

A person wearing a white coat is sitting on a large, gnarled tree branch. The tree is in the foreground, and the person is looking out over a body of water. In the background, there are more trees and a building on a hill. The scene is set in a natural, outdoor environment.

# Meetings with Trees

## Repetition as a Tool in Artistic Research

Annette Arlander 30.11.2021



## Starting points

- “Beyond the Saturation Point”, *VIS* #5 (2021)  
<https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/857358/857359/0/0>
- *Year of the Pig with a Tatarian Maple* (2019-2020) video work (background slides)
- *Performing with Plants*, project funded by Vetenskapsrådet at Stockholm University of the arts (2018-2019).



# Meetings with Remarkable and Unremarkable Trees

- *Meetings with Remarkable and Unremarkable Trees*, project funded by Finnish Cultural Foundation at Academy of Fine Arts, University of the Arts Helsinki (2020-2021)
- Thomas Pakenham *Meetings with Remarkable Trees* (1996)
- Val Plumwood “Decolonizing Relationships with Nature” (2003)





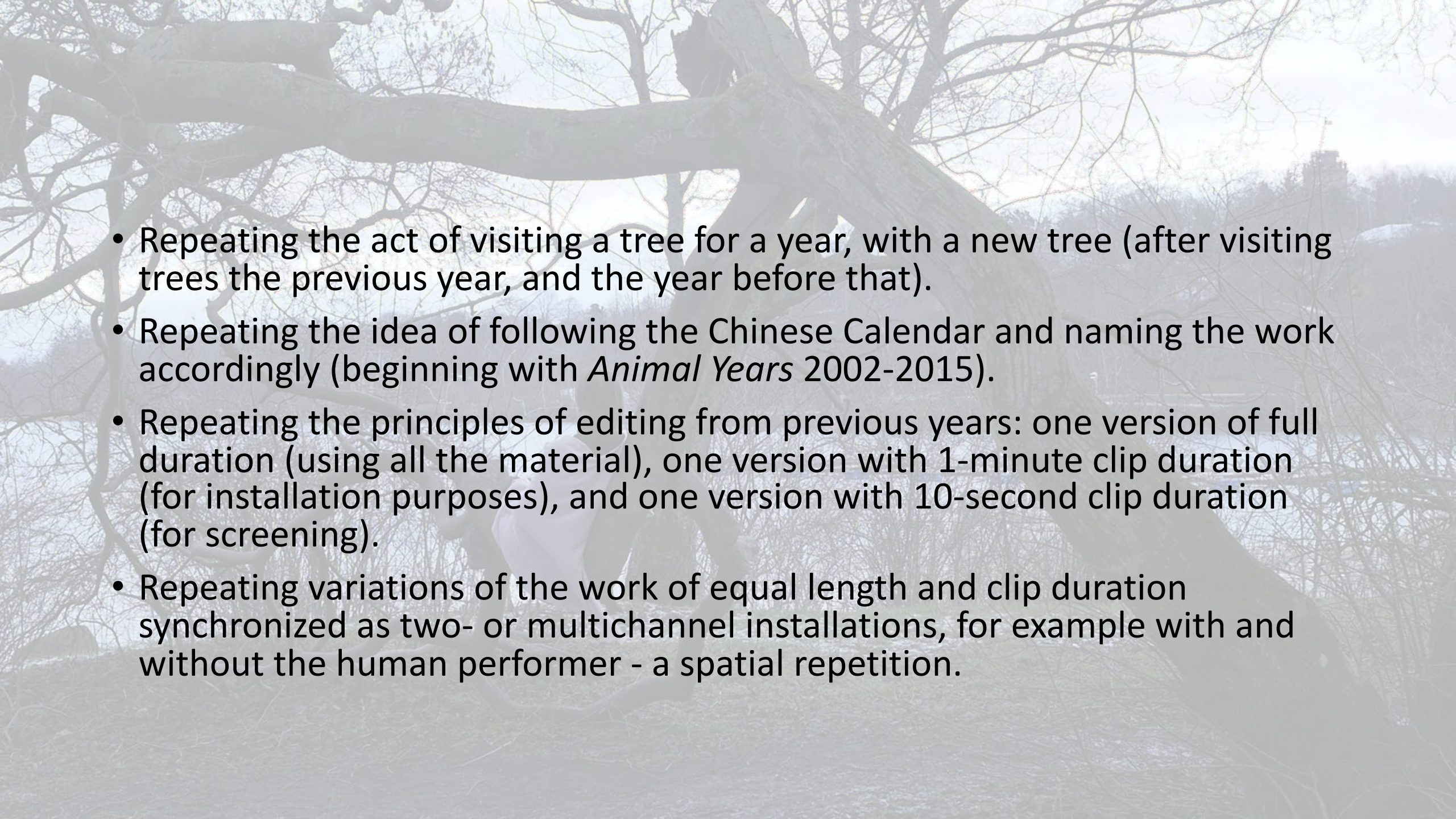
Nobel Park 9.1.2019



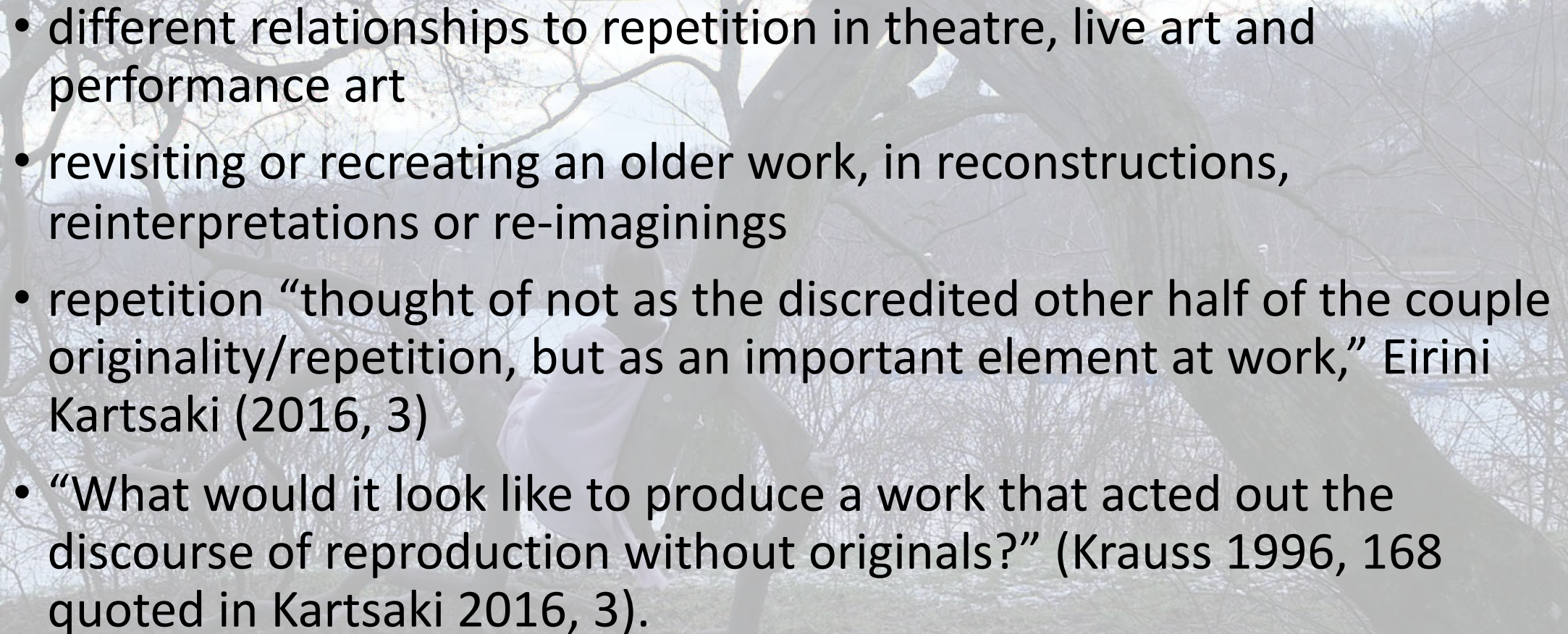
# Repeating in practice

- Visiting the tree again and again, about three times a week for a year.
- Repeating the same camera position and the same framing of the image.
- Repeating the same body posture.
- Repeating (approximately) the same duration of time.
- Repeating a still-act or repetitive action (e.g. swinging).
- Repeating the documentation with still images (with and without the human figure) on the RC.
- Repeating the blog post (once a week).



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- Repeating the act of visiting a tree for a year, with a new tree (after visiting trees the previous year, and the year before that).
  - Repeating the idea of following the Chinese Calendar and naming the work accordingly (beginning with *Animal Years* 2002-2015).
  - Repeating the principles of editing from previous years: one version of full duration (using all the material), one version with 1-minute clip duration (for installation purposes), and one version with 10-second clip duration (for screening).
  - Repeating variations of the work of equal length and clip duration synchronized as two- or multichannel installations, for example with and without the human performer - a spatial repetition.



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- different relationships to repetition in theatre, live art and performance art
  - revisiting or recreating an older work, in reconstructions, reinterpretations or re-imaginings
  - repetition “thought of not as the discredited other half of the couple originality/repetition, but as an important element at work,” Eirini Kartsaki (2016, 3)
  - “What would it look like to produce a work that acted out the discourse of reproduction without originals?” (Krauss 1996, 168 quoted in Kartsaki 2016, 3).





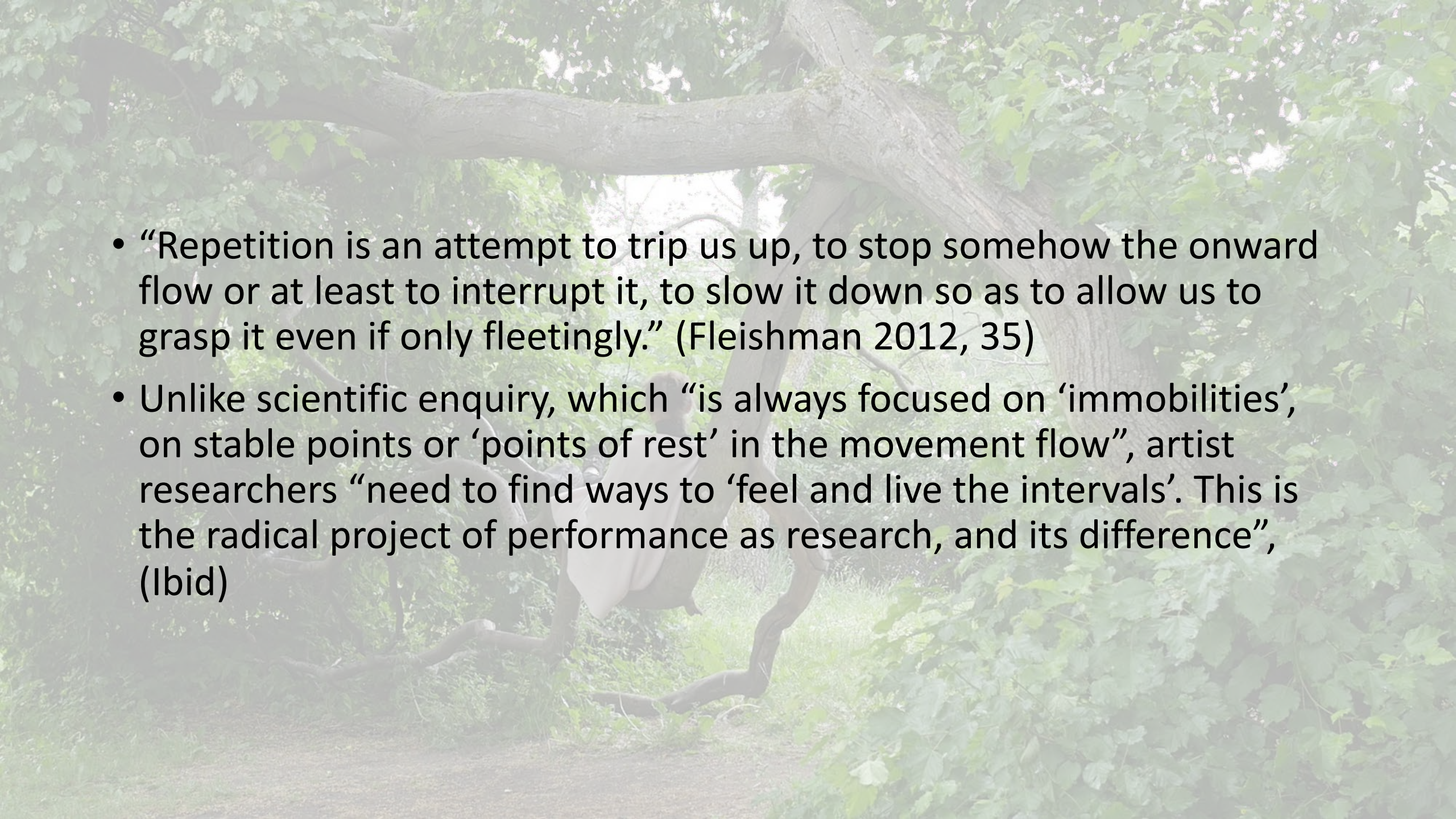
Nobel Park 11.6.2019



# Repetition and Difference

- Mark Fleishman “The Difference of Performance as Research” (2012)
- ...“performance as research is a series of embodied repetitions in time, on both micro (bodies, movements, sounds, improvisations, moments) and macro (events, productions, projects, installations) levels, in search of a series of differences.” (Fleishman 2012, 28).
- “Where do the differences lie, in the repetitions or in the spaces in between? And is there a point at which the unleashing of differences is exhausted...?” (Ibid).

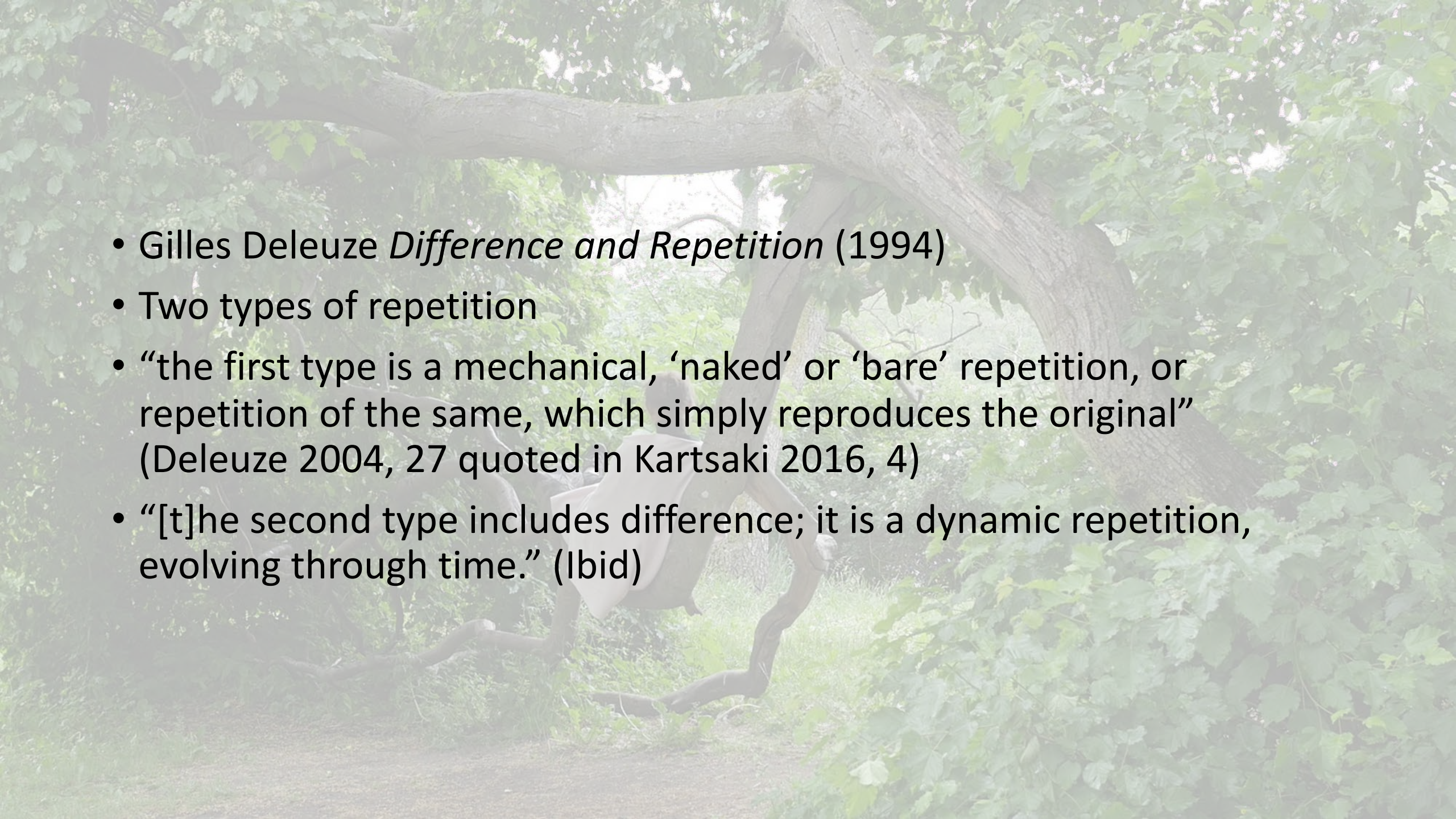


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- A person is sitting on a large, thick tree branch in a lush, green forest. The person is wearing a light-colored jacket and dark pants. The background is filled with dense foliage and sunlight filtering through the leaves. The overall scene is peaceful and natural.
- “Repetition is an attempt to trip us up, to stop somehow the onward flow or at least to interrupt it, to slow it down so as to allow us to grasp it even if only fleetingly.” (Fleishman 2012, 35)
  - Unlike scientific enquiry, which “is always focused on ‘immobilities’, on stable points or ‘points of rest’ in the movement flow”, artist researchers “need to find ways to ‘feel and live the intervals’. This is the radical project of performance as research, and its difference”, (Ibid)

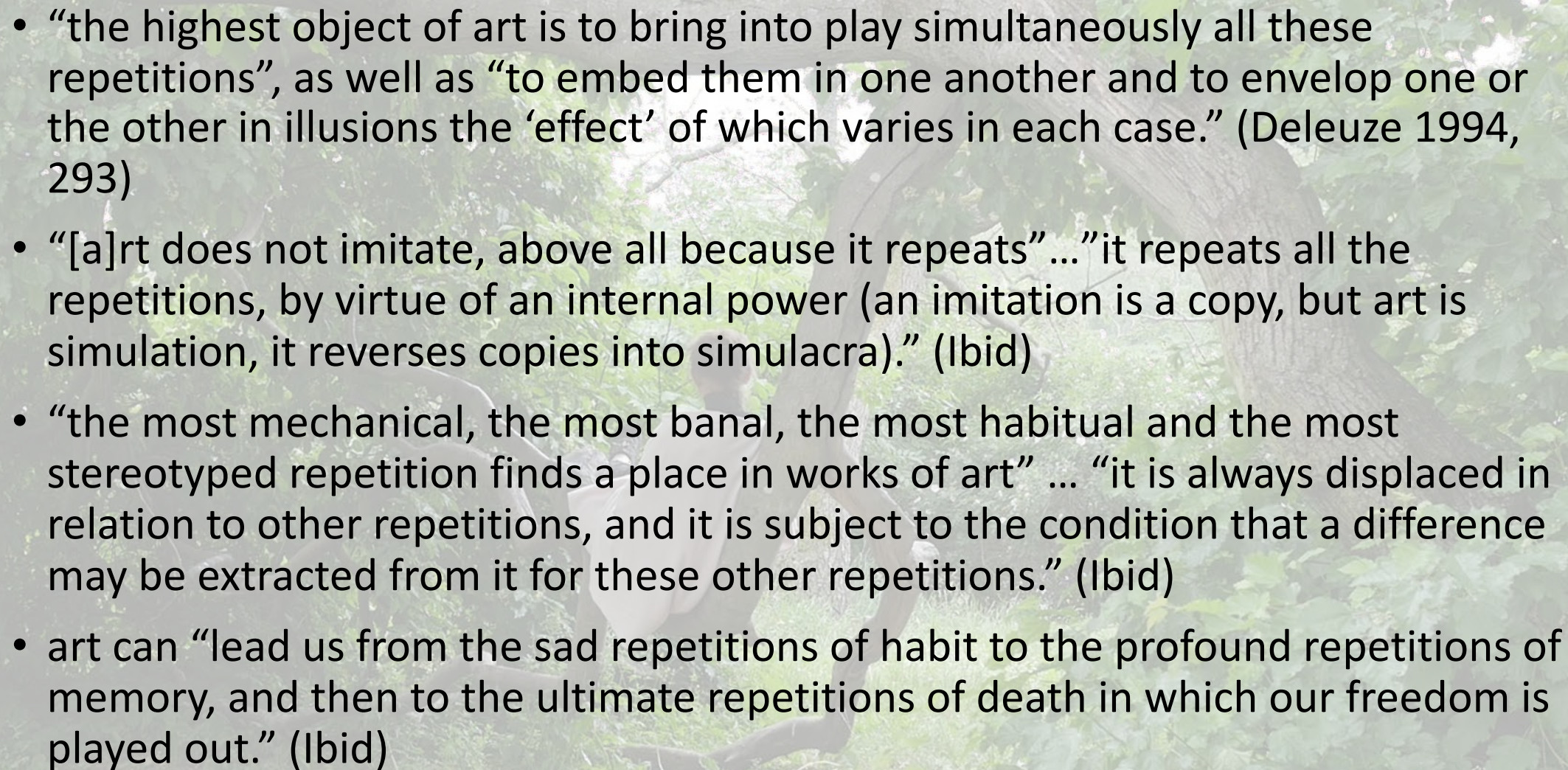


- Clare Foster. “Afterword: Repetition or Recognition.” (2016)
- “[r]epetition is a central attribute of languages, whether verbal, visual or cultural. It is a fundamental structure by which meaning is made.” (Foster 2016, 213)
- “to repeat is to simultaneously fix and transform”; “repetition is the means by which the bounded entity can be perceived at all” (Ibid).
- “If we substitute the words ‘history’ or ‘tradition’ for ‘repetition’, wider stakes emerge,” Foster (2016, 214)
- ...“a critical cusp when the new is repeated once, then twice, and a ‘tradition’ becomes recognizable. With this cusp, repetition has the power to prescribe future events...” (Ibid).



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- Gilles Deleuze *Difference and Repetition* (1994)
  - Two types of repetition
  - “the first type is a mechanical, ‘naked’ or ‘bare’ repetition, or repetition of the same, which simply reproduces the original” (Deleuze 2004, 27 quoted in Kartsaki 2016, 4)
  - “[t]he second type includes difference; it is a dynamic repetition, evolving through time.” (Ibid)



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- A person is lying on their back on a dirt path in a lush, green forest. The person is wearing a light-colored shirt and dark pants. The background is filled with dense foliage and trees. The text is overlaid on the image in a white, sans-serif font.
- “the highest object of art is to bring into play simultaneously all these repetitions”, as well as “to embed them in one another and to envelop one or the other in illusions the ‘effect’ of which varies in each case.” (Deleuze 1994, 293)
  - “[a]rt does not imitate, above all because it repeats” ... “it repeats all the repetitions, by virtue of an internal power (an imitation is a copy, but art is simulation, it reverses copies into simulacra).” (Ibid)
  - “the most mechanical, the most banal, the most habitual and the most stereotyped repetition finds a place in works of art” ... “it is always displaced in relation to other repetitions, and it is subject to the condition that a difference may be extracted from it for these other repetitions.” (Ibid)
  - art can “lead us from the sad repetitions of habit to the profound repetitions of memory, and then to the ultimate repetitions of death in which our freedom is played out.” (Ibid)





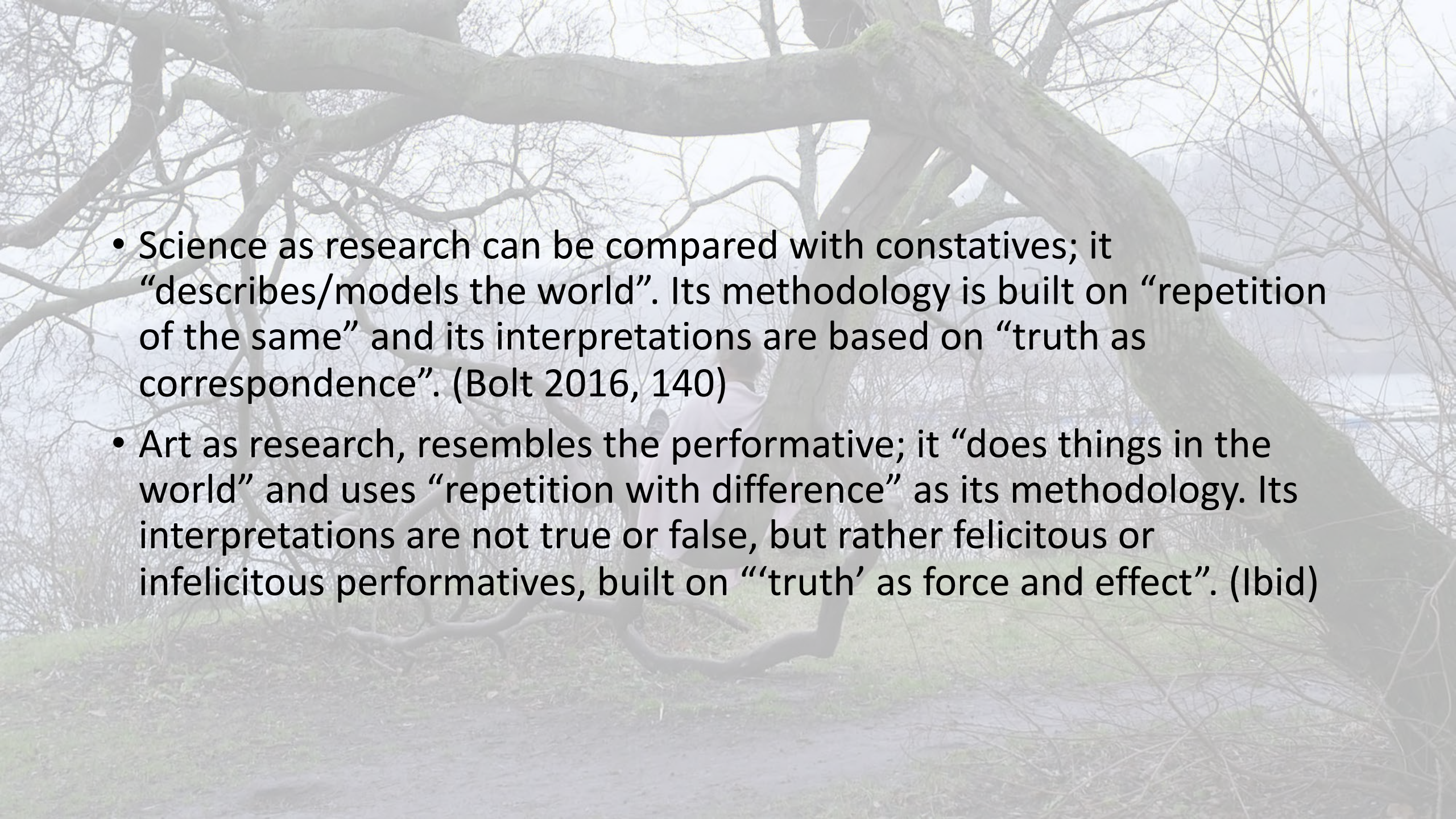
Nobel Park 15.1.2020



# A performative paradigm?

- Barbara Bolt: “Artistic Research: A Performative Paradigm?” (2016)
- “[W]hile in the scientific paradigm assessment of the validity of research lies in replication of the same”, a “performative paradigm would operate according to repetition with difference.” (Bolt 2016, 139)

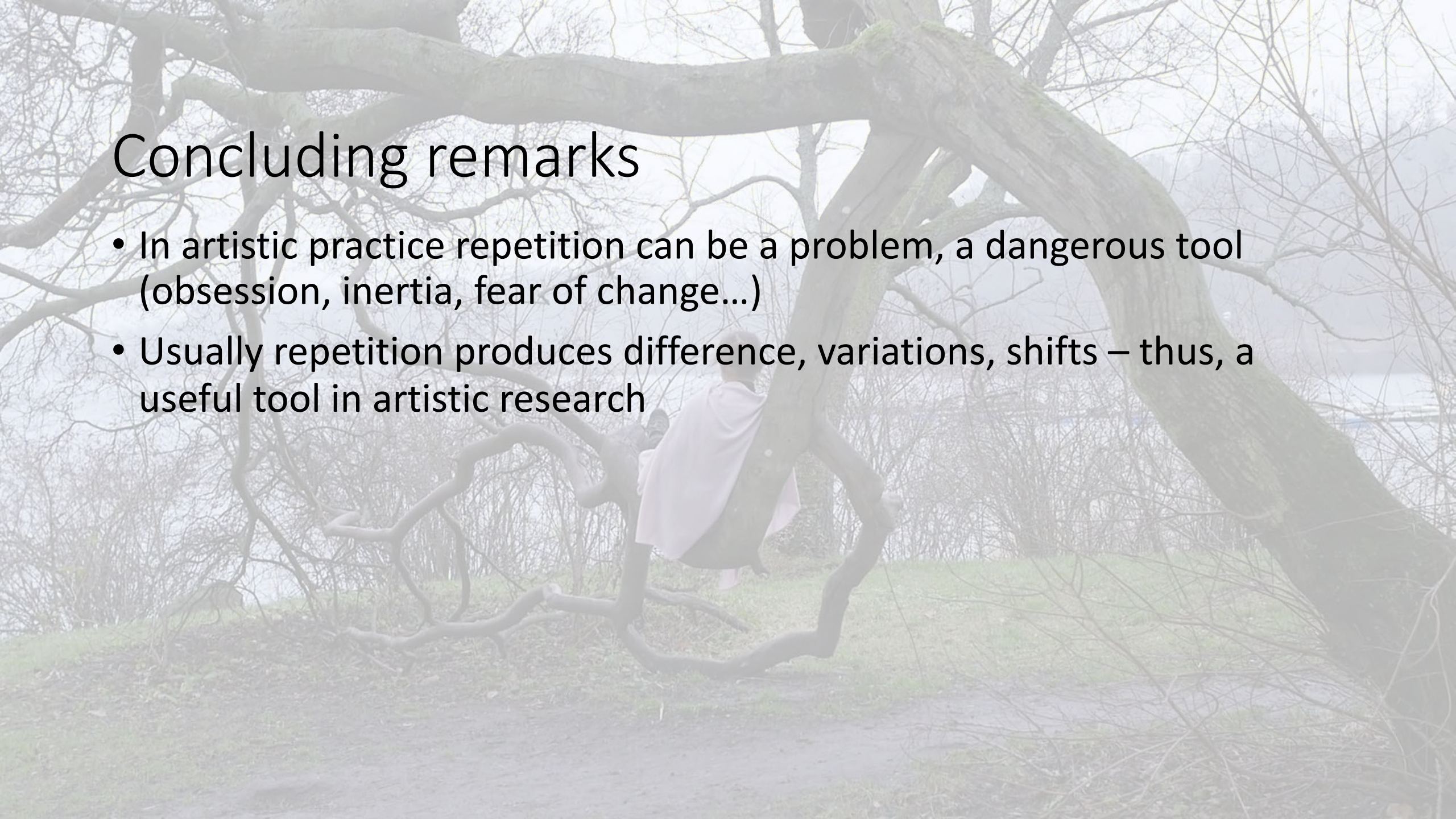


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- A person is sitting on a large, moss-covered tree branch in a misty forest. The background shows a path leading through trees towards a body of water. The overall atmosphere is serene and contemplative.
- Science as research can be compared with constatives; it “describes/models the world”. Its methodology is built on “repetition of the same” and its interpretations are based on “truth as correspondence”. (Bolt 2016, 140)
  - Art as research, resembles the performative; it “does things in the world” and uses “repetition with difference” as its methodology. Its interpretations are not true or false, but rather felicitous or infelicitous performatives, built on “‘truth’ as force and effect”. (Ibid)



# Concluding remarks

- In artistic practice repetition can be a problem, a dangerous tool (obsession, inertia, fear of change...)
- Usually repetition produces difference, variations, shifts – thus, a useful tool in artistic research





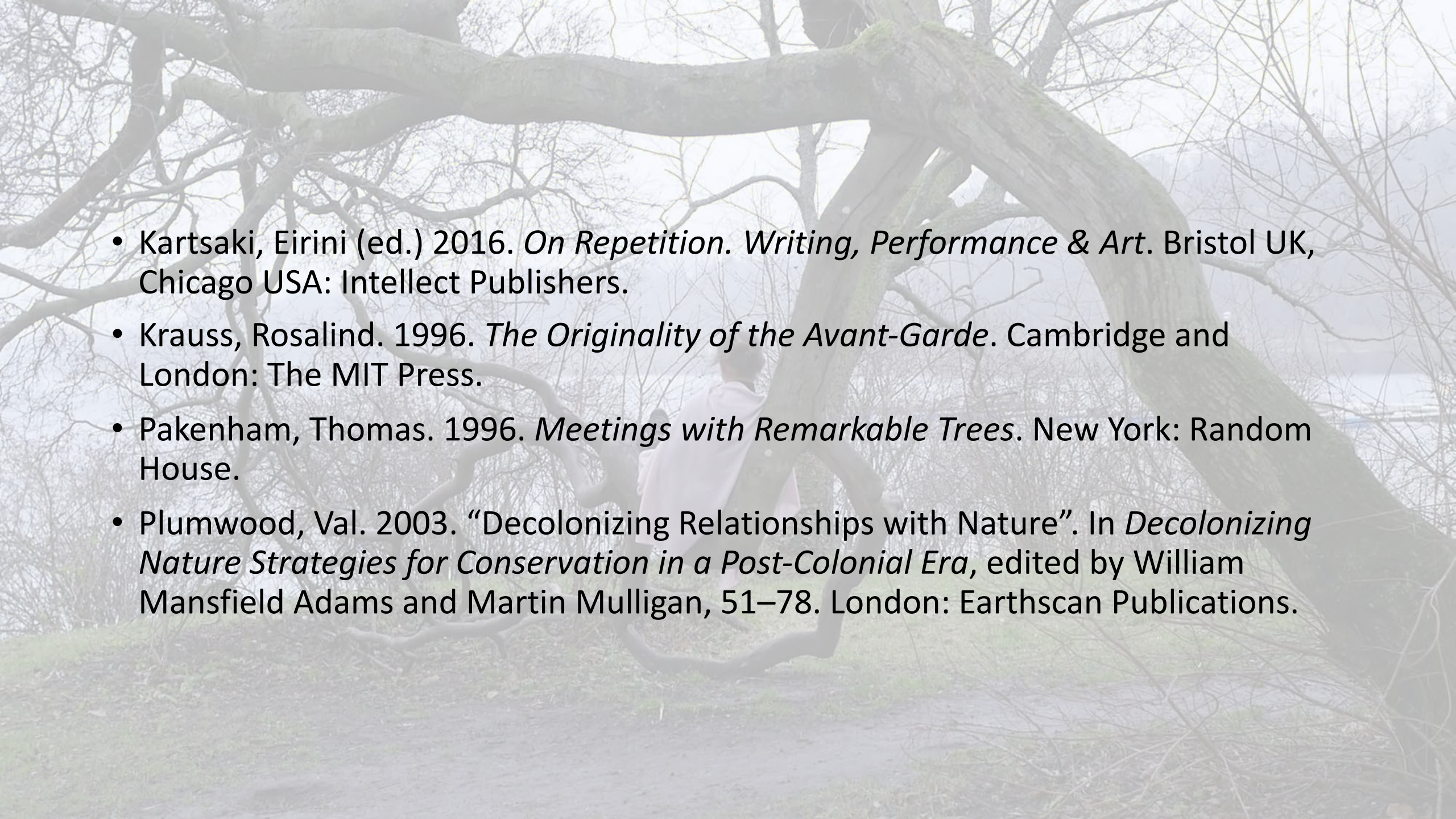
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  - Jones, Amelia, and Heathfield, Adrian (eds.) 2012. *Perform, Repeat, Record—Live Art in History*. London: Intellect.



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- A person wearing a white lab coat or protective suit is standing in a forest of large, gnarled trees. The person is positioned in the center of the frame, looking towards the right. The trees are thick and have a textured bark, with some moss visible. The background is slightly blurred, showing more trees and a hint of a body of water or a path in the distance. The overall atmosphere is quiet and somewhat somber.
- Kartsaki, Eirini (ed.) 2016. *On Repetition. Writing, Performance & Art*. Bristol UK, Chicago USA: Intellect Publishers.
  - Krauss, Rosalind. 1996. *The Originality of the Avant-Garde*. Cambridge and London: The MIT Press.
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Thank you for your attention!