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Immediate Mediation: On the Performativity of Blogging

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ABSTRACT

In this paper I suggest that social media could provide a model for understanding performance today and describe one case, my experiences of blogging related to the project, as an example. I contextualise my observations by discussing the notion of performativity, the performative research paradigm (Haseman 2006; Bolt 2008) and blogging as life-publishing (Östman 2008). A specific blog, <http://aa-katajankanssa.blogspot.com/>, is analysed as ritualized behaviour (Schechner 2002) regarding structure, function, process and experience, and the impact of blogging on the blogger is reflected upon as four types of effects. To conclude, I suggest that as a comparatively ecological form of publishing, blogging is worth exploring further in the context of performance as research.

Keywords

blogging, life-publishing, performative research, performativity, ritualized behaviour

THE WRITING



Figure 1: Main page photo for the blog 'Year of the Rabbit with a Juniper' (photo by Annette Arlander). Click image to visit blog.

In a press release an artist colleague told me he had spent some time in an artists' residency, and his duties there included keeping a research blog. He compared the experience with having a pet. My way of blogging resembles taking care of houseplants: giving them some water and a little fertilizer once a week is enough.

Experiences of blogging as part of the project 'Year of the Rabbit – with a Juniper' made me aware of the difference between mediation as documentation, which includes temporal deferral, and more immediate forms of mediation like blogging. Besides performances for a video camera – holding hands with a particular juniper once a week for a year, while covered in a green scarf – to be edited and published the following year. ^[1]The project included a blog published once a week, first as announcements or notes, and soon as a form of performance. Observations during the project serve as a starting point for this paper.

Previously, I had realised my performances for the camera and presented only the edited video work, the final result, to the public. This time I wanted to make my performance for the camera public, at least potentially open to interested viewers. Thus I had to decide on a specific time and inform the public, and for that a blog was an excellent tool; it was also a quick and easy way to notify potential spectators of changes, if I had to cancel my performance due to weather conditions or a trip. I did not plan the blog as a performance but

[1] By Performing Landscape I refer to a twelve-year project on Harakka Island, off Helsinki, where I return to pose in the same place once a week for a year and document these sessions on video, in order to show changes in the landscape and the passing of time. For some examples of the results of my attempts at performing landscape, visit [this site](#).
[see all footnotes](#)

as a means of informing the public about the actual performance. During the development of the project, I realised that the blog itself functioned as a performance, a form of public process writing and became another way of publishing the work. I also noticed how blogging was performative in the sense of having an impact on the blogger.

My attempt at understanding the performativity of blogging is a side step from my main research, concerned with performing landscape, although it is through performing landscape that I ended up blogging in the first place. I am at the beginning of this endeavour, mainly sketching the implications of my personal experiences with blogging. My starting point is my own bilingual blog 'Jäniksen vuosi katajan kanssa – Year of the Rabbit with a Juniper' 2011-2012, which was more like project documentation than a personal diary. More notebook than forum for dialogue, it was nevertheless created using the blog format and included several features characteristic of blogs, like the following: emphasis on a personal viewpoint, possibility of commenting, stable web address, a form where the new texts are easy to find (usually at the top of the page), and the old texts remain readable and unchanged regardless of new texts, thus creating an archive. This blog documenting my visits to the juniper was not a research blog, but based on my experience with it. I imagined keeping a research blog could be worthwhile.

Blogging can be used in many ways – as a public diary, open letters, autobiographical confessions, dialogical forum, community building, self-publishing, public image maintenance, 'life-publishing' (Östman 2008) etc. In the context of performance-as-research, blogging can mean engagement with the public, process documentation or shared research notes. In my experience blogging is performative in relation to the blogger in various ways, for instance in transforming the blogger by producing a feeling of participation, enforcing a specific relationship to time and space, contributing to a culture of mobility and instant pleasure, serving as monologic self-expression, despite the promise of interactivity, providing an illusion of productivity, of presenting and representing the self, even a sense of agency.

In blogging life and art, the private and the public, the everyday and its documentations, social interaction and imagined interaction can become mixed up and confused. Nevertheless, since blogging is, despite its dependency on computers and electricity, a relatively accessible, economic and ecological form of performance publication, I argue it is definitely worth exploring and

experimenting with in the context of performance-as-research. So yes, in answer to the question posed for the FIRT/IFTR Conference in Santiago de Chile 2012 'to mediate or not to mediate'. My answer would be, inevitably, to mediate.

social media as models for understanding performance today

What is the paradigmatic model for performance today? McKenzie writes about NYU performance studies how

in its formative years, in the 1960s and 1970s, it privileged theatre as a formal model for 'seeing' the broad spectrum of [[performance]], while also privileging liminal rituals as a functional model for theorizing the potential for performances to produce social change. Later, during the so-called US 'culture wars' of the 1980s and early 1990s (Graff 1993), performance art became a paradigmatic performance genre, one that meshed well with emerging theories of subject formation found in post-structuralism and cultural studies. (McKenzie 2001: 29-53 quoted in McKenzie, Wee & Roms 2010: 4-5).

Mckenzie, Wee and Roms suggest in their anthology (2010) that practice-based research and the challenges provided by artists creating performances are bringing a new perspective into performance studies today, and this is certainly true to some extent. Another dimension, (which a first year undergraduate student suggested in response to the genealogy above) are the performances in, and the performativity of social media. These phenomena are of course related to mediated performances and performance as mediation, long discussed for instance by Philip Auslander (2008). Blogging or keeping a blog is only one form of social media (tweeting or micro blogging, Facebook and other social media forms are beyond the scope of this essay and unfamiliar to me). The question therefore arises; if performances in and of social media were the model performances today, what would be the theoretical discourse that could serve as their counterpart and companion, comparable with theories of liminal rituals and later post-structural theories of subjectivity? That question will remain open, however, since I will focus on experiences from practice. First, however, a few words on performativity by way of a theoretical framework.

performativity re-visited

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Blogging can be understood as a performance, but it is also an activity with consequences; it is performative. The concept of performativity, understood as an iterative and citational practice, which produces that which it names, might be helpful in trying to understand the effects of a practice based on repetition, like blogging. The first time I spoke about the performativity of blogging was at the meeting of the Finnish performance studies network (18.11.2011). In the abstract I summarised my approach to blogging:

Deeds change their doers; I transform my daily life with my performances. While contemplating the possibility of a performative research paradigm, Barbara Bolt (2008) refers to Judith Butler's well known analysis, whereby a performance requires a subject whereas performativity challenges the whole notion of subject, and has to be understood as an iterative and citational practice, a repetition of norms, which produces that which it names including the subject. So perhaps I am only imagining (perhaps my daily life changes me instead). With regard to my research project on how to perform landscape, the key word here is iteration, repetition. Through repetition, both deliberate and unconscious, my actions become my daily life. When I spend a moment with a juniper every week and keep a blog about the event, that action transforms my daily life and thus me as well. ([click here](#) for source of text; translated from Finnish by Annette Arlander.)

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On the one hand, performativity is linked with Judith Butler's view that gender is performed by repeating habitual gestures, and that gender can be performed in an understandable way because there is a culturally fixed set of gestures that can be mimicked and repeated. Performativity is considered here to be an emphasis on action instead of being. Whereas performance requires a subject, performativity (in the sense launched by Butler, based on Austin, Foucault and Derrida) challenges the notion of the subject and 'must be understood as the iterative and citational practice that brings into being that which it names' (Bolt 2008: 4). This can be extended to other phenomena besides gender.

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On the other hand, the term performativity is sometimes used to describe something, which is like a performance, in the context of theatre and performance, or, for instance in Jaana Parviainen's article 'Luonnollinen ihminen

ja työelämän performatiivisuus’ [‘The Natural Human Being and the Performativity of Working Life’] in [‘The Contemporary’] (2010) published by Tampere University (and created on a blog platform). According to her we are supposed to behave in a certain way in our work. With our performances and actions we produce certain effects on our environment, on our daily lives and ourselves. It is not only ‘window dressing’ or ‘pretending’; we become what we do (as the old existentialists used to say).

the performative research paradigm

Performance as Research or practice as research in performance can be approached through the notion of performativity, too. In ‘A Performative Paradigm for the Creative Arts?’ (2008), Barbara Bolt argues that within the field of performance studies and especially when speaking of theatre, the notions of performance and performativity are often conflated and mixed. She challenges us to consider the meaning of performativity; if a performative act does not describe anything but actually does something in the world, we should try to ascertain what such an action (or research) has accomplished.

According to Bolt, it is essential to distinguish between performativity and ‘performative’ in the sense of something ‘resembling or related to performance’ if we seriously want to speak of a performative research paradigm alongside qualitative and quantitative research. We need to return to the conceptual distinction made by philosopher J.L. Austin between constatives (stating something about the world) and performatives (doing something in the world), and Judith Butler’s distinction between performance which requires a subject, and performativity, which challenges the whole notion of the subject. Whereas performance can be understood as the conscious (and intentional) act by a subject or subjects, as in a dance or theatre performance, a performance art event or even a painting, performativity must be understood as an iterative and citational practice based on convention and repetition.

Bolt stresses that the performative turn in the aesthetic sense used by theatre researcher Erika Fisher-Lichte (2008), and the performative research paradigm proposed by Brad Haseman (2006) are two very different things (Bolt 2008: 4). Furthermore, Bolt argues that Butler’s theory of performativity can be extended to concern art. There is no artist that would precede the continuous practice of art, since the artist is born through practice, although the practices of art often hide the conventions they repeat. As Butler has shown,

iteration is by nature productive. 'Repetition is never repetition of the same. It is always repetition of difference'. (Bolt 2008: 6) Singularity in art is not produced by the conscious transgressive act of the artist, but 'singularity' is produced through re-iteration and borrowing/citation.

While analysing the claims of the performative research paradigm, Bolt posits a contrast between 'science as research' and 'art as research'. Science as research could be compared with constatives, which describe and model the world, whereas art as research, like performatives, is making things in the world. On a methodological level the first is repetition of the same, whereas the latter is repetition with a difference. And concerning interpretation the first is based on truth as correspondence whereas the latter is based on 'truth' as power and effect (Bolt 2008: 9).

This does not remove the necessity to create criteria for how to evaluate that power and effect. Bolt emphasizes that if we accept that a performative act does not describe anything but actually does something in the world, we must begin by trying to ascertain what an action (or research) has accomplished, which shifts the focus from describing, explaining or interpreting the work into a new area, the experience of the receiver or beholder. According to Bolt these effects or consequences can be discursive, material or affective.

The aim of a performative paradigm is not to find correspondences but rather to recognize and 'map' the ruptures and movements that are created by creative productions. Here the work of art is not just the artwork/performance or the event, but is also the effect of the work in the material, affective and discursive domains. The problem for the creative arts researcher is recognizing and mapping the transformations that have occurred (Bolt 2008: 9).

But how to evaluate effect remains open. And we can ask does this differ from, or what does it add to the traditional approaches of reception research? One dimension, of course, is the experience of the performer. From the point of view of the artist and author there are still mainly two 'indicators' of effect; one's own experience and the feedback from viewers, spectators or participants. An interesting dimension is added through the idea of other effects, or side effects, like a possible heap of waste that the work or its production process

creates. And of course the challenge of trying to articulate the tacit knowledge involved in the making remains. The transformations or effects, however, are not always easy to recognize or articulate.

blogging as life-publishing

Bloggning could be linked to diaries and autobiographies (Sidonie Smith & Julia Watson 2002), to autobiographical performances (Heddon 2008), to performative writing (Pollock 1998), to the changing understanding of liveness in contemporary culture (Auslander 2008) and certainly blogging could be investigated as a social and sociological phenomenon, as a form of presentation of self in everyday life using for instance Erving Goffman's notion of front (Goffman 1959).

Some research on blogging has been done: Scott Rosenberg writes a history of blogging in his (2009). Jodi Dean tries to theorize blogging in (2010). Sari Östman presents previous research on blogging in her interesting article 'Elämäjulkaiseminen – omaelämäkerrallisten traditioiden kuopus' [Life publishing – the youngster of autobiographical traditions] (Östman 2008). She mentions for example Kitzman (2003), who writes about 'self-documenting' and Prior (2005), who writes on women's blogs. With her term 'life publishing' Östman refers to practices in which private persons of their own accord publish their everyday experiences on the Internet (Östman 2008: 1). She includes material from other publication formats besides blogging, like Facebook and YouTube, in her study. She finds three basic motivations for life-publishing: self-reflection, narrative performance and play (Östman 2008: 16). In her conclusion she claims that life-publishing in all its forms includes these three dimensions; it is 1) publishing about or of one's daily life to oneself, thus self-reflection, 2) publishing about or of oneself to others, thus narration and performance and 3) publishing about or of oneself with others, thus interaction and play (Östman 2008: 18).

My blog 'Year of the Rabbit with a Juniper' is not typical life-publishing, since I rarely discuss my private life, and the motivation has been, rather than self-reflection, narration or play, mainly to document the creation of an art project and to inform the public about it, although some kind of performance soon developed out of it as well. Rather than focus on blogging as a

performance or narration I will look at blogging as a form of ritualizing practice, since the blog was linked to a performance project with a ritualistic aspect and since I suspect blogging often involves ritualizing features.

blogging as ritualized behaviour

In one definition proposed by Richard Schechner 'performance is: Ritualized behaviour conditioned and/or permeated by play' (Schechner 2006: 52). This broad definition might be used for blogging as well. He suggests that one could look at rituals – so why not blogging, too – with regard to structure, function, process and experience.

Rituals and ritualizing can be understood from at least four perspectives: 1) Structures – what rituals look and sound like, how they are performed, how they use space, and who performs them. 2) Functions – what rituals accomplish for individuals, groups, cultures. 3) Processes – the underlying dynamic driving rituals; how rituals enact and bring about change. 4) Experiences – what it's like to be in a ritual (Schechner 2006, 56).

In the following sections I describe the blog 'Jäniksen vuosi katajan kanssa – Year of the Rabbit with a Juniper' using these four perspectives as my starting point.

the structure of the blog

What does the blog look like; how is the blogging performed; how are time and space utilized? The blog concentrates on describing the creation process of a video work, or actually the repeated visiting of one specific juniper. The introduction or title of the blog combines a notification, a commitment and an invitation:



Jäniksen vuonna, sunnuntaisin kello 15, alkaen 6. helmikuuta, vietän hetken katajan kanssa, joka sijaitsee Harakan saarella, lähellä ns. lintupiiloa ja kuvaan tuon hetken videolle. Tervetuloa ihmettelemään maiseman muutoksia! / During the year of the rabbit on Sundays at 3 PM, starting on the 6th of February, I will spend a moment with a juniper on the island of Harakka, next to the shed used for bird watching and video film that moment. Welcome to wonder at the changes in the landscape!

Figure 2: Screenshot of 'Year of the Rabbit with a Juniper' (photo by Annette Arlander).

This introduction defines the time and place of the event but does not clearly state how the blog will continue. In my first note 21 January 2011 with the title 'Katajan kanssa – With a Juniper', I explain the same thing more in detail, and this text, too, includes a writer-I and a reader-You:

Katajan kanssa - With a Juniper

Jäniksen vuonna 2011 sunnuntaisin kello 15, alkaen 6. helmikuuta, vietän hetken katajan kanssa, joka sijaitsee Harakan saarella, lähellä ns. lintupiiloa. Kuvaan tuon hetken videolle ja toivotan kiinnostuneet ohikulkijat tervetulleiksi seuraamaan tilannetta. Vuoden kuluttua koostan kuvamaani otokset videoteokseksi.

Tämä pienten kameralle tehtyjen esitysten sarja - joka nyt ensi kertaa toteutuu julkisena - on jatkoa aiemmille vuosille, jotka olen kuvannut Harakan saarella viikottain ja nimennyt kiinalaisen kalenterin mukaan, Hevosen vuodesta (2002) lähtien.

Löydät katajan helposti kulkemalla Harakan luontopolkua kaakkoon, kunnes näet vasemmalla vajan näköisen lintupiilon ja edessäsi saaren halki kulkevan köyden, joka rajaa linnuille varatun eteläkärjen erilleen muusta saaresta.

Tervetuloa ihmettelemään maiseman muutoksia!

During the Year of the rabbit 2011 Sundays at 3 PM, starting on the 6th of February, I will spend a moment with a juniper on the island of Harakka, next to the shed used for bird watching. I will video film that moment and welcome interested passers-by to witness the situation. At the end of the year I edit the material into a video work. This series of small performances for camera - now for the first time made in public - continues a series of years video filmed weekly on Harakka island and named after the Chinese calendar since the Year of the Horse (2002).

You will find the juniper easily by walking along the nature path on Harakka Island towards south-east until you see a small shed used for bird watching and a rope across the cliffs, which separates the southern part reserved for birds.

Welcome to wonder at the changes in the landscape!

Figure 3: Screenshot of 'Year of the Rabbit with a Juniper'.

On 23 January, I added another note:

23.1.2011

Polku - The path

Polku jään yli Harakkaan on tällä hetkellä turvallinen ja helppo kulkea. Harakassa on paljon lunta. Lintupiilon luo pääset seuraamalla latua - mutta tarvitset kunnon talvijalkineet!

The path across the ice to Harakka island is now safe and easy to walk. There is a lot of snow on the island. You can reach the shed for bird watching by following the track for skiing - however, you need good winter boots!

Figure 4: Screenshot of 'Year of the Rabbit with a Juniper'.

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Later I settled on a structure in which I wrote in the blog once a week after visiting the juniper and informed the public about possible changes in the blog note from the previous week. Although the visit to the juniper was scheduled, the blog was officially not, though quite regular in practice. (The blog includes 59 notes, 55 in 2011 and 4 in 2012.) The structure and look of the blog were fairly simple; being bilingual and strictly scheduled (with a time limit, the year of the rabbit, as well) were perhaps the only noteworthy features. Short texts were repeatedly added, a clear time schedule maintained and an endpoint was in sight, the changing of the year of the rabbit to the year of the dragon in February 2012. I wrote in the blog mainly on Sundays, sometimes on Saturdays, and I wrote everything twice, first in Finnish and then in English. If I was travelling on Sunday I made a note in the blog from the place I visited. Comments were allowed, but people did not comment on this blog. One reason might be that I did not explicitly address other bloggers, or comment on other blogs, as people do if they want to engage the community of bloggers.

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A community of sorts was nevertheless involved in the creation of the blog. The blog notes often included photos and the photographers are mentioned in the captions. The photographer was usually somebody from Harakka Island or a temporary guest, whom I asked to take a picture of the juniper, of me or of something they found interesting on the island. Thus the blog was structurally – with regard to the images – quite dialogical. The form and content of the blog are clear; notes describing a specific event once a week and a photo from the island often taken by somebody else, or in exceptional cases from some other place.

the function of the blog

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What does the blog accomplish for the individual, the group or the culture? The function of this blog was very simple to begin with; it had two tasks to accomplish. On the one hand the task was informing the public about the performances. On the other hand the task was to document the project, to help me keep notes. I wanted to develop my minimal recording journal, which had been a part of all my yearly projects of performing landscape. In previous years the notes were often only a few sentences about the weather. By making my notes immediately public through the blog I was committed to thinking more carefully about what to note and what not to note.

The first task, informing, was directed at a group (the public or the potential spectators) while the second task, documentation and notes, was directed mainly at me (or perhaps at posterity, too, and thus to culture more generally). Besides these main functions the blog developed into an informal notice board, a place to inform about other activities on the island and to document them with photos as well. (I felt obliged to inform the public about other events, since the blog was linked to the main page of the Harakka web site). In that way the blog became an information channel for the group of artists working on Harakka Island to communicate with the public, thus providing visibility and a kind of representation of life on the island (which most artists would not really like to share with the public), a performance which helped to demonstrate that the place was in active use and there were activities on offer for visitors.

the process of blogging

What is the dynamic of blogging in this case, what drives it and how does it bring about change? Keeping this blog was rather a controlled process (no occasional confessions or lamentations). During the process the emphasis changed from noting changes in the weather and spreading news towards more thematic ponderings. The changes in the blog reflect the development of the project. In the beginning I imagined I would be serving tea to visitors in the shed for bird watchers during the performance, from a huge thermos, which I carried to the site each time, and would be asking members of the audience to take a picture for the blog. Interested visitors, however, were rare even in summertime, although I informed them about my performances (for instance at the local 'Presentaatio' website). An important turn in the process was, when I realised in the autumn that during most of the year there would be no visitors at all, since the regular boat traffic would stop. Thus I decided to ask in advance one person from Harakka Island to be a witness for each performance, or to photograph something for the blog, and to ask each person to participate only once. The dialogues with the photographer-witnesses became an important part of the process.

The notes I wrote while travelling, looking for local junipers or surrogate ones in various places (Ireland, Crete, India etc.) and the images documenting them punctuate the blog. One aspect that occurred to me only over time was

the challenge in writing a bilingual blog; I had to look for English words in a dictionary, for instance the name of the plant 'Kultapiisku', Golden Rod – I learnt some language, too!

The almost automatic documentation of the project through the blog is an interesting part of the process, which can be juxtaposed with the documentation process included in the art work itself, the result of video recording each performance, which I would see only a year later. In some sense the blog became a work of its own, created in passing, casually, almost haphazardly, and in part as a surprise. In principle I could change the texts afterwards, but I related to the blog in the same way as to the video recordings: What is done is done.

Only during the process did I begin to see the blog as a public space and thus also realize the challenges and possibilities inherent in that. I slowly understood how the blog actually turns into a public diary, something that remains, if I wish. So what is worth mentioning, what is worth talking about? For some reason I framed the blog thematically to deal with a very limited topic, mainly with junipers and the changes in nature on Harakka Island. During the last months I did widen the theme, and in my note on 13 November – the weekend before 18 November when I was to speak about my blog to colleagues in a seminar (the first version of this text) – I chose to write about rituals with the title 'Kummallinen rituaali – Strange Ritual':

Kummallinen rituaali - Strange Ritual

Mikäli haluamme määritellä rituaalisen käyttäytymisen niin, ettei sitä lähtökohtaisesti rajata pelkästään ihmisten käyttäytymiseen, sitä voi sanoa vaikkapa muodolliseksi käyttäytymiseksi, joka liittyy kahden tai useamman yksilön aktiiviseen ja vastavuoroiseen kommunikaatioon keskenään, joka on strukturoitua, stereotyyppistä ja ajassa toistuvaa ja joka johtaa suurempaan koordinaatioon pyrittäessä sosiaaliseen toimintaan, tavoitteeseen tai päämäärään. (D'Aquili et al. 1979) Näin ajatellen mieleen tulee lähinnä erilaisia yhteispeliä edistäviä joukko- lauma- tai ryhmärituaaleja. Mutta saman vanhan tekstin mukaan rituaalin ensisijainen biologinen funktio on edistää paitsi organismien välistä myös organismin sisäistä koordinaatiota. Hyvä, sen voin tunnistaa tämän oudon rituaalini yhteydessä. Ehkä olen nyt ensi kertaa sormikkaat kädessä tänä syksynä kylmässä viimassa katajan luokse kiirehdittyäni jotenkin integroidumpi ympäristööni ja itseeni. Toivottavasti katajakin tuntee olonsa eheämmäksi (jos tällainen inhimillistäminen sallitaan) oudon, melko yksisuuntaisen rituaalimme jälkeen, vaikkei meillä olekaan ilmeistä yhteistä tavoitetta lumentulon tai minkään muunkaan kontrollimme ulottumattomissa olevan suhteen.

If we want to define ritual behavior in a way that does not delimit it to human behavior, only, it can be defined as formalized behavior that involves two or more individuals in active and reciprocal communication; is structured, stereotyped and repetitive in occurrence over time; and results in greater coordination toward some social action, purpose or goal. (D'Aquili et al. 1979) This kind of thinking brings to mind mainly various mass, herd or group rituals that foster team spirit. According to the same old text the primary biological function of ritual behavior is to facilitate not only interorganismic but also intraorganismic coordination. Good, that I can identify in this strange ritual of mine. Perhaps, after hurrying to the juniper in a chilly wind, with gloves for the first time this autumn, I am now somehow more integrated into my environment and myself. Hopefully the juniper, too, feels more whole (if we allow this kind of humanizing) after our strange, rather one-way ritual, although we have no explicit common aim with regard to the coming of snow or anything else beyond our control.

Figure 5: Screenshot of 'Year of the Rabbit with a Juniper'.

As this example shows, the everyday will flow into the blog and transform it. And the blog in turn, becomes material for an exhibition, an article or a seminar presentation. The video work 'Year of the rabbit – With a Juniper', and some other works video recorded with a green scarf and with or without junipers in various landscapes, were shown to the public only in January 2013. By then the blog 'Katajan kanssa – With a Juniper' was long dead, or history, but it remains on the web and can be accessed as background information and evidence of the process, as a kind of 'the making of...' -story. Actually I added a note informing about the exhibition as a note on the blog. Thus one of the key elements of the process of this blog was to make public and accessible to an interested community a private working process in real time; and simultaneously to produce a documentation and archive of the process.

What does it feel like to keep a blog, commit to blogging and participate in it regularly as in a ritual? As an experience, blogging was surprisingly rewarding. Besides the general gratification of ritualised and repeated activity (sense of security, experience of continuity) and the contemplative aspect related to performing with a juniper, the experience of blogging had some specific characteristics. For instance the immediate access to the results, seeing the outcome at once, a kind of instant announcing, which resembles a live performance (more than my usual performances for camera repeated over long durations of time and published only the following year) brings an immediate satisfaction of having accomplished something. Committing can of course feel oppressive as well, if one would not like to drag oneself to the island, if one feels there is nothing particular to say and so on. Mostly one nevertheless feels content after writing a brief blog note and publishing it.

Probably the experience of keeping a blog that is constantly read and commented on, like maintaining an Internet forum, is very different. My experience of blogging was focused on committing to a specific regular time for blogging, to repetition, continuity, and to documenting a process. At the same time a blog obviously provides some freedom as well. If I could not go to the island I could nevertheless write the blog from anywhere.

My last note on the blog (if we forget the note about the upcoming exhibition a year later) was made 22 January 2012 with the title 'Viimeinen vierailu pehmeässä lumessa – Last Visit in Soft Snow':

Viimeinen vierailu pehmeässä lumessa - Last Visit in Soft Snow

Kun astuin ulos työhuoneestani Harakassa, joku sirkutti jo pihakoivussa. Hänellä oli kevättä rinnassa, vaikka talvi on tuskin edes alkanut, ainakin jos ottaa meren jäätymisen mittapuuksi. Meri on yhä avoin mutta leuto koillistuuli oli löytänyt jostakin jäälauttoja ja ajoi ne rantaan niin tiiviisti, että olin vähällä juuttua niihin pienen veneeni kanssa. Lunta on paljon ja maisema on pehmeä ja valkoinen. Pari uutta pientä katajaa löysin kurottamassa esiin lumesta. Tähän aikaan ne näkyvät, kun vihreä väri on vähissä. Havupuiden ja muutaman vihreän roskapöntön lisäksi vain lintupiilon seinustan outo maastoutumisverho on ikivihreä. - Tämä oli viimeinen virallinen vierailuni katajan luona. Tänään päättyy jäniksen vuosi ja tähän päättyy myös tämä blogi. Kiitos kaikille avulaille kuvaajille! Huomenna on jo uusikuu, Lohikäärmeen vuosi, uudet tuulet ja toiveet...

When I stepped out from my studio on Harakka somebody was already chirping in the birch tree. He or she had spring in mind, even though winter has hardly begun, at least if we measure it by the freezing of the sea. The sea is still open but the mild northeast wind had found some ice floes somewhere and pressed them tightly onto the shore so that I almost got stuck with my little boat. There is plenty of snow and the landscape is soft and white. I found a couple of new small junipers reaching out from the snow. They are visible at this time when the colour green is scarce. Besides conifers and some green dust bins only the strange camouflage curtain on the walls of the bird shed is evergreen. - This was my last official visit to the juniper. Today the year of the rabbit ends and this blog ends here as well. Many thanks to all generous photographers! Tomorrow is new moon, the new year of the dragon, with new winds and wishes...



Kuva / Photo AA

Figure 6: Screenshot of 'Year of the Rabbit with a Juniper' (photo by Annette Arlander).

And, as you might expect, I started a new blog 'Calling the Dragon' to document my next performance. Blogging had become part of my artistic practice and of my daily life as well.

to summarize the performativity of blogging

By way of a conclusion, let us return to performativity, to the challenge presented by Barbara Bolt, to think of transformations, effects and impact. What did this blog produce? – Texts, images, stories, notes, documentation, a record, an archive. The blog produced partly the 'same' as the actual performance recorded by the camera, although from a different angle. But what did it transform? Did it change my daily life? Yes, it did – not radically, not as much as the project itself, but to some degree nevertheless. It helped me to approach writing in a more relaxed manner. And it forced me to become social, at least to some extent (for instance with regard to the photographers, whom I invited to participate). Unlike the visit to the juniper, however, which is a material and tangible event of interaction, albeit with a plant, the blog made the interaction with the public, with the potential readers 'imaginary', or let us say potential, conceivable rather than real – virtual rather than actual.

Was there a transformation, besides my becoming a blogger? There were radical transformations in the landscape during the year, like the work on new water pipes to the nearby islands that overturned all of the eastern shore; nothing comparable was produced by the blog, which only mentioned those changes. The effects were subtle, most of them I am probably not aware of: Some people on Harakka started following the blog, some colleagues were inspired to photograph the environment, others commenced experimenting with blogs themselves, I began thinking of the performativity of blogging.

What are the effects of blogging, on the blogger herself? Based on my personal experiences of this one case I would like to note, as a tentative and preliminary summary, that the performativity of blogging occurs on various levels:

- i. Regardless of its informal and intimate character blogging means entering public space and taking the floor, which is performative in the same way as all speech acts.

2. Blogging is performative with regard to the blogger in the same way as any activity; it transforms the person engaged in it physically, psychically and in practice. Blogging strengthens the feeling of participating in the world and also one's sense of self to some extent.

3. Blogging is performative also in more specific ways because it re-enforces a particular relationship to time and space – anywhere, immediately. A blog is a communication form for our culture of quick and immediate pleasure, basically monological self-expression that informs everybody and nobody 'here I am', (although it includes an ideal of, or a potential for comments and community).

4. Blogging is performative by providing the blogger with an illusion of not only participating in society, being productive and presenting oneself, but of some sort of agency. (To what extent this agency is or must remain an illusion can of course be debated.)

Other aspects of blogging are relevant as well, since blogging can be understood and used in various ways: as a public diary, as public letters, as autobiographical confessions, as a forum for debate, as a form of self-publishing, as process writing, as maintaining one's public profile, as life-publishing and so on. Symptomatically, in blogging life and art (or culture, literature, politics), the private and the public, the everyday and its condensation or record, interaction and imaginary interaction, all these aspects are combined and mixed in sometimes confusing and challenging ways.

As mentioned in the introduction, blogging is a comparatively ecological and to some extent sustainable activity. The dependence on computers and electricity sets limits of course, but compared to other modes of expression or other forms of publishing that aim to last, blogs are relatively easy to use and light in terms of burdening the environment or consuming resources, and thus worthy of examining and exploring further. One possible aspect to study in the future is to what extent the predesigned form of the blog is performative, how it seduces one to produce certain types of texts, certain kinds of images, how it regulates one's actions and forms one's thoughts, or brings into being what it names.

The blog I have described in this text was not a research blog, but based on my experience with it I assume keeping a research blog could be worthwhile. In the context of Performance as Research (or practice-led-research or artistic

research) the question of research blogs that document working processes as parts of performance-as-research outcomes may be relevant, as well as the use of research blogs in collaborative research processes.

notes

- [1] By Performing Landscape I refer to a twelve-year project on Harakka Island, off Helsinki, where I return to pose in the same place once a week for a year and document these sessions on video, in order to show changes in the landscape and the passing of time. For some examples of the results of my attempts at performing landscape, visit this [site](#). ↑

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Biography

Annette Arlander, professor of performance art and theory at the Theatre Academy of the University of the Arts Helsinki, is educated as a theatre director, and holds a Master of Arts (philosophy) and Doctor of Art (theatre and drama). Her art work focuses on performing landscape by means of video or recorded voice. Her research interests include performance as research, performance studies, site specificity, landscape and the environment.

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Other Works

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