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VIDEO ARTICLE

The Shore Revisited

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This video article is based on a recorded return, in 2018, to the site of a performance for camera repeated weekly on Harakka Island in Helsinki during the year of the goat (2003–2004) as well as for a day and night during Easter that year. The video installations made fourteen years earlier are inserted in miniature format within the recent recording, complemented by journal entries from the day and night. The voice-over text discusses concerns relevant at the time of recording the performances and displaying the installations for the first time, such as the question what is repeated, what stays the same. It uses these works to exemplify one possible understanding of Karen Barad's notion agential cut.

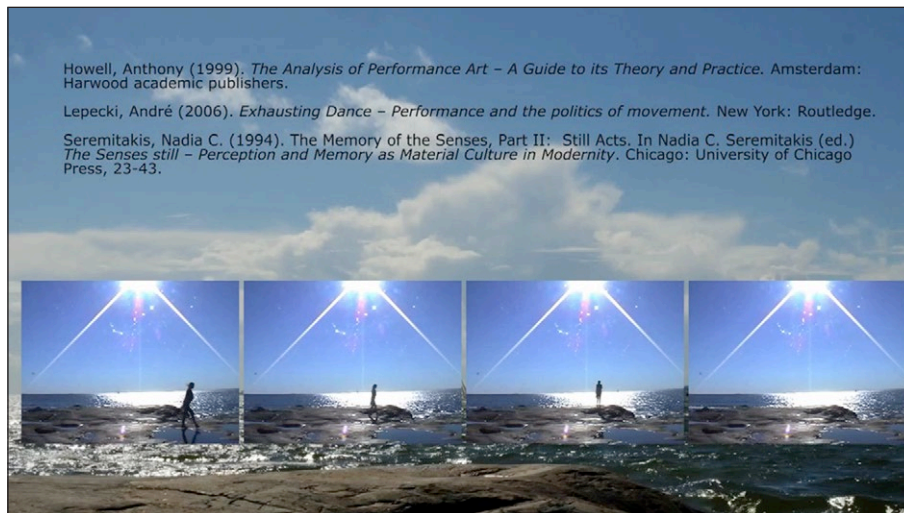
Keywords: landscape; performing ecology; performance for camera; repetition; duration; agential cut

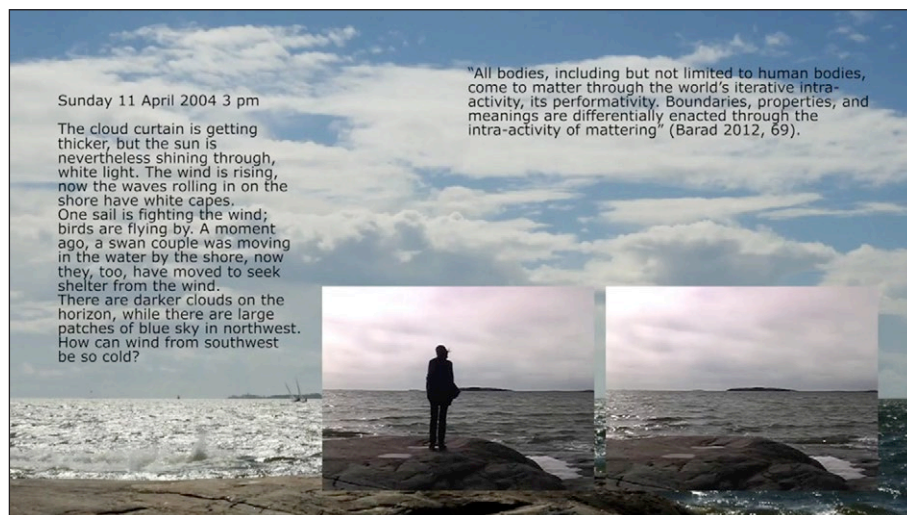
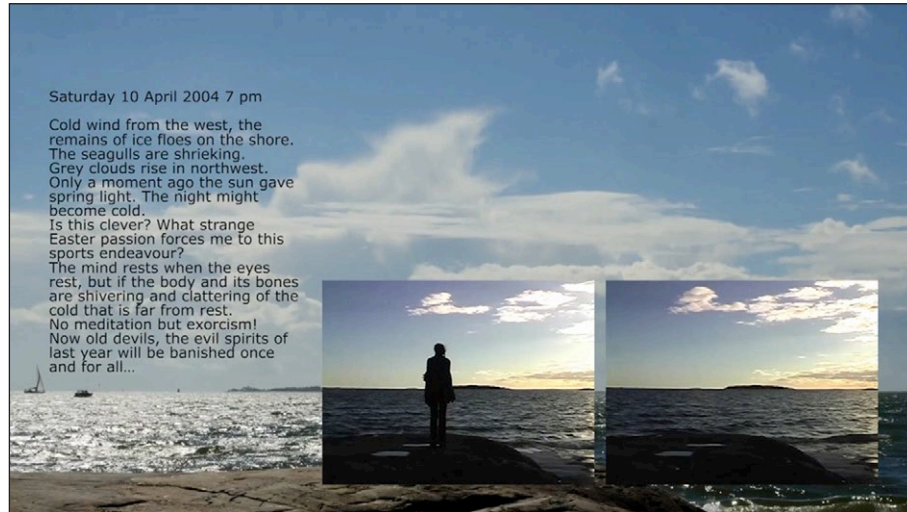
VIDEO ARTICLE

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STILLS FROM THE VIDEO ARTICLE





VIDEO ARTICLE TRANSCRIPT

[00:10]

The Shore Revisited

[Annette Arlander:]

One sunny day in August 2017, while spending time on Harakka Island as a gallery guard, I went down to the southwestern shore with my camera

to see whether I could find the spot where I had recorded *Year of the Goat* fourteen years earlier, in 2003 and beginning of 2004, and whether I would remember what I did. And of course, I remembered. The small cliff I stood on was easy to find. The spot for the camera tripod was more difficult because the terrain had changed. The boulder was still there, but vegetation behind it had grown so there was no easy way of passing behind the camera. The rock I had used as a mark for framing the image, was not there or anywhere near, but there were other rocks. My camera was not the same, nor my tripod. At that time, I used a simple digital video camera and a television format, rather than the film format mostly used today, and un-manipulated stereo sound, without wind protection.

I decided there and then to record a repetition of the same action I had repeated so many times during that year: walking past the camera following the shoreline and the horizon from left to right in the image, then returning behind the camera and walking past it again a little further away, then standing on the cliff looking out to sea for a while, and finally letting the camera record the view without the human figure. This time I did not repeat the walk twice, though, nor did I have my dark blue scarf with me. This was a simple exercise of reminiscence, not a recreation. When I looked at the recording later, I realized I had made the same mistake that I made back then, placing the horizon too high, compared to the painting that had served as my inspiration, *Der Mönch am Meer*, by Caspar David Friedrich.

[02:06]

Caspar David Friedrich: *Der Mönch am Meer*, The Monk by the Sea (1810)

So, I went back and recorded the view one more time, for the image that is used here as the backdrop for the installation material.

This exercise was related to the four-year research project funded by the Academy of Finland “How to do things with performance?”. At the kick-off seminar of the project in October 2016 I used the first part of the series – *Year of the Horse*, from 2003 – and the epilogue created in the same place twelve years later – *Year of the Horse Calendar*, from 2015 – as examples to discuss repetition as one of the ways of doing things with performance. To continue on this track, I decided to use the following year in the series, the *Year of the Goat* from 2004, as a starting point and a site to return to.

[02:31]

Background:

Year of the Horse (Sitting on a Rock) 2003 (12 min. 28 sec.) DV 4:3

<http://www.av-arkki.fi/en/works/year-of-the-horse-sitting-on-a-rock/>

Year of the Horse – Calendar 1–2 2015 two-channel video installation HD 16:9
(11 min 10 sec.)

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

[02:48]

Discussed in:

“How to do things with repetition?” video with text, *Icehole #6* 2017, The Live Art Journal. http://www.icehole.fi/vol-6_issue2_2017/video-by-annette-arlander/

“Repeat, Revisit, Recreate—Two Times Year of the Horse”. In *PARSE Journal* Issue #3 Repetitions and Reneges. 2016, 43–59.

Online <http://www.parsejournal.com/article/repeat-revisit-recreate-two-times-year-of-the-horse/>

[03:00]

Year of the Goat (2004) DV video 4 × 13 min. 40 sec.

performed and recorded approximately once a week

between march 2003 and march 2004

on the southwestern shore of Harakka Island off Helsinki

[3:05]

[Embedded videos begin]

Year of the Goat 1

Year of the Goat 2

Year of the Goat 3

Year of the Goat 4

Year of the Goat was the second year in a series of repeated performances for camera on Harakka Island in Helsinki, named after the Chinese Calendar, and later to be called *Animal Years*. A synopsis for *Year of the Goat – Harakka Shore* in the catalogue of the Distribution Centre for Finnish Media Art is brief: First part, left: I walk with a blue scarf on my shoulders on the shore on Harakka Island, from South to North past the camera, left to right in the image, 54 times, about once a week from March 2003 to March 2004. Second part, center left: I walk on the shore a little further away from the camera, on the same occasions. Third part, center right: I stand at the shore looking out to sea with the camera behind me, on the same occasions. Fourth part, right: The shore without the human figure 54 times, recorded at the same occasions. A single channel version, *Year of the Goat – Harakka Shore 1–3*, consists of the three first parts combined one after the other. Here you can see all four parts simultaneously, inserted into one frame.

Year of the Goat is one of the very few commissioned works I have made – commissioned in the sense that I was invited to participate in an exhibition when I had started the work and decided to base my contribution

on that, together with some other works created to complement it. Thus, *Year of the Goat* was first shown as a three-channel version as part of “The Shore” comprising three video installations composed of performance documentations made with the same method in an exhibition called *Vision and Mind* at Kiasma Museum of Contemporary Art in Helsinki during the summer 2004.

[04:45]

First shown in *Vision and Mind*, Kiasma Museum of Contemporary Art, Helsinki 29.5.–19.9.2004.

In this context “method” means creating rough time-lapse videos by returning to the same site repeatedly, placing the camera tripod in the same spot, framing the image as similar as possible each time, and performing the same action or pose wearing the same scarf. By repeating the same action and the same image, the changes in the landscape can come to the fore, for instance the seasonal changes during a year, as in *Year of the Goat*, or the changing light conditions during a day and night, as in *Day and Night of the Monkey*, to be shown later.

[05:41]

Used as material for:

“Finding your Landscape”, presentation and workshop in

PARIP (Practice as research in performance) conference at University of Bristol 29.6.–3.7. 2005.

Briefly described in:

“Performing landscape” in Ludivine Allegue, Simon Jones, Baz Kershaw, Angela Piccini (eds.) *Practice-as-research in performance and screen*. (catalogue and DVD)

Palgrave Macmillan 2009, 191.

I used this work as a starting point for “Finding your Landscape”, a presentation and workshop in PARIP, Practice as Research in Performance, an international conference at University of Bristol in June/July 2005. For the publication I wrote a short presentation, which describes my concerns at the time. I quote: “I am interested in various ways of performing landscape. Sometimes I use myself as a ‘conduit’ in video or sound works, documenting performances repeated in a particular place. Sometimes I try to ‘give voice’ to elements in the landscape” — end of quote. I further explain that my background is in theatre and in radio plays, give a short summary of my doctoral work and note that, I quote, “since the year 2000, I have moved outdoors, turned to contemporary art and started the project ‘performing landscape’” — end of quote. The aims of the practice I described in a condensed form, as follows. I quote:

“The research practice explored by ‘The Shore’ combines performance and documentation into a method of production with the purpose to support the creative process. It could also be used to explore one’s relationship to the landscape, to take up issues within a community by focusing on special areas, to understand changes in the environment within a time-period, etc. — that is, to produce knowledge related to *The Three Ecologies* by Félix Guattari. Roughly: the subjectivity, the socius and the global environment. It raises questions about the relevance of a devotional practice for the performer, the political use of the self as a focusing tool when addressing environmental issues and the ethical challenge in creating action models to be repeated in everyday life” — end of quote.

[07:09]

Guattari, Félix (2000). *The Three Ecologies*. London: The Athlone Press.

[07:38]

Discussed in:

“How landscape moves me” in *Performing Landscape – Notes on Site-specific Work and Artistic Research. Texts 2001–2011*. Acta Scenica 28. Theatre Academy Helsinki 2012. 321–355 <https://helda.helsinki.fi/handle/10138/37613>

Later, in a chapter of the book *Performing Landscape – Notes on sites-specific work and artistic research* in 2012, in a chapter called “How landscape moves me”, based on an earlier article in Finnish, I pondered how landscape moves me and how to perform landscape by letting oneself be moved by it.

Did the shoreline invite me to walk along it? Perhaps it did so by affording me a direction, although by moving I wanted rather to demonstrate time passing. The landscape moved me through changes in the weather. I quickly learned to know the uneven surface of the cliff, its holes and bumps. Sometimes, however, they turned into pools that froze or disappeared under the snow. A small hollow in the cliff was a sign for where to stand and look out to sea. A boulder where the grass began marked the spot for the camera. With the snow, only the largest signs in the surroundings were of any help. The various elements of the landscape shaped my movements. When a family of geese landed in the pools on my route, I had to wait for them to pass slowly before repeating my performance, and I remembered again what I wanted to show with the video: The landscape is not uniform, singular or static, but always different. It is constantly changing and full of events, even when the site is only a bare cliff without any vegetation. I was interested in the corporeality of site-specific performance and noticed how – although the environment is often experienced most strongly by moving through it, rather than looking at it, as already Arnold Berleant pointed out – in order to experience a corporeal connection to a site it is useful to remain repeatedly still in it for a while.

[09:08]

Berleant, Arnold (1997). *Living in the Landscape. Toward an Aesthetics of Environment*. Lawrence Kansas: University Press of Kansas.

[09:26]

Howell, Anthony (1999). *The Analysis of Performance Art – A Guide to its Theory and Practice*. Amsterdam: Harwood academic publishers.

Lepecki, André (2006). *Exhausting Dance – Performance and the politics of movement*. New York: Routledge.

Seremitakis, Nadia C. (1994). The Memory of the Senses, Part II: Still Acts. In Nadia C. Seremitakis (ed.) *The Senses still – Perception and Memory as Material Culture in Modernity*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 23–43.

In that text, I looked at “The Shore” through the idea of “still-act”, adopted from anthropologist Nadia Seremitakis by dance scholar André Lepecki in 2006, and through the “primaries of action” developed by the British live artist Anthony Howell in 1999. His idea of stillness, repetition and inconsistency being the three basic elements of performance, prompted me to look at the variations in “The Shore” by asking: What is changing, what stays the same? And to explore how the elements of action – stillness, repetition and inconsistency – understood more broadly as principles of action, could be used to analyse choices made in video recording, editing and display. The basic method used in these works involved stillness and cycles of repetition in various ways. The editing principles and the techniques of combining the videos in the installations were regarded through those notions as well. The question “What is changing, what stays the same?” was applied on all levels. Here I will compare only two of the works included in “The Shore”, and performed on the same site on the island, the year and the day and night.

In using a static camera on a tripod, I strived to repeat the same framing of the image. The same walk along the shore and the same pose with my back to the camera looking at the horizon were repeated. The scale of the repetition varied: In *Year of the Goat* the performance was repeated once

a week, mostly during the weekends, for one year. In *Day and Night of the Monkey* the performance was repeated every two-hours for a single day and night during Easter. Stillness and repetition were consciously used as tools, while changes and chance occurrences in the environment provided the variation, the surprises, the catastrophes or inconsistencies in Howell's terms. Inexactness in the framing and unintentional shifts in movement or position seem like inconsistencies as well. While creating *Year of the Goat* the videotape or the battery sometimes finished unexpectedly and thus some part of the performance remained unrecorded. While editing, I filled these gaps with the image of the view, which serves as an interruption in the otherwise orderly repetition.

While editing I retained the original order and the chronology of the images. The weekly performance consisted of several actions in a row – walking past the camera twice and then going to stand at the shore – which I divided into parts to present the variations simultaneously, as can be seen here. Each performance is divided into four parts: first walk, second walk, standing at the shore and the shore without a human figure. In the videos where I am standing still, I cut out my entering and exiting the image, to create an illusion of immobility, an artificial stillness, a fiction of sorts. Small cross fades between the images were added to soften the sound changes and to make the synchronisation easier. In *Year of the Goat* the duration of the images followed the slowest walk and varied from image to image, keeping the rhythm as tight as possible. In *Day and Night of the Monkey*, which involved only standing at the shore, the images were shortened to have the total duration of the video equal that of the *Year of the Goat*, approximately 13 minutes 40 seconds.

When displayed, the videos in *Year of the Goat* were placed next to each other in separate monitors with the image changes synchronised. This formed another type of a repetition; the same landscape was repeated

horizontally, emphasizing and extending the horizon in the images. As the aim was to produce an experience of continuity all videos were running nonstop without a marked beginning, end or rhythmical development. Here, as a miniature installation with all four channels cramped onto one screen, the work seems like an example of repetition as aesthetic strategy. Repetition not as in rehearsal or practicing mastering a skill, nor to find the perfect solution, nor repetition as a technique of the numinous, as suggested by Silvia Battista, but rather repetition as a tool for amplification, for accumulating material, for producing variation, and for demonstrating, even materialising difference.

[13:41]

Battista, Silvia (2016). Repetition as a Technology of the Numinous in Performance: *The Artist is Present* by Marina Abramović. In Eirini Kartsaki (ed.) *On Repetition. Writing, Performance & Art*. Bristol. UK: Intellect Books, 63–80.

Looking at the work today, the notion “agential cut”, or agential separability, developed by physicist and queer theorist Karen Barad, might be a more interesting concept than stillness and repetition in discussing the decisions involved.

[14:07]

Barad, Karen (2007). *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Barad, Karen (2012). Intra-actions. *Mousse*, 34, pp. 76–81. (Interview of Karen Barad by Adam Kleinmann). Available at: <https://openreadings.wordpress.com/texts/karen-barad/>

According [to] Barad, the boundaries and properties of a phenomenon become determinate through agential intra-actions. A specific intra-action, which involves a specific material configuration of the “apparatus”, enacts

an agential cut, effecting a separation between “subject” and “object”. The agential cut resolves the ontological and semantic indeterminacy. This means, to put it simply, that differences are made, not found, and dichotomies derive from specific cuts.

[14:54]

The boundaries and properties of the parts of a phenomenon become determinate only in the enactment of an agential cut that delineates the ‘measured object’ from the ‘measuring agent’. A measurement is the intra-active marking of one part of a phenomenon by another; nothing in a measurement makes it irreducibly human-centred (after Barad 2007, 338).

The boundaries and properties of the parts of a phenomenon become determinate only in the enactment of an agential cut that delineates the “measured object” from the “measuring agent”. A measurement is the intra-active marking of one part of a phenomenon by another; nothing in a measurement makes it irreducibly human-centred. For Barad “observer” and “observed” are merely two physical systems intra-acting in the marking of the “effect” by the “cause”. Humans may emerge as part of such practices but they are not necessary. The agential cut delineates object and instrument, but the role played by any part of the experimental arrangement varies depending on the details of the intra-action, due to the mutual exclusivity of the conditions for definability. For example, a device that can be used to define and measure “momentum” cannot be used to define and measure “position”. If a measurement is the intra-active marking of one part of a phenomenon by another, the question “What is changing, what remains the same?” could be rephrased as what is the “measured object” and what is the “measuring agency” in this case. What matters and what is excluded from mattering?

Suggested by the editor, Ben Spatz, I looked for my notes for *Year of the Goat*, recorded approximately once a week, or 54 times, from March 2003 to

March 2004, in order to add the dates to the images. They were nowhere to be found, of course.

[16:43]

Arlander 2004

[Embedded videos end]

[16:36]

Day and Night of the Monkey (2004) video 2 × 13 min. 40 sec.

performed and recorded with two-hour intervals

between April 10 at 7 pm and April 11 at 5 pm

on the southwestern shore of Harakka Island, off Helsinki

[16:48]

[Embedded videos begin: Day and Night of the Monkey 1–2]

What I did find, were notes for the *Day and Night of the Monkey*, performed every two hours, from 10th April at 7 pm to 11th April at 5 pm, written immediately after each recording session, in Finnish, on separate sheets as if to be included in an exhibition. Here they are translated into English.

[17:10]

Saturday 10 April 2004 7 pm

Cold wind from the west, the
remains of ice floes on the shore.

The seagulls are shrieking.

Grey clouds rise in northwest.

Only a moment ago the sun gave
spring light. The night might
become cold.

Is this clever? What strange
Easter passion forces me to this
sports endeavour
The mind rests when the eyes
rest, but if the body and its bones
are shivering and clattering of the
cold that is far from rest.
No meditation but exorcism!
Now old devils, the evil spirits of
last year will be banished once
and for all...

Saturday 10 April 2004 7 pm. Cold wind from the west, the remains of ice
floes on the shore. The seagulls are shrieking. Grey clouds rise in northwest.
Only a moment ago the sun gave spring light. – The night might become
cold. Is this clever? What strange Easter passion forces me to this sports
endeavour? The mind rests when the eyes rest, but if the body and its bones
are shivering and clattering of the cold that is far from rest. No meditation
but exorcism! Now old devils, the evil spirits of last year will be banished
once and for all...

Day and Night of the Monkey was recorded during Easter in 2004 for a day
and night with two-hour intervals in the same place as *Year of the Goat*. The
tripod was placed closer to the shore and I did not walk past the camera, but
stood still looking at the sea, waiting for daybreak.

[18:17]

Saturday 10 April 2004 9 pm

Only a moment ago the sky was
filled with pinkish lint balls.
Now it is almost empty, spacious,

open. The wind has calmed down
a little, maybe. A lonely swan is
swimming towards the open sea.
A few weeks ago, they were two
diving between the shreds of ice.
I think I would be happy to have
a swan as my companion in the
water by the shore.

Vain, romantic!

It keeps swimming determined,
however, further away, hardly
visible any longer. So be it.
Soon, very soon it will be blue
and then dark.

[18:57]

A text which was shown next to *Day and Night of the Monkey* at the exhibition, and which was later added as subtitles to the night shots of that video, could serve as a script or score for both works:

[19:12]

Saturday 10 April 2004 11 pm

Starry night – and the sea is filled
with flickering lights. The orange
lamps of the western harbour and
Hernesaaari (The Pea Island) are
shining in northwest, even the ice
floes reflect the gleam.

The night is not dark but it is cold.
Stumbling on the rocks feels

strange at night, the proportions
shift, memory distorts them, but
the eyes adjust to darkness quite
soon.

Strange how the wind does not
quiet...

[19:18]

Take a scarf, go to the shore, stand at the shore. Look at the horizon, look at
the water's surface, breathe. Until your eyes rest, until your mind rests, until
you are cold, tired, having enough.

[Text scrolling in embedded video]:

Take a scarf, go to the shore, stand at the shore.
Look at the horizon, look at the water's surface, breathe.
Until your eyes rest, until your mind rests, until you are cold, tired, having enough.
Take the same scarf, go to the same shore, stand at the shore.
Look at the horizon, look at the water's surface, breathe.
And so on.

Take the same scarf, go to the same shore, stand at the shore. Look at the
horizon, look at the water's surface, breathe. And so on.

[19:56]

Sunday 11 April 2004 1 am

The same stars, the same wind.
A moment ago, an illuminated ship
was gliding by. The chugging of a
motorboat is heard from
somewhere, but no lights are

visible. The traffic of the city sounds
very near, nearer than in daytime.
The night is full of lights. The wind
is cold, the sky clear and high.
I do not know the stars, but there
they are, all of them. Some could
be satellites or even an airplane.
The moon is not visible. It should
be a crescent, waning.
Five hours until daybreak.
I am already waiting for the pale
shimmer, a promise of warmth.
[20:41]

Perhaps we can understand the idea of an agential cut, albeit in a somewhat
simplified manner, with the help of these performances for camera.

[20:57]

Sunday 11 April 2004 3 am
There is a faint mist in the air,
a hint, or perhaps I imagine.
The stars are as bright as before.
In the south, there is a strange
pale gleam, could it be Tallinn?
The traffic of the city is even
stronger now. Is somebody still
driving a motorcycle. And church
bells, sounding hollow, like some
iron rolls. What else could it be?
Am I hearing hallucinations,

dreaming while awake.
It feels like winter coming
towards me, not spring. Cold.
The surface of the snow patches
is hard with ice.

Firstly, the framing of an image enacts an agential cut of sorts. The camera produces an image by creating a split between what is within and what is outside the frame, between what is part of the image and what is not. Nothing of this division pre-exists in the landscape; the framing emerges through the action of video recording. The cut is determined by material-discursive practices linked to the entanglement of equipment and environment – like the properties of the lens of the camera, or my preconceptions of what constitutes a good view, or the weather conditions that day, and so on. In *Day and Night of the Monkey* my new camera did not work with infrared light reacting to the temperature, recording the human figure as a grey shadow, as I expected, so the night images showed nothing but darkness and the flickering lights of distant buoys.

Another kind of agential cut is enacted by the choice of time schedule or temporal framing. A literal cut takes place when I return to the shore and repeat the action once a week, thus picking “slices of time” of the landscape. Everything between the recorded moments is excluded from the video.

[22:10]

Sunday 11 April 2004 5 am

It is already rosy in the east,
a clear rose colour, and the sky is
blue, no longer black. The border

between the sea and the sky is
visible anyway, without the
flickering lights.
The light increases each moment.
The wind has calmed down,
slightly, although it does not feel
like it, but the sound of the waves
is milder. It is still clear, but the
stars are turning pale. And cold.
Now one can see that the surface
of the water puddles is frozen.
And the moon! A huge orange
sail is rising in the south.
Almost in time with the sun,
but a little bit before...

The schedule produces a series of cuts in the time continuum. Another schedule, another cycle of time and a different “temporal framing” – such as returning to the same place every second hour for a day and night, as in *Day and Night of the Monkey* – enacts another set of agential cuts and creates another view of the changes in the landscape.

A third type of agential cut is activated through the editing process. By dividing a continuous action into several videos – all images where I walk close to the camera combined to form one video; all images where I walk further away combined into another video; all images where I stand at the shore combined into a third; and images of the view into a fourth – and synchronising their duration, they can be juxtaposed as variations and shown simultaneously as in *Year of the Goat*. Or, all images with the human figure juxtaposed with the same images without a human presence, as in this version of *Day and Night of the Monkey*.

[23:12]

Sunday 11 April 2004 7 am

The sun is already high, in the west the horizon is rosy, as a reflection. The birds have awoken to shriek. Two crows are pecking the frozen surface of a puddle. There is frost on the ground, most clearly visible on the mosses. The wet tussocks are now glazed with white powder. – The sun hits the western harbour and Pihlajasaari (The Rowan Island). They seem to be so very close. Despite it being early everything looks otherwise “normal”, familiar. This is how I have seen it before, or rather, this is what this shore is like “in reality”.

A continuous stillness is artificially created by removing the images where I enter or exit the image when I stand at the shore in *Day and Night of the Monkey*. An illusion of continuity is produced through these cuts.

A fourth level of agential cuts take place in combining the videos. When shown for the first time three of the videos in *Year of the Goat* were presented simultaneously, in parallel, to accentuate the horizon and the movement from left to right. The fourth video, without a human figure, was not included, probably to connect with the other triptych, or perhaps

for some practical reason already forgotten. These kinds of inclusions and exclusions can also be understood as agential cuts of a kind.

[24:11]

Sunday 11 April 2004 9 am

The sun is already warming a little.

A strangely formed concave ice
floe has drifted onto the shore,
in fact, a shred. The seagulls are
shrieking incessantly. There is
probably some other species in
the group, too, some type of tern,
or the like, because the shrieks
are of two kinds – maybe even
more. The frost has almost
disappeared from the ground,
but the frozen surface of the
puddles is melting more slowly.

The slow battle of spring: melting
in the warmth of the day,
freezing again in the cold at night,
melting again – and melting always
a little more. – They say a human
being is 90% water. [60% is more
correct] Perhaps I am like a
puddle, too, which finally
evaporates totally.

As Barad points out, agential cuts should not be confused with human decision-making only; agential cuts are not enacted by wilful individuals but

by the larger material arrangement of which they are a part. In this case, for example, technology had a great deal to say because I used the automatic functions of the video camera. The light meter and white-balance calculator, automatic focus, and other devices included in the functions of the camera constantly reacted and readjusted to changes in the environment and the actions of the performer. The “pumping” of the automatic focus trying to decide what to follow when the performer enters the frame is clearly visible in some of the images. The editing process as well, is an entanglement of human choice, recorded environmental circumstances, and the affordances of technology. They all have their agency in the agential cuts enacted.

[25:14]

Sunday 11 April 2004 11 am

Some haze or soft clouds have
appeared in the sky. It is
not covering the sun, but dims it
like a light curtain. The wind has
brought some ice floes on the
horizon. From the hill once can
see they are small and rather
close. Close to the shore people
are casting or checking fish nets,
or perhaps traps for catching eel.
The waves or combers bring in
some thick foam on the shore.
Not of the kind Aphrodite was
born of but oily, bad looking.
The sun is warming, but the wind
bites almost harder than at night,
pinches, hurts the face. –

The spring is only nascent.

Each of these cuts clearly makes a difference in the resulting videos by defining what is included and what is excluded on each level. As Barad explains, I quote: “different agential cuts materialize different phenomena – different marks on bodies” and “contribute to the differential mattering of the world”. End of quote.

[25:26]

“different agential cuts materialize different phenomena – different marks on bodies” and “contribute to the differential mattering of the world” (Barad 2007, 178)

She insists that we are responsible for the cuts that we help to enact, not because we choose or are being chosen but because we are an agential part of the material becoming of the universe. This also means, I quote, “‘others’ are never very far from ‘us’; ‘they’ and ‘we’ are co-constituted and entangled through the very cuts ‘we’ help to enact”, she writes.

[25:53]

“‘others’ are never very far from ‘us’; ‘they’ and ‘we’ are co-constituted and entangled through the very cuts ‘we’ help to enact” (Barad 2007, 179).

Although I chose the apparatus and the moments, in this case, the combined environmental circumstances that the camera reacted to produce the images.

[26:10]

Sunday 11 April 2004 1 pm

The wind has turned further
towards southwest, southwards,

but is no warmer for that.
 A huge Viking Line ferry glides
 past on the left. Only the cabin
 of the cargo vessel is visible.
 The zone of ice floes floating on
 the horizon a while ago is now
 crushed ice or sludge in front of
 the cliffs. The waves move it
 against the rocks like crushed
 ice in a cocktail.
 In the distance, some sails.
 Crazy people defying the cutting
 wind, longing for the spring, like me.

[26:27]

Barad further specifies the nature of agential cuts as follows, I quote: “Intra-actions enact agential cuts, which are a cutting together-apart (that is, entangling-differentiating), as one move (not sequential acts)”, end of quote.

“Intra-actions enact agential cuts, which are a cutting together-apart (that is, entangling-differentiating), as one move (not sequential acts)” (Barad 2007, 80).

[26:41]

Moreover, I quote, “the world can never characterize itself in its entirety; it is only through different enactments of agential cuts, different differences, that it can come to know different aspects of ‘itself’”, end of quote.

“the world can never characterize itself in its entirety; it is only through different enactments of agential cuts, different differences, that it can come to know different aspects of ‘itself’” (Barad 2007, 432, footnote 42).

We cannot study or look at everything at once, I quote: “Only part of the world can be made intelligible to itself at a time, because the other part of the world has to be the part that it makes a difference to” – end of quote.

[27:00]

“Only part of the world can be made intelligible to itself at a time, because the other part of the world has to be the part that it makes a difference to” (Barad 2007, 432, footnote 42).

What is part of the apparatus and what is part of the body being marked or measured can change from case to case and within a specific case from time to time.

What matters for Barad is the accountability to marks on bodies – that is, an accounting of the apparatuses that enact determinate causal structures, boundaries, properties, and meanings. She stresses the importance of, I quote: “*the proper accounting of agential cuts within the specific phenomenon in question*”, end of quote.

[27:32]

Sunday 11 April 2004 3 pm

The cloud curtain is getting
thicker, but the sun is
nevertheless shining through,
white light. The wind is rising,
now the waves rolling in on the
shore have white capes.
One sail is fighting the wind;
birds are flying by. A moment
ago, a swan couple was moving

in the water by the shore, now
 they, too, have moved to seek
 shelter from the wind.
 There are darker clouds on the
 horizon, while there are large
 patches of blue sky in the northwest.
 How can wind from southwest
 be so cold?

“the proper accounting of agential cuts within the specific phenomenon in question”
 (Barad 2007, 345).

Although there are no determinate, pre-existing entities with determinate properties, there are determinate marks on bodies produced through specific intra-actions, and these marks need to be accounted for.

[28:05]

As Barad suggests, I quote: “All bodies, including but not limited to human bodies, come to matter through the world’s iterative intra-activity, its performativity. Boundaries, properties, and meanings are differentially enacted through the intra-activity of mattering” – end of quote.

“All bodies, including but not limited to human bodies, come to matter through the world’s iterative intra-activity, its performativity. Boundaries, properties, and meanings are differentially enacted through the intra-activity of mattering” (Barad 2012, 69).

She adds, however, that differentiating is not about radical exteriorities, not about “othering” or separating, I quote: “the very nature of materiality itself is an entanglement. Hence, what is on the other side of the agential cut is never separate from us”, end of quote.

[28:34]

“the very nature of materiality itself is an entanglement. Hence, what is on the other side of the agential cut is never separate from us” (Barad 2012, 69).

[28:53]

Sunday 11 April 2004 5 pm

The day turns towards evening
before warming up properly.
The sunlight on the waves is cold
and white. The bluish clouds on
the horizon promise rain;
hopefully rain rather than hail or
snow. – The seagulls are still
shrieking, although they have no
reason yet. There are no nests or
offspring yet, but soon there will
be. Then one would hardly dare
walk on the rocks.
Did the wind banish away the evil
spirits of last winter? I don't know.
It did stiffen me, inured, too,
I guess. I leave content to seek
shelter from the wind on the
mainland and wait patiently for
the warming spring. Exhausted
more than renewed: at home the
spring cleaning remains to be
done.

Sunday 11 April 2004 5 pm. The day turns towards evening before warming
up properly. The sunlight on the waves is cold and white. The bluish clouds

on the horizon promise rain; hopefully rain rather than hail or snow. The seagulls are still shrieking, although they have no reason yet. There are no nests or offspring yet, but soon there will be. Then one would hardly dare walk on the rocks.

Did the wind banish away the evil spirits of last winter? I don't know. It did stiffen me, inured, too, I guess. I leave content to seek shelter from the wind on the mainland and wait patiently for the warming spring. Exhausted more than renewed: at home the spring cleaning remains to be done.

[29:53]

Thinking of Barad's demand to account for agential cuts, it is relatively easy to understand in terms of art, and it is also one aspect of how things are done with performance: attending to the details of what matters and what is excluded from mattering. How to remember, acknowledge and account for the cuts of inclusion and exclusion we make, the apparatuses we use and are used by, as well as the marks on bodies generated by them in daily life, however, could be more of a challenge.

Arlander 2004

[30:25]

[Embedded videos end]

[30:30]

Arlander 2018

Competing Interests

The author has no competing interests to declare.

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