ATT SAMAGERA MED VÄXTER – PERFORMING WITH PLANTS
Presentation, Process, Archive

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Structure of the session

1 - presentation of the background for the project and the archive
2 - task for exploring the archive individually or in pairs
3 - sharing the findings, conversation on documenting, archiving and communicating artistic research processes

Performing with plants / Att samagera med växter

artistic research projected funded by Kone Foundation (2017) and Vetenskapsrådet or the Swedish Research Council (2018-2019)

Online-archive:

https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/316550/316551

Both "archive" and "process" are notions with a heavy history within contemporary art. Within dance, choreography and performance a focus on the process of inquiry has been a crucial part of a research approach. Within fine art working with archives is an established mode of practice.

In this project "archive" and "process" are not so much core concepts but rather tools, parts of the methodology.

Changes pertaining to documenting and recording performances are connected to the increasing use of real time. Our understanding of what is "live" is linked to temporal simultaneity rather than spatial presence (Auslander 2008). Due to this development, documenting, recording and archiving performances are increasingly undertaken in real time during the process, often publicly.
(This is also linked to the increasing need to present preliminary results of artistic productions or research projects in advance of the actual work, in order to secure funding.)

(Auslander, Philip. 2008. "Live and technologically mediated performance." In Tracy C. Davis (ed.). *Cambridge Companion to Performance Studies*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 107–119.)

Within artistic research in performance, documentation has been a core issue from the start (Piccini &Rye 2009). Documenting and archiving performances have been attempts at overcoming the primacy of the written document and preserving parts of performances alongside texts. The question what to document, the process or the result, is crucial in artistic research; sharing methods and processes can increase transparency and communicability.

(Piccini, Angela and Caroline Rye. 2009. "Of Fevered Archives and the Quest for Total Documentation". In Ludivine Allegue, Simon Jones, Baz Kershaw and Angela Piccini (eds.). *Practice-as-Research in Performance and Screen.* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 34-49.)

Open Access publishing as well as open access archiving of research data are topics much debated in academic research today.
The idea of open archiving is problematic for art, if we think of art as production of value to be purchased, either as objects or tickets etc.

Archiving

In the introduction to their anthology *Performing Archives / Archives of Performance* Gunhild Borggreen and Rune Gade note how these two seemingly contrasting concepts are increasingly blurred: "New ways of understanding archives, history, and memory emerge and address theories of enactment and intervention, while concepts of performance constantly proliferate and enable a critical focus on archival residue." Starting with Richard Schechners' understanding of performances as actions, Marvin Carlson's observation that performance as a metaphor has moved scholarly focus from the "what" to the "how" of culture, and Jon McKenzies' claim that performance is today not only an analytical tool but also a disciplinary instrument ("perform, or else"), they rehearse the debate concerning the ontology of performance with regards to documentation.

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

Since Peggy Phelan's well-known claim in 1993 that performance's only life is in the present, and performance's being becomes itself through disappearance, various responses have criticized and complicated this ontology, including Philip Auslander (1999), who deconstructs the opposition between live and mediated forms, and Rebecca Schneider (2001), who maintains that archives disappear as well, while performances do remain and form bodily techniques of remembering. Following Diana Taylor (2003), who, in her influential discussion of the archive and the repertory, politicises the idea of considering performances as ephemeral, they note the need to "take seriously the repertoire of embodied practices as an important system of knowing and transmitting knowledge."

(Borggreen, Gunhild, and Gade, Rune. Introduction: The Archive in Performance Studies. In *Performing Archives / Archives of Performance.* Gunhild Norggreen and Rune Gade (eds.). Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press. 2013. pp. 13-15.)

Another aspect they refer to is the increasing popularity of practice as a methodology: "Parts of performance studies known as PaR (Performance as Research) use creative practice as a methodological approach in its own right, and thus emphasize a mutual response between doing and knowing in the scholarly process." For them "there is not only a close relationship between research and performance—since many scholars are practising artists themselves, and many artists engage in critical theorising about the way in which they do or perform—but also because the distinct categories of artwork and research can no longer be upheld."

(Borggreen, Gunhild, and Gade, Rune. Introduction: The Archive in Performance Studies. In *Performing Archives / Archives of Performance.* Gunhild Norggreen and Rune Gade (eds.). Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press. 2013. pp. 12.)

Documentation of practice

In their article "Of Fevered Archives And the Quest for Total Documentation" (2009) Angela Piccini and Caroline Rye criticise the "archive fever" (Derrida 1995), pertaining to the documentation of practice-as-research in the UK.
"While … the formalisation of practice-as-research must not be conflated with the question of documentation, it is clear that the discussions that took place and the policies formulated shaped specific research-documentation-dissemination relationships." They suggest that, "should the continued inclusion of art within the academy be predicated on the academy's need to archive, then artist-scholars cannot avoid developing diverse strategies for documentation that problematize the very possibility of representation."

(Piccini, Angela and Caroline Rye. 2009. "Of Fevered Archives and the Quest for Total Documentation". In Ludivine Allegue, Simon Jones, Baz Kershaw and Angela Piccini (eds.). *Practice-as-Research in Performance and Screen.* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 37.)

They distinguish between document and documentation:
"It is crucial up front to signpost the difference between 'document' (the unintended traces, detritus, residues left over from practice-as-research in the form of coffee cups, cigarette butts and the hair, skin and sweat of our bodies that may later be identified as important by the archaeo-archivist) and 'documentation' (the intentional desire to create the indexical sign *out of which* meaning may be *revealed*)."

(Piccini, Angela and Caroline Rye. 2009. "Of Fevered Archives and the Quest for Total Documentation". In Ludivine Allegue, Simon Jones, Baz Kershaw and Angela Piccini (eds.). *Practice-as-Research in Performance and Screen.* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 35.)

"While both may stand in for the experience when we cannot get to the show, where documents as artefacts presence absence, the intentional documentation of practice-as-research through the use of camera-based technologies provides an illusion of knowing through its dominant alignment with the aesthetics and logics of direct cinema. While any event produces traces… the use of camera-based technologies attempts to produce a 'document' that indexes the event."

This means forgetting what documentary filmmakers know: "the act of documenting signals the impossibility of its claims to evidence any pro-filmic 'reality'."

(Piccini, Angela and Caroline Rye. 2009. "Of Fevered Archives and the Quest for Total Documentation". In Ludivine Allegue, Simon Jones, Baz Kershaw and Angela Piccini (eds.). *Practice-as-Research in Performance and Screen.* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 35-36.)

Piccini and Rye suggest that we must be precise about how we wish documentation to operate in the academy.

They insist that "documentation can neither properly comment on nor reveal and disseminate the research dimensions of art, as demanded by the peer review and assessment structures." They stress, however, "the difference between the use of recording technologies to produce art in proximity of practice-as-research and the use of recording technologies in the impossible task of documenting practice-as-research. The problem rests not so much with the concept of 'video' as with the concept of 'documentation'."

(Piccini, Angela and Caroline Rye. 2009. "Of Fevered Archives and the Quest for Total Documentation". In Ludivine Allegue, Simon Jones, Baz Kershaw and Angela Piccini (eds.). *Practice-as-Research in Performance and Screen.* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 42.)

They suggest that "the current trend towards ongoing commentaries on, rather than documentation of, practice-as-research produces spaces in which the more radical implications of these activities might be realized. /--/ Documentation thus sits in useful relation to mixed-mode research practices … as an arena through which the various practice-as-research communities may collectively (dis)agree on and raise questions about what they and the wider academy deem worthy."

(Piccini, Angela and Caroline Rye. 2009. "Of Fevered Archives and the Quest for Total Documentation". In Ludivine Allegue, Simon Jones, Baz Kershaw and Angela Piccini (eds.). *Practice-as-Research in Performance and Screen.* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 49.)

In performing with plants video is the primary medium, not an auxiliary tool to document a practice that would take place without the presence of the camera.

Earlier I used to stress, however, that the actual work was the performance for the camera, and the video to be shown to the public was only a documentation of that performance.

Today I would rather remind you, - although the archive you will see includes quite a few edited video works - that most of the images in the archive are video stills from unedited material for future works, which nevertheless document the process, or rather, produce the process by documenting it.

Performativity of documentation

In "The Performativity of Performance Documentation" (2006) Philip Auslander claims that documenting a performance art event as a performance makes it into a performance, that performance documentations are performatives (in the Austinian sense). For him "*the act of documenting an event as a performance is what constitutes it as such*" (Auslander 2006, 5). "[I]t is not the initial presence of an audience that makes an event a work of performance art: it is its framing as performance through the performative act of documenting it as such" (Auslander 2006, 7). Moreover, no performance that is documented is performed as an end in itself, Auslander claims: it is always at some level raw material for documentation. Ultimately, the photograph replaces the reality it documents.

(Auslander, Philip. 2006. "The performativity of performance documentation." *Performing Arts Journal* 84 Vol. 28, N 3. September, pp. 1–10.)

Research Catalogue

The platform in this case is the online Research Catalogue-
"The RC [Research Catalogue] is designed to support such expositions of practice as research. While the notion of 'exposition' may suggest a simple 'unveiling' of research, in the context of JAR [Journal for Artistic Research], the term also indicates a creative act: an exposition is a form of making that turns an artistic idea into an epistemic claim. Consequently, speculations regarding the ontology of artistic research are less relevant; more important are the epistemologies that are proposed that suggest how a particular practice may be understood as research."

(Michael Schwab 2015. English draft (pp. 1-3) for: Research Catalogue. In J. Badura et al., (eds.) Künstlerische Forschung. Ein Handbuch. Zurich: Diaphanes, pp. 333–336.)

The Research Catalogue (RC) is an international searchable online database and publishing platform for artistic research, which is free to use for individual artists and researchers, at the same time as it is the publishing platform for several online journals, first and foremost among them the Journal for Artistic Research (JAR).

The RC can be used in at least three ways: 1) as a publication platform and searchable database with possibility to comment, 2) as a personal tool for organising, presenting and archiving work, and 3) as a tool for sharing work in progress and collaborating with a specific group only.

Other aspects, like easy referencing of previous artistic research or sharing research in progress are useful for the individual user, although the main purpose of the RC to begin with was to serve as a publication platform.

As an educational tool the RC is useful via an active documentation of practice, which can then be arranged and conceived as an exposition and becomes a tool for reflection, like mind mapping, a simultaneous presentation of material juxtaposed instead of or as a complement to the linear, story-line approach to reporting research.

In performing with plants I use the RC as a personal tool for organising, presenting and archiving work, which is also made publicly available. Thus I share the process as it unfolds.

Other expositions as inspiration for core features of the exposotion:

"living archive", made public while in progress rather than a fixed and published document – Tahto Doctoral programme, (participants defending their works at different times) https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/142936/232532/0/5

"timeline" as an overarching structure for presenting the various activities and products of a research project – Music Experiment 21 by Paulo de Assis
 https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/106821/243746

Performing with plants / Att samagera med växter

artistic research projected funded by Kone Foundation (2017) and Vetenskapsrådet or the Swedish Research Council (2018-2019)

Online-archive:

"'Performing with plants' is an artistic research project aiming to investigate the question 'how to perform landscape today?'. A post-humanist perspective prompts us to rethink the notion of landscape, and to realize that the surrounding world consists of life forms and material phenomena with differing degrees of volition, needs and agency. What forms of performing landscape could be relevant in this situation? One possibility is to approach individual elements, like singular trees, and explore what could be done together with them. The most important inquiries to be explored are:

1) How to collaborate with nonhuman entities like plants?

2) How to further develop experiences from previous attempts at performing landscape?

3) How to create actions with plants, in which humans can be invited to participate?

An overarching research topic is: How to perform landscape today by collaborating with trees and other plants, with an awareness of the insights generated by post-humanist and new-materialist research? The aim of the project is to develop techniques generated during previous work by the applicant, i.e. the twelve-year project *Animal Years* (2002-2014), where focus was on showing changes in the landscape over time, rather than collaboration with the trees. By collaborating with plants more sensitively and ecologically, sustainable modes of performing can be developed, in order to serve as inspiration and provocation regarding ways of understanding our surrounding world." (abstract of the plan)

Example of practices in 2017

- Year one with plants - a snapshot of plants every day (on tumblr)
- Performances for camera in Stockholm - visiting two trees in Stockholm every month
- Performances for camera in Helsinki - visiting two trees in Helsinki a few times every week
- Tree Calendar in Helsinki, tree of the month, based on the Celtic Calendar
- Other experiments - performing for camera with trees I meet on travels
- Explorations in the bushes with Kirsi Heimonen
- Organizing seminars on working with plants (3.5. 2017 and 27.10.2017)
- Presentations in various contexts, seminars and conferences
- Exhibitions and publications, some based on old works

Structure of the session

1 - presentation of the background for the project and the archive
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Task a

Please acquaint yourself with the on-line archive or exposition of Performing with Plants, choose pieces you find interesting or uninteresting and prepare to present and explain your choices (15 minutes).

Task b

Please present your choices of pieces you find interesting or uninteresting and explain your choices. This will form the starting point for a shared conversation on strategies for documenting, archiving and communicating artistic research processes.

Thank You