BECOMING JUNIPER – PERFORMING LANDSCAPE AS ARTISTIC RESEARCH

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This text consists of two parts, with an introduction and an epilogue. In the first part I discuss the notion of landscape briefly. In the second part I describe an example of a practice of performing landscape and discuss some of its aspects that might be useful for understanding or developing related practices. Finally, as an epilogue, I take up the question of how to speak of the environment.

Video still from Becoming Juniper – Kalvola (2012), Annette Arlander

INTRODUCTION

How to perform landscape, not only represent it? Can you have a meaningful relationship with a singular element in the landscape? How can you relate to a living being that you do not easily recognise as your kind? A plant is hard to see as a partner in interaction although plants are actually our collaborators with regard to production of oxygen and carbon dioxide. Plants are our allies, since they produce, via their photosynthesis, the basic ingredients of our food. They are the true creators of our world. There is a kind of symbiotic relationship between plants and animals, in this case a shrub and a human being. Most plants are stationary, reliable to be there for us. We could say that a plant 'knows' what it means to be site-specific.

During the year of the rabbit 2011 I chose a juniper growing on Harakka Island in Helsinki as my partner in the project *Year of the Rabbit – With a Juniper*. A juniper seemed to me a strange enough creature together with which I could search for a new contact with the environment. I ended up visiting the juniper once a week and "holding hands" with it wrapped in a green scarf. Passers-by and colleagues were invited to witness my performances and follow a blog about the project.^2 While

travelling I encountered other junipers to make acquaintance with and I spent time with junipers in the year 2012 as well. Am I perhaps “becoming juniper”?

As David Abram writes in his beautiful book *Becoming Animal,* despite its title (inspiring mine) which is more influenced by Maurice Merleau-Ponty than Gilles Deleuze: “We can feel the trees and the rocks underfoot, because we are not so unlike them,” because “we are not pure mind-stuff but are tangible bodies of thickness and weight, and so have a great deal in common with the palpable things that we encounter” (Abram 2011, 46). By focusing on junipers, or other parts of the environment, repeatedly and in a performative manner, as a process, I have tried to perform landscape rather than merely represent it. Through the notion of landscape I nevertheless use a vocabulary with a legacy of dominance, maintaining a sense of distance and overview. An idea of setting, backdrop or scenery is easily suggested by landscape. A dimension beyond the human scale, however, and the more-than-human^3 world, is also implied.

Abram analyses the legacy of “the great chain of being” in Western thought, the hierarchy from spirit to matter, and argues that if we consider matter animate or self-organizing rather than inert, the hierarchy collapses and we have instead a differentiated field of animate beings. As humans we find ourselves in the “midst of this living field, our own sentience part and parcel of the sensuous landscape.” (Abram 2011, 47). He maintains that the detached stance of science is dependent upon a more visceral reciprocity between the human organism and its world, by “the ageless intercourse between the body and the earth”. The eyes looking through the microscopes or the intelligence interpreting data are formed in participation with the rest of the animate landscape. (Abram 2011, 73–74). Unlike the Cartesian assumption “[o]ur animal senses are neither deceptive nor untrustworthy; they are our access to the cosmos” (Abram 2011, 307), he claims. In a way, which resonates with my example – performing with a juniper – he notes that we can influence our own integration only by entering into relation with others. And such others need not to be people, but they could be “wetlands, or works of art, or snakes slithering through the stubbed grass”, since each thing, if given attention, can gather our senses together in a unique way. Each being that we perceive enacts a subtle integration within us and alters our prior organization. “The sensing body is like an open circuit that completes itself only in things, in others, in the surrounding earth.” (Abram 2011, 254).

Along the same lines, although from a post-cognitivist rather than phenomenological perspective, theatre scholar Teemu Paavolainen discusses, in the introduction to his doctoral dissertation on theatre, ecology and cognition (Paavolainen 2011, revised and published 2012), our heritage of “the great chain of being” with humans at the top and inanimate objects at the bottom. In contrast to a dualist ontology, where actors and objects, or mind and matter, are divided as if over a vertical chain, he proposes an ecological epistemology in which they emerge in horizontal couplings over a field

of relationships. (Paavolainen 2011, 24). Emphasizing his starting point in the psychology of J.J. Gibson and in objects as agents, he focuses on organism-environment interaction and suggests that the relationship of actors and objects consists of affordances. (Paavolainen 2011, 52). Although he speaks of theatre, his focus on the blurring boundaries between the performer and the surrounding world is highly relevant for the performances I will discuss here.

Theatre historian Baz Kershaw notes that performances involve the inter-relational interdependence of "organisms-in-environments", or, following deep ecologist Arne Naess, constitute "a relational total field" in which everything is interdependent. (Kershaw 2007, 16). For him a "theatre performance is not a system that is different *in kind* from other ecological systems, though of course like them it has its own peculiar characteristics" (Kershaw 2007, 24). This is obviously also true for less complicated performance systems, like actions built around a camera on a tripod, a human being, a shawl and a juniper.

According to systemic thinking organism and environment are aspects of the same system. In the famous words of Gregory Bateson: "The unit of survival is *organism* plus *environment.*" (Bateson quoted in Kershaw 2007, 248). Along the same lines, Félix Guattari argued that in order to comprehend the interactions between ecosystems, we must learn to think transversally. Furthermore, "no one is exempt from playing the game of the ecology of the imaginary!" (Guattari quoted in Kershaw 2007, 249). Art is involved in providing imaginary options. So what should we imagine today? How can we perform landscape in a way that does not strengthen the dangerous fantasy of self-sufficient subjects ontologically severed from the world? How can we make explicit, or "explicitate", ^4 to use the term adopted by Bruno Latour, how can we show the interdependence between human beings and the environment, performer and landscape, me and a juniper?

This is a question for artistic research, which could be seen as part of the performative turn in the social sciences, (Davis 2008, 1–8) as an instance of the new performative research paradigm (Haseman 2006, 98–106; Bolt 2008) as well as something resembling a paradox. One of the tasks proposed for artist-researchers is to articulate the tacit knowledge involved in the production of art, which is more challenging than it seems, since many aspects of artistic work are partly unconscious and as an artist one is embedded in the work. Moreover, as Baz Kershaw notes of humans in general, since we are imbued with earth's biosphere and cannot survive without it, we cannot access a critical perspective that is wholly beyond it. He brings in Po Chang and paradox: "Asked about seeking the Buddha-nature Po-Chang says, 'It's much like riding an ox in search of the ox!' The quest is a search for itself" (Kershaw 2007, 52). This kind of recursive dilemma is a concern for artist-researchers who mix the object, method, and outcome of their research, and for all of us performing landscapes in their midst, or studying the environments we inhabit.

I – ON LANDSCAPE

Before turning to my example, I will present some approaches to landscape by a geographer, an art historian, a performance scholar, and a feminist visual theorist, in order to show the multiple ways of understanding the term. Cultural geographer John Wylie asserts that there are specific tensions related to the concept, such as proximity vs. distance, observation vs. inhabitation, eye vs. land, as well as culture vs. nature. (Wylie 2007, 2).

To exemplify the first tension (proximity or distance), Wylie refers to Maurice Merleau-Ponty's idea that observer and observed, self and landscape are intertwined. In embodied experience eye and land rest in each other's depths, "landscape names *a perceiving-with-the-world"* and a painting can "make visible how the world touches us". (Merleau-Ponty quoted in Wylie 2007, 3). This he contrasts with Raymond Williams's view that "*the very idea of landscape implies separation and observation*" (Williams quoted in Wylie 2007, 3) and Jonathan Crary's claim that "to visualize is to set at a distance" (Wylie 2007, 4). Related to the second tension (observation or inhabitation), Wylie notes that landscape is studied both as a particular way of observing and knowing, including vested interests in regimes of power, and by understanding cultural practices through notions of embodiment, habitation and dwelling. A tension thus exists between "critical interpretation of artistic and literary landscapes and the phenomenological engagement of cultural landscape practice" (Wylie 2007, 6).

Illustrating the third tension (eye or land) a dictionary definition of landscape – *that portion of land or scenery, which the eye can view at once* – implies that landscape is land, terrain, to be surveyed and mapped, but it is also scenery, seen from a specific perspective, related to perception and imagination. Thus, "studying landscape involves thinking about how our gaze [...] is always already laden with particular cultural values, attitudes, ideologies and expectations" (Wylie 2007, 6–7). Landscape refers to *a picture or image of the land*,^5 and has been analyzed as an artistic genre as well. The tension is accentuated in the question of the materiality of landscape in response to the dematerialized focus on representations. (Wylie 2007, 7–9). The fourth tension (culture and nature) is for Wylie at the heart of landscape studies since landscapes have traditionally been defined as the product of interaction between natural conditions and cultural practices. Landscape equals nature plus culture. (Wylie 2007, 9). Since the 1970s the cultural construction of nature has been a key topic, although its proponents have been critiqued for seeing nature as a mere blank screen to project meanings on. Taking an interest in practices, which since 1990's has been called performative, we could rather speak of "landscaping", and focus on those everyday interactions that produce our ideas of nature and culture, Wylie (2007, 11) suggests.

In fine art, landscape has long been a key topic. (For brief overviews, see Andrews 1999; Herrington 2008). A volume in the art seminar series called *Landscape Theory*, edited by art historians James Elkins and Rachael Ziady DeLue, can exemplify recent discussions. If landscape is "a kind of backcloth to the whole human stage of activity" (Appleton quoted in DeLue and Elkins 2008, 11) and if "landscape is not a genre of art but a medium" (Mitchell quoted in DeLue and Elkins 2008, 11), it is important to understand "what and how landscape is and does, especially since our sense of landscape (natural or otherwise) has direct bearing on the sustenance and survival of the environment in which we live and of which we are a part" (DeLue in DeLue and Elkins 2008, 11). Their starting point is Denis Cosgrove's formulation of landscape as ideology, as "a way in which some Europeans have represented to themselves and to others the world about them and their relationship with it, and through which they have commented on social relations" (Cosgrove quoted in DeLue and Elkins 2008, 80–81). In their perspective, a phenomenological understanding of landscape as an encounter with subjectivity has replaced ideological analysis (DeLue and Elkins 2008, 103), and they suggest that ideas of landscape are specific to disciplines like geography or landscape architecture (DeLue and Elkins 2008, 110), such as the art historical view of landscape art as a product of the Western tradition of late-romantic painting and photography (DeLue and Elkins 2008, 141). In her afterword Elisabeth Helsinger mentions the problem of eliding the difference between "real" landscape and its representations, and the complex ways in which space is inseparable from time in any conception of landscape (Helsinger in DeLue and Elkins 2008, 326).

From my perspective within artistic research in contemporary art questioning landscape as a topic is challenging: "Are there occasions when landscape can be seriously pursued as a contemporary theme, medium or interest? [...] or does it have to find expression [only] in various local and regional contexts?" (DeLue and Elkins 2008, 119). Could documenting the landscape on Harakka Island have any relevance in terms of contemporary art? Or is it only within related fields, like landscape architecture, that ecology is important? (DeLue and Elkins 2008, 122).

One of the invited commentators to the book, Jill H. Casid, who criticizes what she understands as a return to a unified phenomenological subject, provides in a recent article (Casid 2011, 97–116) an example of contemporary engagements with landscape within feminist theory. She writes in response to W.T.J Mitchell's nine theses on landscape in "Imperial Landscape" (Mitchell quoted in Casid 2011, 99), which skirt sex and gender, and acknowledges being influenced by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's notion of the "periperformative", or statements that cluster around the performative. (Casid 2011, 98–100). Casid uses the word landscape as a verb, and notes how "matter (the matter of trees and bodies) is an on-going process of materialization and of meaning and value-making" (Casid 2011, 98). She mentions traditional verb forms; to landscape as depicting or representing a landscape; to landscape as laying something out as a landscape (like for example a garden). She distinguishes the thing

(something to be landscaped), its representation (what it requires to appear as a landscape) and the process of its conversion. (Casid 2011, 101). Casid exemplifies her theses, drawing on a wide range of works by women artists, in order to show how landscape continuously matters. (Casid 2011, 101–111).

In the context of performance, place and site are more common terms, although issues related to landscape and nature have been intensely discussed in recent years. (See for instance Szerszynski, Heim and Waterton 2003; Giannachi and Stewart 2005; Hill and Paris 2006; Kershaw 2007 as well as Arons and May 2012). From the point of view of site-specific performance Mike Pearson (2010) treats landscape as a subset of site. His examples of landscape performances include a walk broadcasted on radio combined with a pre-recorded drama documentary and an audio work to be listened to in the specific agricultural area the work talks about, or on the web. Landscape is included in his list of contexts or conditions, sets of geographical, architectural, social and cultural circumstances that might inform the concept and execution of a performance. Different definitions of landscape (as a piece of land, a scene, a way of looking, a vista, a representation) might inspire different kind of performances, he explains. (Pearson 2010, 92–126).

In choosing the term landscape I followed environmental aesthetician Arnold Berleant, who titled his book *Living in the Landscape* (Berleant 1997), though speaking of outdoor places, rather than landscape, would better describe my interests. Discussions around the notions of place and site, however, lead in a different direction, which I have pursued elsewhere,^6 so I only mention here writers like Doreen Massey (2005), Tim Ingold (2000) and Miwon Kwon (2002), and make a long story short: Performing landscape necessarily involves engagement with what is contingent and site-specific.

II – PERFORMING LANDSCAPE

Could approaching landscape (environment, nature, place) through some of its singular elements help us to conceive of landscape as a collaborator in an artwork or performance? Rather than seeing it as surroundings, material setting, thematic source or systemic resource for a performance or for a work of art, as sometimes happens. Could a practice of focusing attention on a specific organism in the landscape, help us develop an interest in the environment and an understanding of our mutual dependency with other forms of life? Performing with a juniper serves as an example of the problems (fictionalisation, marginalisation, overemphasis on detail) and benefits (emotional engagement, symbolic significance) suggested by this method.

The focus on landscape, especially trees, or junipers in this case, brings another aspect to the on-going discussion of our relationship to the environment, to nature, to the more-than-human world, or rather, to everything that is alive. Debates are flourishing in the arts concerning the non-human, the post-human and the more-than-human. In Finland, many artist-researchers are working with these issues. The environment, weather, technology, animals, or natural processes, can be collaborators in a performance, as explored for instance by Tuija Kokkonen. Natural elements like the wind can function as co-creators when producing artworks with the help of photographic processes, as Tuula Närhinen has shown. Terike Haapoja, who showed her work in the Nordic Pavilion during the Venice Biennale 2013, has founded a party of others as an art project. One of the internationally best known Finnish artists, Eija-Liisa Ahtila, is exploring the parallel worlds of humans and animals and has in a recent work, *Horizontal*, produced the portrait of a tall spruce tree as a multi-screen video installation. The list could go on. In this context my main interest is to develop practices that could enhance an understanding of our interdependence with other living beings, rather than ethical issues related to otherness, for instance. I am an urbanite; for me sensing myself as part of the living environment is a goal rather than a starting point. Playing with becoming, or even with camouflaging as, a juniper is challenging. It is this experience that I will analyse here and make it available to others with similar interests.

Year of the Rabbit – With a Juniper is one part in a series of twelve one-year projects videoed on Harakka Island.[^7] The series, which I began in 2002, is based on the Chinese calendar and its cycle of twelve years, with each year named after a specific animal. Every year I have looked for a new perspective on the landscape, a new aspect of the environment and a new kind of relationship between the human body and the place. This working method utilizes the traditions of performance art, video art, and environmental art, moving in the borderland between them. I am concerned with the question: How to perform landscape today? The objective is to record and document changes in the landscape by video filming the same action in the same place, from the same point with the same framing of the image, once a week for a year. These documentations or “souvenirs” are then edited to form video installations.

Video still from Year of the Rabbit – With a Juniper (2012), Annette Arlander

For the year of the rabbit, 2011, I chose to visit a juniper in the southern part of the island. After some experiments I ended up holding hands with the juniper and covering myself with a dark green scarf. Unlike the performances in previous years, I decided to make this action a public event, to invite spectators to witness my performance for camera on Sundays at 3 p.m. To be able to inform potential visitors quickly about possible changes, I decided to start a blog, which soon evolved into a crucial part of the performance. The visitors were rare, so I invited colleagues or passers-by to function as witnesses and to take a photo of anything they found interesting in the surroundings. Thus, two kinds of documentation of changes in the

landscape were produced: one of the actual performances, on video, and another in the blog, including my notes and images by various participants. The blog added a social dimension to the performance. (Arlander 2013)

The title *Year of the Rabbit – With a Juniper* has several associations in Finnish. It reminds of a novel by Arto Paasilinna, *Year of the Hare*, telling the story of a man who left his job and travelled to the north with a hare he had injured by accident. Another association is the saying "put one's head in a bush like a hare", that is, avoiding facing reality. "Katajan kanssa" (with the juniper) sounds almost like "katajainen kansa", "juniper-like folk", an old epithet of the Finns. And there is a proverb, "the one who reaches for the spruce will fall into the juniper", hubris leads to nemesis.

What could be specific with a juniper as a collaborator? Or with the life of a juniper documented for the duration of a year? Unlike our relationship to animals, which can be collegial or competitive, our relationship to vegetation seems unproblematic. On a basic everyday level of understanding, we have a symbiotic relationship to plants, regardless of the possible difficulties in distinguishing a plant and an animal on a microscopic level. A tree or a shrub is a part of the landscape, an entity with a distinguishable individuality, something to relate to and revisit.

On a practical level, a coniferous (evergreen) shrub would stand out in the snow. There are only three full-grown junipers on Harakka Island, situated in an area reserved for birds, in the south-east. I have been working with trees before, like sitting in an old pine tree or hiding under a spruce,^8 so working with a juniper appeared as a logical development. The size of this particular juniper was close to human size. In January, it was largely covered in snow, almost the size of a child, and seemed to grow taller with the melting snow. Here I will focus on only two initial choices: Why cover one's head with a scarf? Why hold on to the juniper?

The green scarf I chose partly in order to merge with the vegetation (the hue is actually too bluish for that). The inspiration for covering my head with the scarf came from an article about bear rituals based on interviews with contemporary Khanty- and Mansi- women. (Juslin 2007) In the bear ritual a dancing woman's entire upper body is covered with a shawl; both the head of the animal and the dancing women are covered. (Juslin 2007, 15). I imagined the dancer could simulate the spirit of the bear under the shawl, perhaps even become the bear in some way. Covered by a green shawl, the human figure resembles a juniper and enables a visual merging with the environment. I was not performing "as" a juniper, though, but together with it. The impact of the shawl as a cover, a camouflage and a costume was important. It facilitated an imaginary identification with the juniper, produced intimacy through a concentration of the space, aided in achieving mental focus via visual simplification, served as protection from possible intruders or extensive stimuli, like birds, and enforced awareness of the breath inside the space created by the shawl.

Why holding on to the juniper? The action of holding on to the juniper, “holding hands” with it, was the result of a gradual development. Initially, I planned to perform various actions; I walked around the juniper, brushed away snow from its branches and sprayed water on them to make the needles sparkle, picked some of its berries (first week one berry, second week two berries, third week three berries and so on). Soon, I abandoned most of these extra activities and just went up to the juniper, covered my head with the shawl, and took one of the stronger branches in my right hand for support. Then I just stood there, breathing under the shawl. All that remained was standing next to the juniper, holding hands with it, as it were. Only many months into this practice did I search for some facts about junipers and realised that junipers are dioecious, they have gender. This was a female juniper with berries, spread out to its form, while a taller almost dry juniper nearby was a male one. The green berries would ripen and turn blue only the following year.

In a contrasting experiment, I stood next to a shed for birdwatchers (covered in greenish camouflage material). In this version there was no real contact with another being. The changing sea level was the only interesting feature; sometimes the water rose to my ankles, and the sound of the sea was constantly shifting. The camera was placed on a tripod far away; my movements would not be visible. Moreover, I performed this part before the time for the announced performance with the juniper, without visitors; thus it felt more like a warm up, a preparation. The final installation included a juxtaposition of the documentation of both performances.^9

During that year I performed with other junipers or juniper-like shrubs in other parts of the world, and occasionally during the following year as well. The act of visiting junipers, spending time with them and holding on to them had become meaningful to me in some strange way. Some of these variations were edited to form video works and exhibited together with the main installation in January 2013.^10

When I showed the video in a research context for the first time an expert in Asian theatre made a connection to the aesthetics of Zen Buddhism, which I immediately denied. Later, I realised that while performing I usually repeated silently a phrase from a Buddhist meditation exercise. Another colleague mentioned shamanism, to my surprise, since I have tried to avoid “magical” modes of relating to the environment and excess romanticism, and to develop contemporary practices.^11 I was reminded of David Abram’s account of his time as a disciple of a shaman, and his task of repeatedly focusing on a crow in order to gain its powers, and to increase his sensory understanding of the world. (Abram 2011, 217). Although I hoped to gain some strength from this practice, it was in terms of integration with the environment and other beings in it. I tried to produce an experience of being connected to and part of a world that is alive, rather than beginning with that experience and then trying to represent it.

Some aspects of the practice could perhaps be useful for developing related practices: 1) Standing still, immobile for a while was the prerequisite for finding a contact to the present moment and engaging the senses, trying to listen, smell, even see through the shawl and feel the ground through my feet and the touch of the juniper with my hand. 2) Covering my head with a shawl was initially an aesthetic choice, to create an impersonal shape, merging with the environment, perhaps resembling a juniper. The experience thus produced was specific, however, since the shawl created a protected intimate space. I could see through the thin woollen fabric, although the air inside became warm and moist because of my breath. In an almost childlike way, I felt invisible, protected and safe. 3) Holding on to or "holding hands with", was a symbolic gesture, but also very practical; physical touch had a real and tangible effect. By touching the juniper, and by holding on to it, I had an immediate "lifeline" to the environment. Since the needles of the juniper are sharp, finding a branch I could hold on to without hurting myself required sensitivity and focus. The touch brought me to the present moment more effectively than any other action. 4) Breathing slowly beneath the shawl, deliberately slowing down my breath, was part of the practice. Instead of counting I repeated a sequence of words from a meditation exercise silently in my mind with each breath. The words were unimportant, while focusing on breathing and slowing down the breath was crucial.^12

Besides these four basic features other aspects influenced the performance: a) Repetition, and the regularity of returning to the same place once a week at the same time for one year, enhanced the effect of the practice. b) Using a fixed time and announcing the action as a public performance, created commitment. c) Making a preparation for the performance, creating an alternative image standing by the bird shed first, helped in calming down. d) Allowing variations over time – leaving out unnecessary actions – helped in finding out what is relevant. e) Keeping a blog of the practice (in this case including visits to other junipers abroad) facilitated some basic reflexivity. f) Inviting passers-by and colleagues to witness the action (and in this case to document changes in the landscape for the blog) generated a sense of community. On the basis of this experience the four main aspects worth developing are nevertheless: stillness, creating an intimate space, sensory focus on touching and slowing down the breath. These were important for becoming present, for feeling supported, and for being literally connected to the environment.

There are several benefits to this kind of practice, besides emotional engagement and symbolic significance. One advantage with a tree or a bush as a co-performer is that the seasonal changes become obvious in a new way. The vulnerability of a plant to environmental circumstances, to changes in the seasons, in the weather, in the climate, in human behaviour, is extreme, since the plant has no possibility to escape. The company of a plant is special; as a "pet" it is trustworthy, certainly there when you want to meet it, site-specific to the extreme. The practice does not rely on removing a plant from its site, but can be created there, in its own place. And the connection is based on a real symbiosis, an exchange of oxygen and carbon dioxide.

The imaginary dimension is partly unavoidable, however. Trying to feel empathy and sympathy with a living being very different from oneself, and without any real possibility of ordinary communicative exchange (compared to communicating with some animals, for instance), is necessarily based on fantasy to some extent. It also involves identification with the creature, extending one's capacity to feel compassion towards living beings in general, not only to the ones that resemble us. The physical contact with something living, sensing it with one's body, not only in one's imagination, a material exchange, if you wish, facilitates awareness of the surrounding landscape, and coming back to oneself, becoming centred, feeling part of a whole, a living world.

Despite these benefits, there are problems, as well; many of the disadvantages emerge from the advantages. These include overemphasis on detail, fictionalisation, and marginalisation. The main risk is perhaps resorting to fantasy, to anthropomorphism instead of animism. Projecting human characteristics on the juniper, or some sort of fairy tale power, perhaps personifying it, could easily mean that one lifts it out from the landscape, and severs its ties to everything around it. This could be articulated as an overemphasis on detail, literally not seeing the forest for the trees, placing the juniper in the position of a protagonist with the rest of the environment as background, losing sight of the complicated entanglements involved in every landscape. Moreover, fictionalisation could mean turning one's attention away from sensory awareness into an imaginary fantasy world. Instead of developing sensitivity to the environment one could be creating an imaginary escape in one's consciousness, severed from the surroundings, that is, producing the opposite effect of what was intended. Another problem concerns marginalisation. There is a risk of indulging in a private exercise that perhaps helps the practitioner, but has no further impact on the world around, beyond the limited sphere of the immediate community. Moreover, by producing more inanimate objects through documenting the performances on video and creating video works and digital images, one is seducing the beholder to enjoy representations of landscapes instead of going out and engaging with the environment, a problem I have discussed elsewhere.[^13]

As a preliminary conclusion, and regardless of these dangers or disadvantages, I would nevertheless recommend performing with plants as an alternative to explore, in order to focus attention on the landscape and develop a sensuous appreciation of our living environment. It seems to me that in order to avoid seeing landscape as surroundings, material setting, systemic resource or thematic source only, one option is to choose an element in the landscape and to interact with it over time.

EPILOGUE

Why speak of becoming juniper, or of holding hands with a juniper? How could this type of fictionalization help us understand our interrelatedness? And, with David Abram, we could ask why an animistic way of speaking, ”one that assumes some modicum of creativity in even the most obstinate of phenomena, and which therefore speaks of things not merely as objects but as animate *subjects*, as living powers in their own right” would renew and rejuvenate our bodily senses? (Abram 2011, 70). He proposes that an animistic style of speaking opens a possibility for interaction and reciprocity between our bodies and the breathing earth, that it implies consanguinity between our lives and the land itself. Moreover, “by describing the myriad things as unfolding, animate beings we bring our language back into alignment with the ambiguous and provisional nature of sensory experience itself...” (Abram 2011, 70–71). Here, I have not tried to develop a specific style of speaking, animistic, sensuous or in some other way congenial with an animate evolving world, although I find Abram’s argument compelling. Nor have I consciously focused on developing modes of speaking that would support an ecological understanding of our coexistence on this earth. I recognize, however, that it is important to choose carefully what words we use when describing a landscape or an environment and the various beings living in it. By describing my own artistic practice I hope to provide an example to substantiate future discussions and explorations.

NOTES

1) The text is based on a talk given on the 2nd of May 2013 at Freie Universität Berlin. I want to thank Erika Fischer-Lichte and Daniela Hahn for inviting me. I am proud to be able to be part of such an interesting program. I also want to thank Daniela Hahn for the careful editing of this text.

2) The blog can be found at http://aa-katajankanssa.blogspot.com. (25.5.2015)

3) I prefer the term more-than-human, used for instance in Arons, Wendy and May, Theresa J. (eds.). *Readings in Performance and Ecology*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan. 2012, although the related term non-human is more commonly used.

4) In “A Plea for Earthly Sciences”, his keynote lecture for the annual meeting of the British Sociological Association in April 2007, Bruno Latour referred to the ecological crisis and to the notion of “explicitation” coined by Peter Sloterdijk: “Everything that earlier was merely ‘given’ becomes ‘explicit’. Air, water, land, all of those were present before in the background: now they are explicitated because we slowly come to realize that they might disappear – and we with them.” (Bruno Latour. “A Plea for Earthly Sciences” www.bruno-latour.fr/sites/default/files/102-BSA-GB_0.pdf) (25.5.2015)

5) This concerns English, for instance in Swedish or German landscape refers to a region as well.

6) In ”Performing Time Through Place” (Arlander 2012 c) I discuss performing place related to ideas of Massey and Ingold. In ”Performing Landscape as Autotopographical Exercise” (Arlander 2012 b) I discuss mobility, memory and site.

7) Works performed and videoed during the year of the rabbit in 2011 and partly during 2012 were exhibited for the first time in January 2013 in Gallery Jangva in Helsinki. See http://aa-katajankanssa.blogspot.com (25.5.2015).

8) I have been sitting on a birch (2005), sitting in a pine tree (2006), hanging from a pine tree (2007), sitting under a spruce (2008), see Arlander 2010, 158–176.

9) For previews of some of the video works see www.av-arkki.fi/en/artists/annette-arlander_en (25.5.2015).

10) The last entry in the blog has information on the exhibition, see. http://aa-katajankanssa.blogspot.com (25.5.2015).

11) See for instance Arlander 2008, 28–41. In “Performing with Trees” (Arlander 2010) I describe various approaches to working with trees. In “Performing Landscape – Live and Alive” (Arlander 2012 a) I discuss the problem of digital representations.

12) On breathing, see also Arlander 2008.

13) In “Performing Landscape – Live and Alive” (Arlander 2012 a) I discuss the problem of transforming live experiences into digital representations, which then serve as substitutes of landscape for the viewer.

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