rail—Sort of a Beginning. *Ruukku—Studies in Artistic Research*. no. 1. 2013. <http://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/42484/42634/53> (Accessed 2016-04-12).

have chosen two or more actions to repeat and more than one place to return to. The camera position, too, tends to shift, despite my efforts to keep it constant. *Animal Years* is all about repetition. Perhaps we could call it a refrain, even an existential refrain.²⁶ “The symptom through its own repetitiveness functions as an existential refrain.”²⁷ Discussing that would be another story.

Recreating an Image after Twelve Years

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

When I first took an interest in recording the changes taking place in the landscape by returning regularly to the same place and placing my video camera on a tripod in the same spot, attempting to keep the same framing and entering the image to the same position I worked for a few weeks, sometimes twice a day. To focus on the seasonal changes rather than changes in light and weather, and thus more specifically on time, I decided to record one full year, approximately once a week. And I chose the easiest place possible, the stairs on the slope towards southwest just outside my studio on Harakka Island, off Helsinki. And to have some tension in the image, I chose two positions, one very close to the camera, hiding half of the view with my shoulder, and another further away in the landscape, sitting on a rounded boulder next to the path. This was actually an exaggeration of the two different versions in a work called Windrail II,²⁸ where I explored the difference between guiding the viewers gaze into the landscape or posing as the central figure embedded in the landscape. In this exaggerated version the human figure is literally blocking the view in the first version, and so small as to be hardly discernible in the second.

This was more than twelve years ago, in 2002. To return to the same place after twelve years would certainly be more dramatic were I not walking on that same path almost on a weekly basis. To try to recreate a version of the first year of weekly repetitions as a monthly calendar is actually a way of softening the shock of coming to the end of this project, which has occupied me fairly regularly for twelve years. It is also a way of closing the cycle, as it were. So one day in brilliant sunshine, I decided the moment was right for creating the February image and start the remake. I remember the first image of the Year of the Horse, with the sun sending two dazzling swords to hit the snowy ground. By the time I stood in front of the camera twelve years later the sky was cloudy with a soft pinkish hue although there were several hours to go before sunset. My camera was different, too. Originally I used simple DV and a 4:3 image, while I now worked with HD and a 9:16 image. The dark blue scarf was the same, and so was

*the rock I was sitting on. The only notable difference in the landscape was the small windmill, fastened with wires to the ground, and I deliberately framed the image to include a part of it, to show some change. I remember being very unhappy about the framing of the original image later in the first year, since the rail of the wooden stairs is visible in a monitor, although the camera screen would not show it. So this time I was careful to leave the horizon low, to be on the safe side.*²⁹

The day I started my recreation, *Helsingin Sanomat*, the main local newspaper, used the trope of showing an old photo with a contemporary picture of the same place, to commemorate the bombing of Helsinki on 6 February in 1944. Compared to such dramatic demonstrations of time passing, my documentation of changes in the landscape is modest. Tapio Heikkilä has developed a technique for visual monitoring of cultural landscapes, which could be useful for further developing this practice. He recommends, for instance, choosing some of the vantage points in advance on a map, photographing the landscape in four directions, adding other viewpoints if needed, returning to take photos from exactly the same spots and directions in predetermined years, and using a camera at 200–250 cm level with a tilt of 5 degrees downwards,³⁰ which resembles the height I used by accident in these first and last images, due to the hill.

Re-creation and Repetition in March

*My attempt at re-creating "Year of the Horse" (2002) on Harakka Island in 2014, albeit once a month rather than once a week, was almost stranded before it started due to unlucky circumstances. During my first session, in the first days of February, snow covered the island and most of the sea as well. The winter was exceptionally short, and the ice soon turned unreliable to walk on or impossible to row through. In mid March when the sea was finally open for boats, I was away travelling. In order to continue the "calendar" I finally made it to the island at the end of March. The jump between the first two images is thus almost two months rather than one month. There was no more snow in sight, only a few remains by the rocks on the northern shore. The first sounds of birds filled the air and the sun felt warm, like spring.*³¹

Kirsten Pullen discusses the many re-creations of Beyoncé's *Single Ladies* on YouTube, viewed by millions, and suggests that performance studies scholars should not only use YouTube for examples in teaching, as consumers, but to participate as producers too.³² Re-creation is a kind of repetition relevant for artistic research, as Mark Fleishman notes in "The Difference of Performance as Research".³³ For him performance-as-research

is a process of creative evolution. It is not progressivist, building towards a finality; nor is it mechanistic in the sense that it knows what it is searching for before it begins searching. It begins with energy... that is then channelled, durationally, through

29. Posted 2014-02-07. <http://annettearlander.com/2014/02/07/recreating-an-image-after-twelve-years/> (Accessed 2016-04-12).

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

31. Posted 2014-03-31. <http://annettearlander.com/2014/03/31/march/> (Accessed 2016-04-12).

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

33. Fleishman, Mark. The Difference of Performance as Research. *Theatre Research International* 37, no. 1. March 2012. pp. 28–37.

34. Ibid., p. 34.

35. Posted 2014-04-15.
<http://annettearlander.com/2014/04/15/intra-acting-with-geese-grass-and-wind/> (Accessed 2016-04-12).

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

37. Ibid, p. 234.

38. Ibid, p. 235.

39. Ibid.

40. Arlander, Annette. From interaction to intra-action in performing landscape. In *New feminist materialism: engendering an ethic-onto-epistemological methodology*. Beatriz Revelles Benavente, Ana M. Ramos González, Krizia Nardini, (eds.). *Artnodes*. no. 14. 2014. pp. 26-34. <http://journals.uoc.edu/index.php/artnodes/article/download/n14-revelles-gonzalez-nardini/n14-full-node-en> (Accessed 2016-03-31).

*repetition, in variable and indeterminable directions... It expresses itself through a repeated, though flexible and open-ended, process of ontogenesis.*³⁴

Fleishman suggests that repetition is a way of slowing down in order to see the differences, in order to feel and live the intervals between the stable points of action. I completely agree; in creating a performance it is as if repeating things is the only way to become aware of what actually takes place. But what about revisiting old works, old places, old strategies for performing landscape? What is the difference, and is there a difference that matters? These questions haunted me at the start of the project, although I soon abandoned them as unproductive. Working with repetition can take many forms.

Intra-acting with Geese and Grass in April

*A short visit to a windy Harakka Island for the April session revealed a familiar landscape. The surroundings looked almost the same as at the end of March, with one audible difference; the birds had arrived. Not only were the seagulls sitting in pairs on the cliffs, screaming every now and then of the sheer joy of spring, but two geese couples were strutting on the slopes of the old fortifications, trying to find something green to eat among the dry grass of last year. When more of them have arrived and started nesting, standing on the path on the hill is like a dangerous adventure; the birds will be fiercely protecting their territories from intruders, and humans make no exceptions.*³⁵

During that time I was struggling with Karen Barad's important book *Meeting the Universe Halfway*,³⁶ trying to understand what agential realism might mean in practice. Building further on the explorations of Foucault and Butler, Barad insists that the forces at work in the materialisation of bodies are not only social and the materialised bodies are not all human. "According to agential realism, causality is neither a matter of strict determinism nor one of free will" she writes, "intra-actions iteratively reconfigure what is possible and what is impossible—possibilities do not sit still."³⁷ Barad explains: "The world's effervescence, its exuberant creativeness can never be contained or suspended. Agency never ends; it can never 'run out'. The notion of intra-action reformulates the traditional notions of causality and agency in an ongoing reconfiguring of both the real and the possible."³⁸ Barad emphasises that agency is a matter of intra-acting, an enactment rather than something somebody or something has. "Particular possibilities for (intra-) acting exist at every moment" and they "entail an ethical obligation to intra-act responsively in the world's becoming, to contest and rework what matters and what is excluded from mattering."³⁹ Her notion of intra-action, instead of interaction, which assumes that the entities interacting pre-exist the interaction, is fascinating; intra-action suggests that bodies or agents or subjects are created through intra-actions.

Later that year I wrote an article on intra-action⁴⁰ trying to understand the concept in relation to another work in the same series, *Year of the Snake*. The notion of intra-action changes our understanding of our relationship to the environment. Bodies are not simply situated or located in particular environments; rather, environments and bodies are intra-actively co-constituted. “Bodies (‘human’, ‘environmental’ or otherwise) are integral ‘parts’ of, or dynamic reconfigurings of, what is”.⁴¹ The relationship between “bodies” and “environment” becomes obvious when working with video imagery. The idea of intra-action as constitutive is easier to understand, because the elements in the image are produced by the intra-action of “measuring agencies” like the camera, the tripod, the framing of the image, and “objects” like the cliff, the sea, the tree, the stub, the swing and the performer.

Exposition of Artistic Research in May

*When the sun suddenly appeared after several rainy days I rushed out on the slope above the fortifications to record the May session of the remake of the Year of the Horse. I reacted as if the subtle green of the small birches on the cliffs would immediately turn into ordinary foliage consequent to the light. The wind from southwest was freezing cold, so no risk.*⁴²

In “Integrating the Exposition into Music-Composition Research” Hans Roels presents the idea of the open sketch as an exposition form and a research tool, which could be transposed to other art forms as well. Roels emphasises the unfinished character of the sketch, which is deliberately created to investigate a research topic and is performed and discussed by an invited critical audience. It differs from a finished complex composition by being focused on a specific problem and perhaps allowing some emotional distance as well.⁴³ I immediately associated my blog posts with open sketches as expositions. Perhaps one would expect a research exposition to be more planned, more focused and analytical than monthly blog notes, which seem like field notes, observations, material to be analysed later. If we understand the word exposition literally, however, I was indeed exposing my artistic practice and research in the making; the investigation of the effects of a time-lapse of twelve years was presented as open sketches made public.

Practicing Embodied Cognition in June

*Standing on the hill in front of the camera and walking down to sit on the rock below the slope, during the session in June, made me aware of the small windmill again. It is the only feature in the environment that has visibly changed since I sat on the same rock once a week for a year twelve years ago. At that time I was interested in recording the seasonal changes in the environment during one year. Now my focus is on changes that have taken place during these years in between.*⁴⁴

41. Barad, p. 170.

42. Posted 2014-05-11. <http://annettearlander.com/2014/05/11/exposition-of-artistic-research-in-may/> (Accessed 2016-04-12).

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

44. Based on a note posted 2014-06-21. <http://annettearlander.com/category/year-of-the-horse-remake/> (Accessed 2016-04-12).

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

46. *Ibid.*, p. 61.

47. *Ibid.*, p. 60.

48. Posted 2014-07-14. <http://annettearlander.com/2014/07/14/returning-to-the-rock-in-july/> (Accessed 2016-04-12).

49. See <http://psi-artistic-research-working-group.blogspot.fi> (Accessed 2016-04-12).

50. See <http://www.av-arkki.fi/en/works/year-of-the-horse-sitting-on-a-rock/> (Accessed 2016-04-12).

51. See <http://www.av-arkki.fi/en/works/sitting-on-a-rock-rock-with-text/> (Accessed 2016-04-12).

52. The blog post *Istun kivellä sateessa* [Sitting on a rock in rain] is written in Finnish <http://annettearlander.com/2014/06/23/istun-kivella-sateessa/> (Accessed 2016-04-12).

The environment could be understood as an example of the excluded middle, as discussed by Jondi Keane in “Æffect: Initiating Heuristic Life”.⁴⁵ According to Keane a new materialism must be built on the subtle difference initiated by embodied reality sensitive to affects and prompted by atmospheric intricateness. His notion *Æffect* is “a relational/corelational tool devised to help one learn how to negotiate the material processes of self-organisation.”⁴⁶ Practising embodied cognition, or distributing the mind throughout the body and into the environment, means “first, the recognition of the role of the environment in the co-selection of the organism-person-surround”, that is, “cognition as perception and action”, and “second the role of abstract relationships in the coordination of the organism-person-surround”, that is, “cognition as attention, emphasis, and the production of value-based distinctions”.⁴⁷ The role of the environment, the organism-person-surround, was evident while sitting on the rock among small birches bending in the wind and geese walking around followed by their young when I was performing for camera in 2014. Rather than observing and reflecting I was engaging in actions in order to perceive, focusing my attention on some parts of the environment, putting more emphasis and value on some aspects, intent on noticing changes since my last visit. The camera, however, does not make the same distinctions but registers the familiar and the surprising with the same intensity. By using its automatic functions for choice of light balance and focus an impersonal approach and some constancy is maintained. Moreover, the agency of the technology and the environmental conditions it reacts to are acknowledged.

Returning to the Rock in July

*Revisiting the same rock on Harakka Island as a kind of re-enactment, felt like a relaxed return home after a trip to Shanghai in China. /--/ Sitting on the same rock on the island again, knowing that the second half of the year is still in front of me, feels both strange and familiar at the same time, like engaging with the remains of some ancient practice that does not really belong to me or my concerns at the moment any more. On the other hand I have not invented any significantly different approaches to performing landscape, not yet.*⁴⁸

During the conference Performance Studies International #20 at the Shanghai Theatre Academy I showed images of the first part of these re-visits together with the original video in a performance-presentation called “Revisiting the Year of the Horse” as part of the “Porous Studio Avant-Gardening” organised by the Artistic Research Working Group.⁴⁹ Besides the original video *Year of the Horse*⁵⁰ from 2003 I showed *Sitting on a Rock (Rock with Text)*,⁵¹ made the following spring in the same place, and a new work performed in Koivumäki (Birch Hill) during a day and night at midsummer 2014, *Sitting on a Rock in Rain*.⁵² I tried to write a new version of the text “Sitting on a Rock” from 2002, without much success, although the attempt at using an existing text as a template, re-creating it and adding new observations according to circumstances was useful as a tool and would merit a separate discussion.

Watching the Birches Suffer in August

*After a long period of warm, dry weather the birches on the cliffs on Harakka Island... have been completely yellow, like in autumn, since there is very little soil on the cliffs and no water without rain. But today, after the rainfall last night I expected them to look invigorated. Because of the brisk wind, however, most of the dry leaves had fallen, so the landscape looked even more autumnal, despite some fresh greenery here and there.*⁵³

Since my last visit I had participated in the World Congress of the IFTR (International Federation for Theatre Research) at Warwick University in the UK, with the theme “Theatre and Stratification”..⁵⁴ At the meeting of the Performance as Research Working Group, originally started by Baz Kershaw and Jacqueline Martin in 2006, I focused on a work from the previous year of the snake (2013) and Michael Marder’s ideas on plant thinking.⁵⁵ In a paper called “Performing with Plants—Challenges to Traditional Hierarchies?”⁵⁶ I discussed how we normally take the plants that support our activities for granted. And the rocks, like the rock I was repeatedly sitting on during 2002 and 2014, and which I did not grant any agency before reading Jane Bennett and her idea of thing-power.⁵⁷ Without the big rounded rock on the path on Harakka Island I would probably have chosen another place to sit on and another spot to place my camera tripod on. In the timescale of the rock the twelve years that have passed since I performed with it the last time are merely an instant.

Indian Summer and Immaterial Land in September

*Beautiful warm summer days in the middle of September are rare in Finland, and what we call “Indian summer” always feels like extreme luxury. Very, very soon the dark, damp, stormy autumn is upon us. I went to revisit the slope and the rock I used to visit weekly in the year of the horse in 2002, and now visit once a month this year, and was surprised by the view. After a few days of rain the moss was light green on the cliffs, and all the yellow leaves of the birches were gone, so the few remaining green ones almost reminded me of spring. And it was warm!*⁵⁸

“Immaterial land” by Brian Martin⁵⁹ is written from the point of view of the indigenous population in Australia and their view of art in contrast to western notions. The central notion is “country” or land, which makes the text harder to comprehend. A more sensitive relationship to the earth, the soil and the environment is necessary, but talk about land and belonging inevitably associates to “Blut und Boden” ideology in European ears. The idea of an artwork as a map, a ritual aid and the materialisation of memory is fascinating, however, as is refusing the binary between the material and the immaterial or spiritual. The aboriginal works I have seen were huge shimmering colour fields, while the works Martin describes are ornamental images of fish. The concept is beautiful, though: you catch a fish, respect it, eat it and then paint a representation of it and bring it back to life that way—a perfect form of

53. Posted 2014-08-12. <http://annettearlander.com/2014/08/12/watching-the-birches-suffer-in-august/> (Accessed 2016-04-12).

54. See <http://iftr2014warwick.org> (Accessed 2016-04-12).

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

56. In a workshop organised together with Stefanie Bauerochse and Juan Manuel Aldape Munoz we invited people to swing from an old oak (me), to climb that oak and read some lines of Shakespeare (Stefanie) and walk into the art centre and watch a small performance with one of the volunteers (Juan). The book of abstracts, including these ones, can be found online. (<http://iftr2014warwick.org/conference/book-of-abstracts/>)

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

58. Posted 2014-0-17. <http://annettearlander.com/2014/09/17/indian-summer-and-immaterial-land-in-august/> (Accessed 2016-04-12).

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

60. See <http://www.av-arkki.fi/en/works/year-of-the-horse-sitting-on-a-rock/> (Accessed 2016-04-12).

61. Posted 2014-10-11. <http://annettearlander.com/2014/10/11/appropriation-and-invocation-in-october/> (Accessed 2016-04-12).

62. Verwoert, Jan. *Apropos Appropriation: Why stealing images today feels different.* *Art and Research* 1. no. 2. summer 2007. <http://www.artandresearch.org.uk/v1n2/verwoert.html> (Accessed 2015-09-01).

63. Ibid.

64. See [http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Der_-_Moench_am_Meer_\(C_D_Friedrich\).jpg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Der_-_Moench_am_Meer_(C_D_Friedrich).jpg) (Accessed 2016-04-12).

65. See <http://www.av-arkki.fi/en/works/year-of-the-goat-harakka-shore-1-3/> (Accessed 2016-04-12).

66. See <http://www.av-arkki.fi/en/works/three-shores/> (Accessed 2016-04-12).

ritualised repetition. My repeated visits to the rock were also turned into representations, albeit without such ritual significance. Perhaps recreating *Year of the Horse* was a ritual exercise to keep up the practice, while looking for another place, another landscape, a different environment.

Appropriation and Invocation in October

Revisiting the rock on the western shore of Harakka Island once again made me think of the materiality of this kind of reworking, remaking, returning, and replaying of what was before. Although the rock, the wooden stairs, my scarf are the same as twelve years ago, I have a hard time making the connection. I do not remember what I experienced in October 2002, rather, I have only some vague images in my mind of the video thus created, Year of the Horse—Sitting on a Rock,⁶⁰ which I saw recently. Probably the same goes for many memories, we do not remember the events but only our retelling of them.⁶¹

In “Apropos Appropriation: Why stealing images today feels different”,⁶² referred to by Barbara Bolt at the conference “New Materialist Methodologies—Gender, Politics and the Digital” in Barcelona, Jan Verwoert discusses appropriation and invocation comparing postmodern practices of appropriation in the 1980s with appropriation today. Referring to Derrida he contends that invoking images involves dealing with ghosts, as well as the ceremonies of invoking them. He describes the move away from interest in the arbitrariness of the sign to the performativity of language, how things are done with words, how language through injunction and interpellation enforces meaning, like a spell cast upon a person. When you call up a spectre it will not be content with being analysed, it will have to be negotiated.⁶³ Invoking the spectre of German romantic painting, as in re-creating *Der Mönch am Meer*⁶⁴ by Caspar David Friedrich on various shores, resulted in *Year of the Goat—Harakka Shore 1–3*⁶⁵ and *Three Shores*⁶⁶ and evoked a whole legacy of ghosts, interpretations and recreations to negotiate. But *Year of the Horse* had no conscious model or precursor. In recreating it I did not appropriate my previous work, but perhaps I invoked it. We could ask, why call up exactly these ghosts? Why sit on the rock again? Perhaps I should have considered what ghosts would be worth calling forth, what spectres could be summoned for help? Acknowledging the performativity of all artistic practices, we could ask: what spells should we use right now? What should we really repeat? These questions must remain rhetorical; I have not yet discovered an answer. One of the beauties of using repetition as a tool, however, is that it can carry you through moments of doubt.

Production of Space in November

On returning to a damp and chilly Helsinki from the rainy but considerably warmer city of Porto I inevitably thought about the influence landscape and the environment

*in general has on our moods. After discussing various approaches to artistic research during a small well-organised and fairly informal event called “Conversations on Artistic Research” at the department of fine arts of the University of Porto, where I gave one of the keynotes with the title On Doing Research, it seemed almost an anti-climax to resume my modest project on Harakka Island.*⁶⁷

The classic work by Henri Lefevre, *The Production of Space*⁶⁸, from the 1970s is on the reading list of most people interested in space, and his tripartite division of space into lived, conceived and perceived space, or his distinctions “spatial practice”, “representation of space”, and “representational space” are still relevant. His witty criticism of the proponents of the linguistic turn of the time and his ironical comments directed at orthodox Marxists are entertaining today, but most of his ideas on the production of space still make sense: how has the particular space of Harakka Island been produced, and how is it continually reproduced by the social practices of various user groups, including my practice of performing landscape?⁶⁹ The lived space on the island is transformed into the conceived and perceived space of a video work, a representational space, which is based on, and to some extent influences, the prevalent cultural conceptions of space. The notion of production, rather than the levels of representation, seems related to the performativity of space.

Between Storms in December

*Last night some of the rainfall came down as wet snow, but nothing of it remained in the afternoon when I went down to the shore to empty my boat from water. The ground was as dark and gloomy as before, only more wet. To my surprise the wind was blowing from west-northwest in such an angle that there were no big waves between the mainland and the island. Thus I quickly decided to return and bring my things and to row across to record the December session of the Year of the Horse now, and thus to have it done well before Christmas. /--/ I was energized by my dread for the strong wind, though. On the way to the island it was pushing me, but on the way back I really had to work hard against it. And nothing keeps you awake better than a kick of adrenaline.*⁷⁰

Many performance artists work with risk, experimenting with pain or hinting at terror. Some, like Marilyn Arsem, say that without risk there is no performance art. My performances for camera do not involve any real risk, or even imagined dread, although they repeat the same actions as if forced by an obsession or trauma. Their forte is not in duration, like for instance the work of Linda Montano,⁷¹ but in repetition. *Autoimmunity: real and symbolic suicides, a dialogue with Jacques Derrida*⁷² recommended by Rustom Bharucha, during his lecture on his book *Terror and Performance*,⁷³ reminds us that even a peaceful activity like revisiting a site could become risky, if there are disagreements concerning who is entitled to use the land. “Terra”, territory and terror go together.

67. Posted 2014-11-09.
<http://annettearlander.com/2014/11/09/production-of-space-in-november/>
(Accessed 2016-04-12).

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

69. For a discussion of what I mean by the term, see Arlander. *Performing Landscape*, pp. 7-21.

70. Posted 201-12-13.
<http://annettearlander.com/2014/12/13/between-storms-in-december/>
(Accessed 2016-04-12).

71. Linda Montano repeated her *Seven Years of Living Art* for another seven years.
<http://www.lindamontano.com/14-years-of-living-art/>
(Accessed 2016-04-12).

72. Borradori, Giovanna. *Autoimmunity: real and symbolic suicides, a dialogue with Jacques Derrida*. In *Philosophy in a Time of Terror. Dialogues with Jürgen Habermas and Jacques Derrida*. Chicago, IL, and London: The University of Chicago Press. 2003. pp. 85-136.
http://is.muni.cz/el/1423/podzim2013/SOC571E/um/Borradori_A_Dialogue_with_Jacques_Derrida.pdf
(Accessed 2016-04-12).

73. See http://www.teak.fi/general/Uploads_files/Bharucha_lecture.pdf (Accessed 2016-04-12).

74. Posted 2015-01-19.
<http://annettearlander.com/2015/01/19/through-the-thick-skin-of-the-sea-in-january/> (Accessed 2016-04-12).

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

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

77. See <http://www.av-arkki.fi/en/works/year-of-the-horse-sitting-on-a-rock/> (Accessed 2016-04-12).

78. See <http://www.av-arkki.fi/en/works/year-of-the-horse-calendar-1-2/> (Accessed 2016-04-12).

79. Previews of both versions are available on the web: the first version <http://www.av-arkki.fi/en/works/year-of-the-horse-sitting-on-a-rock/> and the second version <http://www.av-arkki.fi/en/works/year-of-the-horse-calendar-1-2/>

80. Macdonald, Scott. The Ecocinema Experience. In *Ecocinema Theory and Practice*. Sean Cubitt and Salma Monani (eds.). New York, NY, and London: Routledge. 2013 [2004]. pp. 19-20.

Through the Thick Skin of the Sea in January

The sea was open when I came over to the island, but since there was no wind it felt like it could be freezing any moment. There was no thin layer of ice on the surface yet, but near the shores there was a sort of porous jelly that could turn into ice floes any minute. For a good ice to form it was not cold enough, though. I got a ride across to the island and went to perform, to stand and sit in front of the camera with my dark blue scarf on the hill towards the west for the last time. This remake of my weekly performance during the year of the horse 2002, done once a month in 2014, ends here. /--/ When I look at the small DV tape cover on my table, I can read the dates I have visited the hill and the rock below it: 6 February, 30 March, 12 April, 11 May, 2 June, 14 July, 12 August, 17 September, 11 October, 9 November and 14 December 2014. And now, today, on 19 January 2015.⁷⁴

The Skin of the Film by Laura U. Marks,⁷⁵ the only work related to video or film, besides, *Theory & Practice*,⁷⁶ I read during the year, introduces the notion of haptic visuality, relevant to these works. Marks discusses intercultural cinema in a postcolonial context, and focuses on films describing diasporic experiences, including specific audiences touched by the actual “skin of the film”. Many of the film-makers she introduces work with the blurring of vision in order to evade objectifying visuality and to evoke other senses in an effort to articulate what cannot be remembered. Despite the discrepancy in the context, this resonates with my idea of repetition; returning to the same place, showing the same thing over and over again, trying to grasp what exactly is happening in the landscape. Perhaps that is something to focus on even more in the future: to look closer, to forget the view and to direct attention to the details, the more or less living things that together comprise the landscape.

Returning to the Beginning

The purpose of returning to the same site was not only to recreate the first version twelve years later, but also to be able to juxtapose the two works, *Year of the Horse*⁷⁷ (2003) and *Year of the Horse—Calendar 1-2*⁷⁸ (2015). Looking at the two versions provided a surprise; the same actions on the same site performed for a camera placed in the same spot produced two rather different works. This was due to several changes: 1) from DV quality to HDV quality, 2) from a 4:3 video format into a 16:9 film format, 3) from approximately one image per week (64 images) into an image once a month (12 images). The environment had changed surprisingly little, while developments in video technology have been remarkable. The main difference between the two works is the rhythm. The second version, a two-channel installation (11 min. 10 sec.), was edited to almost the same length as the first, a single channel video with two parts (12 min. 28 sec.)⁷⁹ In the first work the year is thus repeated twice, and the image duration is 6 seconds. In the second work the image duration is more than 60 seconds, which changes the character of the work completely. Moreover, one image

per month rather than one per week accentuates seasonal changes rather than shifts in weather and light conditions. Additionally, in the second version the scarf often covers more than half the image, so the camera automatically focuses on the textile, leaving the landscape blurry.

Slowness and static images of long duration—which characterise the second version—are considered the hallmarks of an ecological approach to film. Scott MacDonald, for instance, defines certain films as eco-cinema primarily because they provide within the film an experience of nature that functions as a model for patience and mindfulness, characteristics of awareness that are decisive for an appreciation of and a commitment to the natural environment; they offer an alternative to conventional modes of watching media, thus helping to foster a more sensitive relationship to the environment.⁸⁰ Paradoxically the second version could thus be considered more “radical” than the first version, in terms of the values of eco-cinema.

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

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

Websites

Annette Arlander: Performing Landscape <http://annettearlander.com>
<http://psi-artistic-research-working-group.blogspot.fi>
<http://iftr2014warwick.org>
<http://newmaterialistconference.wordpress.com>.

Video works

<http://www.av-arkki.fi/en/works/year-of-the-horse-calendar-1-2/>
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