

Feminist Art: Practices of Co-Existences Editorial

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Fig.1 Eva Vēvere, On work Elke II, 2024, graphite, marker and textile paint on paper, 21 x 29.7 cm

I believe in shared space, but what happens when you meet 40 women in two days? Recording encounters with people in the form of a drawing is something that I started to do recently. Conversations don't necessarily have to be long. They just have to connect the dots, fall into place, land in a soft or angry spot, an unexpected slot, continue the web of tangled thoughts, and have a body if you want. Encounters with people become landmarks of the current day, signals of realities colliding, sometimes, joyful rides. Shared space where words bounce back and forth, the space in-between becomes translucent and terms like Radical Fertility embrace women who work too much.

The series of drawings "On _" came about as a response to the 3rd International symposium "The Lost-and-Found: Revising Art Stories in Search of Potential Changes" in Riga on 6 and 7 June 2024. Each drawing relates to a particular encounter that I had during the conference days with its participants and organisers. "Radical Fertility: Materializing the Immaterial" by Paula Chambers was one of the presentations given during the symposium.

Eva Vēvere, October 2024

Latvian artist Eva Vēvere's reflection accompanying the drawings created as a commentary on the final event in

Latvian artist Eva Vēvere's reflection accompanying the drawings created as a commentary on the final event in a series that were part of "The Lost-and-Found: Revising Art Stories in search of Potential Changes" symposium organised between December 2023 and June 2024 in Lisbon, Warsaw and Riga, highlights the entanglements accompanying conversations that happened between the symposium participants.^[1] "Connecting the dots" that Vēvere writes about is not an easy task; it is one that foregrounds methods and strategies of making relations, which was the key focus of "The Lost-and-Found" initiative. Emerging itself out of a conversation between individuals associated with three institutions in Portugal, Poland and Latvia, the dialogues initiated at the three gatherings turned into a durational inter-conversation that expanded towards others, human and non-human.^[2] This was unexpected, catalysing literal connections through talking-with, eating-with and walking-with, and metaphorical moving-with each other in turbulent times affecting our situated worlds.

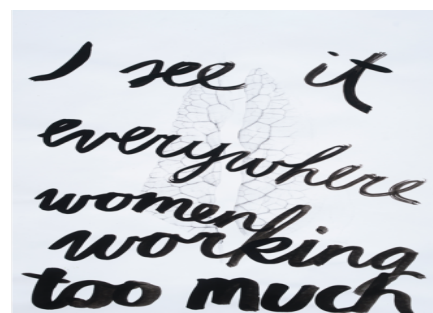
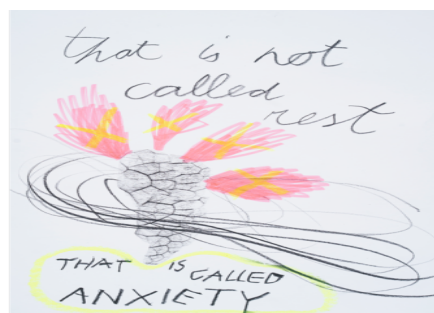


Fig 2. Eva Vēvere, On academic systems Dominika, 2024, ink and marker on paper, 29.7 x 42 cm. Fig 3. Eva Vēvere, On freelancing Elke, 2024, graphite, oil pastel and marker on paper, 29.7 x 42 cm. Fig 4. Eva Vēvere, On work Elke, 2024, ink and graphite on paper, 29.7 x 42 cm

When conceptualising the gatherings, we drew on the poem *A Speech at the Lost-And-Found* (1972) by Wisława Szymborska, a Polish poet and recipient of the 1996 Nobel Prize in Literature.^[3] The poem discusses the evolution of humans from animals while expressing grief for the loss of community with/in the world. The processual evolution Szymborska describes aligns with the proposed approach to evolution as a collaborative relationship between species by Lynn Margulis, an American evolutionary biologist who, together with a British chemist James Lovelock, developed the Gaia hypothesis.^[4] Countering the still dominant neo-Darwinist view on evolution as competition-driven and based on the idea of the survival of the fittest, Margulis foregrounds cooperation, symbiosis and interdependencies over separation and antagonisms. Similarly, Szymborska describes worldly entanglements attentive to materialities. Her exploration of what is lost and what could potentially be found if we care to notice generated a sensitivity in our thinking towards everyone's positionality within the world. Drawing on the notion of "situated knowledges" proposed by Donna Haraway, which involves attending to positional perspectives in the formation of all knowledge and arguing that objectivity is framed by specific socio-cultural, historical, environmental, personal and bodily contexts, we mapped the three symposium sessions prioritising interrelationality at the heart of feminist ethics.^[5] Haraway's notion of situated knowledges, "allows us to become answerable for what we learn how to see."^[6] It is noteworthy that the text that introduces the concept was published in 1988, on the cusp of the end of the Cold War and a conservative backlash in US politics. The similarities with the current turbulent state of the world are many. It was important for us to revisit Haraway's proposal, recognising feminist subjectivities in contrast to masculinised and supposed scientific objectivity, which highlights one's positionality but also one's privilege therein. The three events focused on matter and its mattering in enacting new rituals of communal knowledge building through artistic practices. "The Lost-and-Found" traced material and spatial relations to unearth forgotten rituals, languages and stories her-stories, it-stories, their-stories while becoming curious of diverse positions.

The three symposium events, and this themed issue of *PARSE Journal* that has emerged from them, also offered an opportunity to explore what Haraway refers to as "working together" in daily interactions.^[7] In *Staying with*

The Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene (2016), Haraway writes about companion species that are relentlessly “becoming-with”.^[8] She employs the figure of “with” to consider the connections between each other. “Staying with the trouble requires making oddkin; that is, we require each other in unexpected collaborations and combinations. [...] We become-with each other or not at all.”^[9] Those material entanglements are situated, “someplace and not noplacement”, and worldly, she writes. Haraway’s thinking offered a fertile grounding for the three events to experience how our separate thinking can not only come together but respond to a specific locality, the someplace that generates thinking-with other beings, human and other-than-human to make kin.^[10]

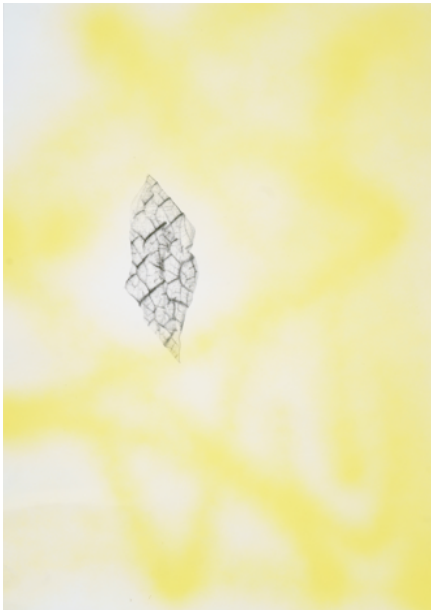


Fig 5. Eva Vēvere, *On place and belonging Basia*, 2024, graphite and textile paint on paper, 29.7 x 42 cm. Fig 6. Eva Vēvere, *On place and belonging Basia II*, 2024, graphite, marker, acrylic and textile paint on paper, 29.7 x 42 cm. Fig 7. Eva Vēvere, *On being in multiple places at the same time* Liāna Ivete, 2024, ink and graphite on paper, 29.7 x 42 cm

This issue of *PARSE Journal*, titled “Feminist Art: Practices of Co-Existences”, is a further extension of the inter-conversations that took place in Lisbon, Warsaw and Riga. We invited participants of the gatherings to contribute to this issue either with individually authored essays or collaborative conversations interfacing with, and expanding on, their separate engagements with “The Lost-and-Found” initiative. Some of them attended different iterations of the event and did not know each other before collaborating on their contributions. This issue focuses on artistic practices enabling reciprocal and intra-relational co-existences. Co-learning and physical, affective and material experiencing within diverse contexts and communities are explored with the intention to disrupt hegemonic art historical paradigms. Framed through a feminist ethics of care defined by María Puig de la Bellacasa as a practice and everyday commitment, and a layered “material space”, the issue explores ways in which artistic practices have the potential to catalyse new ways of building knowledge(s) and the diverse methods and tools employed by art to mobilise alternative ways of learning while unlearning to learn anew.^[11] Foregrounding such strategies supports a plurality of perspectives in collaborative dialogue with other partners human as well as other-than-human.

Tending to the interrelationality of knowing and thinking, Puig de la Bellacasa argues that thinking from, for and with requires care.^[12] The different contributions in this themed issue practice such care, engaging with the ways in which we pay attention to cultivate “response-ability”, to quote Haraway once more.^[13] How to make human and other-than-human kinships to practise becoming-with companion species, or, in Haraway’s “where who

is/are to be in/of the world”?^[14] What do the connections and disconnections teach us and how do artistic practices grounded in feminist ethics of care constitute intra- and inter-actions? Employing feminist art practice as making *and* thinking, the contributors to *PARSE Journal* issue 20 explore potentials to foster responsible, response-able and empathetic co-existences towards others, generating care *for* and *about* a more attentive and inclusive communal belonging.



Fig 8. Eva Vēvere, *On places you come from Natalia*, 2024, graphite, ink, oil pastel and textile paint on paper, 29.7 x 42 cm. Fig 9. Eva Vēvere, *On family Katarzyna*, 2024, ink, graphite, acrylic and textile paint on paper, 29.7 x 42 cm. Fig 10. Eva Vēvere, *On family Katarzyna II*, 2024, graphite and acrylic paint on paper, 29.7 x 42 cm.

The issue opens with a contribution by Catherine Dormor, who, as a practising artist, writer and academic, develops a critical examination of socio-spatial paradigms, taking both creative and intellectual practices as core tools for the reconfiguration of what it means to be human, in response to Katherine McKittrick rethinking of that meaning through “a creative-intellectual project”.^[15] Drawing on the artistic-academic panels she hosted at all three “The Lost-and-Found” events, and engaging with Sylvia Wynter’s work regarding the construction and disruption of racial-sexual-economic categories in relation to geographies, Dormor emphasises the important role of fluidity and interwovenness in the construction of histories and narratives. Taking a feminist approach, she proposes an expanded notion of being in community, advocating to resist the fixedness of narrow narratives and instead embrace plurality, malleability and mutability.

Engaging with some questions outlined in the previous essay, Paula Chambers, who participated in the panels curated by Dormor, reflects on her artistic practice. Writing with her project *Feral Objects* (2023 24) including sculptural objects and installations made out of discarded domestic items found in flea markets and second-hand shops Chambers embraces her transnational experiences while drawing on what anthropologists Anna Tsing, Jennifer Deger, Alder Keleman Saxen and artist Feifei Zhou, call “feral effects”. Writing about feral objects as both adaptative and vulnerable, she interrogates spatial constraints of conventional cultural institutions to argue for creative resilience and flexibility as feminist strategies. Chamber proposes that the unplanned can yield unexpected results and enable challenging of established systems.

Co-authored by Marta Branca Guerreiro, Katarzyna Laskowska and Elena Peytchinska, the following contribution, titled “Walking, Weaving, Writing”, is a triologue between three artists who, employing different

methodological approaches, performed workshops at different moments and locations within the scope of “The Lost-and-Found” events. Their collaborative essay aims at intertwining their individual experiences, openly and generously trying to find, through words and collaboration, a space for togetherness, where, collectively, they attempt to identify the shared dimensions of their projects, highlighting the attention they devote to non-human agencies. Envisioned as a visual essay, this contribution recaptures some of the materials produced for, and during, the workshops, which catalysed the collaboratively woven narrative presented in the essay.

The article by Vivian Sheng guides us through the evocative materiality of the work of Chinese-born French artist Shen Yuan. While tracing the complexities of displacement associated with transnational travel and migration, and the impositions of Covid-19 lockdowns, Sheng explores the familiar and intimate dimensions shaping the sculptural pieces Yuan presented at a solo exhibition that took place in 2022/23 at the Red Brick Art Museum in Beijing. Made of easily accessible everyday items, Yuan’s works subtly reference domestic dimensions while emphasizing the domestic might not always be a place of comfort and safety. Sheng argues that home can also be a space open to new encounters and connections, where movement, resettlement and adaptation are part of a process of constant becoming.

“Art-based research” is the main subject of Anna Markowska’s contribution, which interrogates the potential of artistic practices to foster new or alternative ways of generating knowledge, which this *PARSE Journal* issue seeks to bring to the fore. Drawing from two specific collective art activities that took place during the Warsaw and Riga events, Markowska argues that art research can help revitalise the teaching of art history, not only by embracing diverse methodologies, but also by emphasising individual, personal and subjective engagements with art. Foregrounding corporeality and materiality, the essay acknowledges the potentials enabled by artistic practices to inspire transformation and facilitate social and political change.

Contributing to the discussion on the mattering of materiality, Agnieszka Patała’s article interweaves diverse chronologies, spaces and materialities, while reflecting on the different ways in which medieval sacred objects can be experienced, both physically and imaginatively. Discussing elements such as shadow, aura or touch, the text problematises the complex dimensions of perception via three case studies connected to medieval devotion. These played a key role in the curatorial tour Patała organised during the event in Warsaw, which allowed attendees to experience matter in the Gallery of Medieval Art at the National Museum in Warsaw.

The final essay, co-authored by three Polish artists, Dominika Łabędź, Małgorzata Markiewicz and Katarzyna Zimna, attends to their individual artistic practices in which they each explore collaborative strategies of bookmaking and their potential for collective knowledge production. Their visually led contribution mobilises creative potentials of bookmaking through writing. Envisaged as a coming together to reflect on their experiences at “The Lost-and-Found” gatherings, the text weaves together voices, but also carves out space for their singular and situated contributions.

The examples reflected on by the authors showcase ways of being curious, striking up conversations, asking questions to meet and/or generate something unexpected. Each contribution is focused on art practices that enable encounters and knowledge building in other ways to catalyse possibilities of coexistence. In no way is this therefore the end of the conversation. Developing tools for practice is easier said than done and it takes time, care and effort to open ourselves up towards trustworthy exchanges in solidarity to learn from each other. What started as a conversation between a few individuals, turned into three events that generated the various dialogues presented here. The next encounter of co-existence has the potential to happen via material gathered in this issue and through its careful reading, hopefully towards further exchanges of knowledges to practice a

scholarship of care collaborative research that is, literally and metaphorically, in-touch through diverse approaches to writing. Our desire is to connect, in Vēvere's words, more dots to practice caring and care-ful co-existences.



Fig 11. Eva Vēvere, *On art practice Sohaila*, 2024, ink and graphite on paper, 29.7 x 42 cm. Fig 12. Eva Vēvere, *On untranslatable words Karolina*, 2024, graphite and textile paint on paper, 29.7 x 42 cm. Fig 13. Eva Vēvere, *On skyline that defines the experience Anna*, 2024, graphite on paper, 21 x 29.7 cm

Footnotes

1. The International symposium "The Lost-and-Found: Revising Art Stories in search of Potential Changes" was a series of three events in three locations. The first was hosted by the Art History Institute at the Faculty of Human Sciences and Humanities of Universidade NOVA de Lisboa, Portugal, 6–7 December 2023. The second was hosted by the Art History Institute at the University of Wrocław and Polish Institute of World Art Studies in Warsaw, Poland, 21–23 March 2024. The third took place in Riga, Latvia, 6–7 June 2024 and was hosted by the Art Academy of Latvia. The website for all three events can be accessed at <https://thelostandfoundlisbon.weebly.com> (accessed 2025-02-22).
2. Agnieszka Patala (Institute of Art History / University of Wrocław), Anna Markowska (Institute of Art History / University of Wrocław), Basia Sliwinska (Art History Institute / Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities of the Universidade NOVA de Lisboa), Janis Taurens (Art Academy of Latvia), Jana Kukaine (Riga Stradiņš University; only for the first event in Lisbon) and Margarida Brito Alves (Art History Institute / Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities of the Universidade NOVA de Lisboa).
3. The poem was published in W.S. Zymborska, *Isława*. *Poems New and Collected 1957–1997*. Trans.

Stanisław Barańczak and Clare Cavanagh. New York: Harcourt Brace International. 1998. The full text of the poem can be found at the event website, <https://thelostandfoundlisbon.weebly.com> {accessed 2025-02-22}.

4. At a certain time Margulis was writing under her husband's surname, astronomer Carl Sagan, whom she subsequently divorced. When she remarried, she changed her name to Lynn Margulis. See Sagan, Lynn. "On the origin of mitosing cells". *Journal of Theoretical Biology*. vol. 14. no. 3. 1967. pp. 255-74. doi: 10.1016/0022-5193(67)90079-3. PMID: 11541392.
5. Haraway, Donna. "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective". *Feminist Studies*. vol.14. no.3. 1988, pp. 575-99.
6. Haraway, "Situated Knowledges", p. 583.
7. Haraway, Donna J. *Staying with The Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press. 2016. p. 129.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 16
9. *Ibid.*, p. 4.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 7.
11. Puig de la Bellacasa, María. *Matters of Care: Speculative Ethics in More Than Human Worlds*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. 2017. p. 87.
12. *Ibid.*, pp. 197-98.
13. Haraway, *Staying with The Trouble*, p. 130.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 13.
15. McKittrick, Katherine. "Yours in the Intellectual Struggle: Sylvia Wynter and the Realization of the Living". In *Sylvia Wynter: On Being Human as Praxis*. Ed. Katherine McKittrick. Durham, NC: Duke University Press. 2015. p. 2.