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DOMESTICATED

I am interested in both *abnormal state* and *abnormal space* in the project *Floating Peripheries – Mediating the Sense of Place*. I approach the phenomenon through several art projects, all of which consist of scenographic works of arts - and all of which will be located at the porous border between normal and abnormal. During these projects my purpose is to encounter disabled, isolated and abandoned - both humans and animals - and to make their spaces and circumstances visible by scenographic means but also to build places for them to dwell.

In the project *Domesticated* I examine the ability of expanded scenography in bringing forth and revealing phenomenon, which take place in our immediate surroundings and everyday life but are, as a whole, concealed. This phenomenon is the modern human's nature relationship. The wild and the domesticated nature form the conceptual starting points for my examination; the centre and the periphery that change places depending on the point of view. Here, by wild nature I refer to nature's diverse, entity that always works in its own terms, and that no species rules alone. Respectively, in my examination domesticated nature refers to nature - that the human being has taken control of. I claim that the modern human lives far away from the wild nature. The lifestyle of an urban human is global, industrial, technological - and in this way of life - nature exists only for the needs of the human. This kind of a nature relationship, where nature is no longer understood as an entity nor approached from its own needs, can be considered *thinned*. Finnish philosopher Juha Varto has used this term based on German philosopher Martin Heidegger's idea of *Calculative thinking*, for describing the anthropocentric attitude, always targeting an aim. In a thinned nature relationship, nature has become first and foremost a resource. Human has placed himself at the centre of the universe and divided nature into parts that serve his own needs.

My underlying assumptions include existential phenomenology, especially the way how Heidegger thinks about being; what *being* is. According to this philosophy, humans have two ways of being in the world; one is *Authentic* and the other is *Inauthentic being*.¹ Being authentic is being whole - by being one with the world - and thus also being towards the authentic self. Respectively, inauthentic being is being that has been dispersed everywhere, toward the world - and thus away from the self. Inauthentic being is acting in accordance with general models - that prevail everywhere. In *Domesticated* I ask how to make visible the thinned nature relationship - that is realized in the manner of humans in treating their animals. I also ask how to restore the understanding of nature - that has moved to the periphery - as an entity surpassing the needs of humans - back to the centre of our thinking. The thinned nature relationship is real, mundane, near and everywhere. By taking an animal as a pet, the nature comes near us and we create a vision that the wild nature is in our control. The wild nature has been tamed, stroked, dressed and trimmed, and it has become more human or a product. The

¹ Heidegger 2001, 67.

modern human is thoughtless consumer. He acts amongst his things and products like the masses act, so his name is 'They'. 'They' is Heidegger's Inauthentic man (Das Man.)²

My artistic research is based on living reality; life with a pet as well as life in the country of abandoned pets; and working as voluntary in animal shelters. In the background, there are also numerous local and international news, news images, and statistics that all tell a story of, how the wild nature has moved to the periphery along with domestication. I have approached my subject with a phenomenological, ethnographic and autoethnographic grasp but my primary research method is an art practice. My starting points are in the reality but, at the same time, they are also in memories, images and mysticism. As methods of artistic research, fiction and fantasy enable looking also to the future, where our thinned nature relationship takes us. *They say that a cat has nine lives.* In number mysticism, nine is the trinity of trinities. In Ancient Egypt, where cats were highly respected, they worshipped Atum-Ra, the god of sun, that I took to my fictional fellow researcher.

*Atum-Ra gave life to four gods: the gods of air, humidity, the earth and the sky.
The god of sky, in turn, gave birth to four gods, Osiris, Isis, Seth and Nephthys.
Together, all these gods are known by the name 'the nine'.
Atum-Ra, who took the shape of a cat - when visiting the underworld,
- embodied the nine lives in one creator character.*

In a pre-Socratic world nature was understood as Fysis but Fysis was more than the nature. It was an uncontrollable force surpassing human. According to the mythology, the shape of a cat embodies nine lives, the entity of nature. Thus, the cruel way to understand animals as products depicts our way of relating to the air, water, earth and sky; to the wild nature, we look at from the periphery. The human living in the periphery has forgotten that nature is wild and uncontrollable. By releasing the domesticated animal back to nature, the modern human, 'They', can begin an unpredictable series ' of events and a new era.

Domesticated always returns. *A cat returns, because it has nine lives.* This idea inspired me in my art work. Atum-Ra, who took the shape of a cat embodied air, humidity, earth and the sky. Finland has four seasons and the irresponsible keeping of pets is centred around the summer. In the fall raining begins and in the winter the earth freezes. Abandoned animals grow wild, freeze and die – or grow wild and reproduce. I asked what water, coldness and ice could say about abandoned animals and the thinned nature relationship of humans. Ice cannot 'survive' in the hot sun or in the rain, at the mercy of the weather. Ice cannot survive without melting, changing shape and disappearing. Ice is a proof of the constant need for care. My aim was to make it visible, in my site-specific ice gallery by the roadside, how the growing wild and uncontrollable breeding of abandoned animals can, before long, also lead to crossbreeding and mutations – and ultimately the creation of wholly new species. *Nature will return from the periphery, into the centre as domesticated always returns, and show humans their place.*

² Heidegger 2001, 164-169.

Domesticated presented those future mutations; broken figures of animals and their new forms; hybrids, which were made from ice (element of nature) by using rubber dog toy's (industrial product) as molds. The exhibition resembled the power of wild nature, post-humanism, which is not new, but which was already known as the power of the Fysis. Domesticated was both a presentation of the concealed or forgotten power of Nature, and a construction built up of Nature's own elements: humidity, water, temperature and ice. It comes into being, exists, and then vanishes subject to Nature's own terms and conditions. It revealed the inability of man to permanently push wild Nature to the periphery, but at the same time it also makes another dimension of Nature visible. It brings out the natural ability of humans to apply fantasy and fiction, and the ability of Art to reveal and see something not-yet-existent.

Future is not yet here and now, as the future is always only arriving. Seeing into the future requires fantasy and fiction as its means. With the help of fiction, we can make visible that what not yet exists. When this future dystopia becomes visible, alongside it, we can also imagine an alternative future. Alongside human centred calculative thinking targeting an aim and inauthentic being breaking loose from control and spreading everywhere also another kind of way of thinking and being can be realized: authentic being and *letting be* or *releasement* as a discourse of thinking (Heidegger's *gelassenheit*.)³ When the viewpoint changes the dualistic nature separating human and nature is broken or dualistic nature of the centre and the periphery, and the boundary between them disappears. Then we no longer have to think of nature as a resource, nor do we have to think that nature exists solely for the human. Instead, we have the opportunity to think in nature, as part of nature. Domesticated was an attempt to think in nature; *in air, water, earth, sky and ice*. It is also an attempt to expand thinking into *scenography* so that it is not design but revealing.

Heidegger Martin. 2001 (1927). *Oleminen ja aika*. Suom. R. Kupiainen. Tampere: Vastapaino.

Heidegger Martin. 1991 (1959) *Silleenjättäminen*. Suom. R. Kupiainen. Filosofisia tutkimuksia Tampereen Yliopistosta Vol. XIX. Tampere: Tampereen yliopisto.

³ Heidegger 1991.