

PERFORMING LANDSCAPE: LIVE AND ALIVE

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Year of the Tiger. Video Still, 2011
Image Credit: Annette Arlander

If we think of performative research as a specific research paradigm, as Brad Haseman (2006) and Barbara Bolt (2008) have argued, it will have implications for how we look at the impact of such work.¹ If we accept that performative research does not describe phenomena but actually creates or shapes them, like a performative utterance, which does not describe phenomena (as constative utterances do) but actually does something in the world, we must commence our analysis by trying to ascertain what a specific research project has accomplished. According to Bolt the effects or consequences of a creative research project can be discursive, material or affective.² But how we might evaluate “effect” remains open. Bolt suggests that “[t]he problem for the creative arts researcher is recognizing and mapping the transformations that have occurred.”³ From the point of view of the artist and author there are mainly two indicators of transformation or impact: one’s own experience and feedback from viewers, in addition to possible material effects on the environment. I suggest that we distinguish between impact on the performer and impact on the viewer or the audience, as well as consider the consequences of the working process in addition to the consequences of the work itself. The working process might, for instance, produce unwelcome side-effects, like a possible heap of waste, not considered to be part of the actual work.

¹ See Brad Haseman, “A Manifesto for Performative Research.” In *Media International Australia incorporating Culture and Policy*, theme issue “Practice-led-Research,” no. 118 (2006): 98-106; see also Barbara Bolt, “A Performative Paradigm for the Creative Arts?” *Working Papers in Art and Design*, volume 5 (2008). Last accessed online 11/29/2011 at: http://sitem.herts.ac.uk/artdes_research/papers/wpades/vol5/bbabs.html

² Bolt, 2008: 6.

³ Bolt, 2008: 9.

In discussions on performance documentation and on the changing notions of the live and the mediated, questions of the organically alive, the animate and the inanimate, are rarely posed.⁴ Nor is the importance of a living environment usually emphasized when the live encounter between performer and spectator is stressed. According to Teresa Brennan (2000), known to performance scholars mainly through André Lepecki (2006), we should take seriously the indissolubility of individual and environment. Our tendency to assume ourselves as subjects in a world of objects is intensified in a manmade environment such as a contemporary city. Surrounded by commodities, which function like fantasies, the subject is more likely to see what it has made, rather than feel itself to be connected with, or part of, what has made it.⁵

Performing for a camera means using technology to create objects out of experiences. What I call *performing landscape* is a technique for documenting performances and for producing artworks or “souvenirs” of changes that take place in the environment, thus combining technology (the camera) and experience (of the site, the repetition) in order to produce artworks that remain – memorabilia of sorts. By returning to the same place once a week for one year and performing the same action in front of a camera that is placed in the same position, and then editing the takes, the slow processes in the environment can be condensed and sped up in the video work. For the performer the act of returning to a site repeatedly produces almost the opposite effect, an extended encounter with the living environment, a kind of meditative practice. Inevitably this way of creating “mementos of moments” in a landscape also means producing more inanimate objects, turning experiences of the living environment into commodities, into video works.

Like any form of recording, performing landscape for a camera preserves specific moments, and actively excludes others, like everything that remains outside the frame. It also excludes the experience of the performer. What the performer senses and what the camera on a tripod records do not have much in common. Unforeseen transformations in the environment over time can cause further complications, as in the example to be discussed in this text: *Year of the Tiger* (Arlander, 2011).⁶ On the site of this work, the vegetation grew to such an extent that the performer could not be distinguished at all in long sequences, which caused me to ask in retrospect: how to document that which is hidden, that which is literally overgrown?

This text will discuss some of the problems encountered when performing landscape – live and alive. I begin by describing the project *Year of the Tiger*, after which I relate my work to Teresa Brennan’s ideas about the foundational fantasy that influences our relationship to the environment. I then explore Philip Auslander’s summary of the changes in our understanding of liveness, and finally, prompted by Barbara Bolt, I consider the question of impact with regards to the possible effects of this case of performing landscape.⁷

⁴ For more on documentation, see: Angela Piccini and Caroline Rye, “Of Fevered Archives and The Quest for Total Documentation.” In *Practice as Research in Performance and Screen*, edited by Alleghue, Jones, Kershaw and Piccini (Basingstoke Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009): 34-49; For more on the live and the mediated, see: Philip Auslander, “The Performativity of Performance Documentation,” *Performing Arts Journal* 84 volume 28 no 3 (New York: MIT Press Journals, September 2006): 1-10; Philip Auslander, “Live and Technologically Mediated Performance,” *Cambridge Companion to Performance Studies*, edited by Tracy C. Davis (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008): 107-119.

⁵ Teresa Brennan, *Exhausting Modernity: Grounds for a New Economy* (New York: Routledge, 2000); André Lepecki, *Exhausting Dance: Performance and the Politics of Movement* (New York and London: Routledge, 2006).

⁶ See: Annette Arlander, *Year of the Tiger* four channel video installation 2011 (28 min.) <http://www.av-arkki.fi/en/works/year-of-the-tiger/>; and Annette Arlander *Round of the Tiger* video documentary 2011 (23 min.) <http://www.av-arkki.fi/en/works/round-of-the-tiger/>

⁷ This text is based on a paper called “Mementos of a Landscape” presented at PSI #17(Performance Studies International), 25-29th of May 2011 in Utrecht, The Netherlands. <http://www.psi17.org/>

Year of the Tiger

A performance project and video work, *Year of the Tiger* is an example of the practice I call *performing landscape*. The project was realized by using a technique I have developed in previous years: performing for a camera in the same place once a week for a year. *Year of the Tiger* is one part in a series of twelve one-year projects that have been (and will be) performed on Harakka Island, Helsinki. The series, which I began in 2002, is based on the Chinese calendar and its twelve-year cycle, with each year named after a specific animal. Every year I have looked for a new perspective on the landscape, a new aspect of the environment, and a new kind of relationship between the human body and the place. My working method utilizes the traditions of performance art, video art and environmental art, and moves in the border area between them.⁸

During the year of the tiger (2010), I explored how changing the point of view can influence how a landscape is perceived, by video recording the same site from four different directions for a year and thus producing four different views of the same landscape. The performance consisted of me walking wrapped in an off-white scarf once a week for a year on a decomposed stone base of a building, the remains of a small house in the south-eastern part of Harakka Island, and of lying down on a small white mat in the four corners of the ruins. I repeated these same actions four times and recorded them from four different directions.

Year of the Tiger, the main work that was edited from all the recordings of these performances is a four-channel video installation, which shows four versions of the landscape with me lying on the ground while the seasons change around me.⁹ In wintertime the old stone base of the house is hardly visible due to the snow, and in summertime it is hardly visible due to vegetation; but in spring and fall it is sometimes clearly distinguishable in the images. Lying down in the open on the ruins of a house may produce associations with homelessness, or with the helplessness of a contemporary person in nature. The main intention of the work, however, is to bring attention to changes in the landscape due to the shifting seasons, weather and climate, thus showing in a tangible way the passing of time. The work also indicates how images and notions of a landscape are constructed, how a change in perspective may change the meaning of a landscape.

⁸ An overview of previous works in the series is available on the web site of the AV-archive, The Distribution Centre for Finnish Media Art, http://www.av-arkki.fi/en/artists/annette-arlander_en/

⁹ *Year of the Tiger* installation (28 min. 19 sec.) Wrapped in a white shawl I lay on the remains of the stone base of a building on Harakka Island once a week for a year from 14th February 2010 to 31st January 2011. Part 1, in the northeastern corner. Part 2, in the southeastern corner. Part 3, in the southwestern corner. Part 4, in the northwestern corner. The four channel installation is planned to be presented in such a way that all four parts are shown next to each other, synchronized, in the following order (from left to right) 4-1-2-3. <http://www.av-arkki.fi/en/works/year-of-the-tiger/>



Year of the Tiger. Video Still (from west towards east), 2011
Image Credit: Annette Arlander



Year of the Tiger. Video Still (from north towards south), 2011
Image Credit: Annette Arlander



Year of the Tiger. Video Still (from east towards west), 2011
Image Credit: Annette Arlander



Year of the Tiger. Video Still (from south towards north), 2011
Image Credit: Annette Arlander

In contrast to the four-channel video installation, a one-channel video work called *Round of the Tiger* documents only one session, in wintertime, and reveals how the work was made. It shows me walking in a square, wrapped in an off-white scarf, the woollen blanket of a Berber woman, moving a small mat, a whitish rag rug, from one corner to the next, lying down and getting up again, struggling in the snow.¹⁰ One round consisted of the following actions: I picked up the blanket and wrapped it around me, walked in a square on the remains of the stone base until I came to the rug in one corner, lied down on the rug for a while, then continued walking one more round, picked up the rug and moved it to the next corner, left the blanket in the following corner and thus finished the round. Then, after moving the camera and tripod to the next side of the stone base, I repeated the actions. Thus I recorded the same sequence of actions four times, from four different directions; first with the camera in the east facing west, then in the south facing north, then in the west facing east, and finally in the north facing south. The performance involved walking around the stone base and lying down on the rug four times during each session. These sessions were repeated once a week for a year.



Round the Tiger. Video Still, 2011
Image Credit: Annette Arlander

¹⁰ *Round of the Tiger* documentary (23 min. 11 sec.) Wrapped in a white shawl I walk on the remains of the stone base of a building in snow on Harakka Island, four times, video filmed from four directions in February 2010. <http://www.av-arkki.fi/en/works/round-of-the-tiger/>



Round the Tiger. Video Still, 2011
Image Credit: Annette Arlander



Round the Tiger. Video Still, 2011
Image Credit: Annette Arlander



Round the Tiger. Video Still, 2011
Image Credit: Annette Arlander

A third variation, called *Day and Night of the Tiger - in the Year of the Rabbit*, was performed at midsummer 2011 for 24 hours with three-hour intervals, on the ruins of a smaller building near the original stone base, and with some spoken descriptions recorded.¹¹ This time I repeated the action only once each time, and video recorded it from one side only – all in all, only twelve times. Instead of changes in vegetation, the changes in light conditions dominate in this work; during midsummer in Helsinki it is dark only for a few hours every night. In addition, I video recorded some small studies of sitting in the landscape. I was looking for affinities between my white scarf and details in the environment, from the salt on the seashore to bird droppings on the rocks. One of these studies, *On the Birds' Rock*, explores the idea of four perspectives on the same landscape. In it I sit for a moment with a white scarf on a rock that is covered in white bird droppings, turning my back to the camera on a tripod. This is repeated four times, recorded from four directions.

¹¹ *Day and Night of the Tiger* documentary (9 min. 44 sec.) Wrapped in a white shawl I walk on the remains of the stone base of a small building on Harakka Island for a day and night with three hour intervals between 24th June 2011 at 5 pm and 25th June 2011 at 5 pm. <http://www.av-arkki.fi/en/works/day-and-night-of-the-tiger/> *Day and Night of the Tiger* 1-2 installation (7 min. 43 sec.) Part 1. Wrapped in a white shawl I lie on the remains of the stone base of a small building on Harakka Island for a day and night with three hour intervals between 24th June 2010 at 5 pm and 25th June 2010 at 5 pm. Part 2. I describe the weather conditions with a few words in Finnish and English on the same occasions. This two channel installation is planned to be presented with parts 1 and 2 next to each other, part 2 to the left, part 1 to the right. <http://www.av-arkki.fi/en/works/day-and-night-of-the-tiger-1-2/>



Day and Night of the Tiger. Video Still, 2011
Image Credit: Annette Arlander

Year of the Tiger shows four perspectives of the same landscape. I chose the placement of the camera and the framing of the images so the stone base would visually follow the baseline of the image. When the camera was placed to the east and south of the ruin this was easy because the land was open. In the west a swamp with shrubs formed an obstacle. In the north a group of alder bushes blocked the view. In winter-time, by the time of the Chinese New Year when I began, one could see through them but in summertime the bushes grew surprisingly fast and finally covered the view completely. So what to do? At some point I stopped walking the fourth round which was blocked by the shrubs and thought I could just as well record only those plants, but soon realized that there was no point in that. Either I would perform my action or not. If I only wanted to create an impression for the viewer I could do it just as well in Photoshop or by drawing or storytelling, for instance. Thus I continued my walking, literally in the bushes. The value of the practice is in the practice, I thought. In terms of documentation, to show my action I should have changed the camera position. But then the whole project with four repeated views would be ruined. The absurdity of documenting an action you cannot see, creating evidence of something in a manner that does not function as evidence, except for the camera being there, was soon obvious. The choice to continue the action despite the futility of recording it did have relevance in terms of impact, at least concerning the effects on the performer.

In terms of my relationship to the environment, this project showed me that I am influenced by an idealized and romantic notion of landscape still prevalent in contemporary art, a notion that is of little use when actually engaging with the environment.¹² In terms of liveness, a term often used in relation to performance, this case exemplifies the unforeseen occurrences that should be taken into consideration when one works with environments that are literally alive. But of course one could say that a person better pre-

¹² For more on romantic notions of landscape in contemporary art, see: James Elkins and Rachael Delue (editors), *Landscape Theory*, The Art Seminar (New York and London: Routledge, 2008): 143.

pared to work in “unkempt” landscapes would have known how quickly alders grow and thus made other decisions to begin with, never encountering such surprises. Perhaps other “side-effects” of the living environment would have occurred, however, since in a landscape nothing stays the same. In this case I received what I wanted, more literally than I expected: mementos of a landscape.

These mementos, comprised of digital material, have turned my experiences of being immersed in, or struggling with, a living environment into objects that can be endlessly copied but not easily biodegradable or able to participate in the reproduction of life. The ethical dilemma of making dead objects of something that is alive, of trying to inspire people to enjoy the endless changeability of the living environment with the help of inert objects, prompted me to look at how our relationship to the environment has been understood, which in turn led me to Teresa Brennan.



On the Birds' Rock I. Video Still, 2011
Image Credit: Annette Arlander

Exhausting Commodities

The practice of performing landscape that I describe above is challenged by ideas that are perhaps best exemplified by Teresa Brennan’s work *Exhausting Modernity: Grounds for a New Economy* (2000). She analyzes what she sees as the exhaustion that pervades modern capitalism in psychic, social and environmental terms, and claims that a phenomenon she calls the *foundational fantasy* – assuming ourselves as subjects in a world of objects – is intensified in modernity. Commodities function after the manner of fantasies, and they make living substances inert in contrast with the energetic movement of life.¹³ For her it is this “slow-

¹³ Brennan, 2000: 176.

er movement” that is the key to the exhausting nature of modernity. The less animate the environment is and the slower time becomes in natural reality, the greater the ego’s need to speed things up.¹⁴

Brennan’s analysis has relevance for the discourse on documentation, and for the well-rehearsed notion of performance art as resistance to commoditization.¹⁵ Her emphasis on the distinction between animate and inanimate, organic and inorganic, introduces a new angle into the so-called liveness debate. Personally, I find Brennan’s arguments challenging for my artistic practice, alerting me to the problems involved in performing for a camera, which may help the performer (and the viewer) reconnect with the living environment, but actually end up producing more dead objects, like videotapes and DVDs. Moreover, in attempting to create a mode of working that would be a meditative alternative to the commercial corruption of collaborative performance production, I might be succumbing to a fantasy of omnipotent independence.

Brennan shows how capitalism is turning biodegradable life into dead objects, and disturbs an ecological balance by “binding more and more life in a form in which it cannot reproduce life.”¹⁶ The production of commodities binds nature to forms, “incapable of re-entering the lifecycles via the reproduction of their own kind or their organic decay.”¹⁷ She draws on Marx but criticizes him for a subject-centred perspective, which made him unaware of the fact that “nature as well as labour is a source of value, and of the energy drawn on in turning living nature into commodities and money.”¹⁸ Interesting in Brennan’s work is precisely the way in which she combines the psychological, social and economic-environmental, somewhat reminiscent of the three ecologies proposed by Félix Guattari (2000).¹⁹ For the purposes of this paper, her most relevant discussions are about the consequences of a psychic foundational fantasy of autonomy for our relationship with the environment.

Our energetic connection to the environment is crucial when working with landscape. Brennan goes further than traditional philosophical critiques of hubris and subject-centeredness because she takes energy into account. According to her, pre-modern people conceived of themselves as energetically and psychically connected with their environment and to others in it, whereas modern subject/object thinking automatically separates the subject from the environment. It seems that the transmission of affect, while once conscious, is now an unconscious process in the West, and consequently, the influence of the environment on the subject is denied or downplayed. The pre-eminence of the subject is threatened by the idea of an energetic connection between the subject, others and the environment. If the subject is energetically connected to, and hence affected by, its context, it is no longer the source of all agency.²⁰ If I am energetically connected to the landscape, I cannot claim I am performing landscape without acknowledging that the landscape is performing me, or at least has an impact on me as performer.

How can I perform landscape without succumbing to, or reinforcing what Brennan calls the foundational fantasy? This is, according to Brennan, the paranoid fantasy of autonomous beginning; the subject must deny its history, since that history reveals its dependence on a maternal origin.²¹ Energies and affects flow

¹⁴ Brennan, 2000: 174.

¹⁵ For more on performance art as a resistance to commoditization, see Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance* (New York and London: Routledge, 1993).

¹⁶ Brennan, 2000: 2.

¹⁷ Brennan, 2000: 5.

¹⁸ Brennan, 2000: 11.

¹⁹ See Félix Guattari, *Three Ecologies* (London: The Athlone Press, 2000).

²⁰ Brennan, 2000: 10-11.

²¹ Brennan, 2000: 36.

between the subject and its surrounding environment, creating an illusion that the subject founds the world and has dominion over it, as well as the desire to destroy any evidence to the contrary, like the living and thinking Other.²² Seeing ourselves as subjects in a world of objects that are supposed to respond to our every whim is aggravated in modernity. The subject postulates itself as a subject, severs connections with those around it, and believes that its fantasies and affects are its own affairs. For Brennan, the foundational fantasy “relies on a divorce between mental design and bodily action to sustain its omnipotent denial.”²³ How could this be avoided? Performing landscape (for example walking weekly on the stone base of an old building) could mean that the performer disengages from the actual environment by producing a private imaginary world on top of it. For instance, when I try to connect with my surroundings on site, am I actually projecting a fantasy onto the environment, using it as a background for my experiments in controlling time?

Moreover, it is not only the ego’s own fantasies that weigh heavily upon it. Brennan suggests we are influenced by our surroundings, by the “subjective if not subliminal sensing of what is animate or inanimate in the surrounding environment.” According to her, the less animate the environment is, the greater the ego’s need to speed things up, “its need for control, its ‘cutting up’ in its urge to know, its spoiling of living nature, and its general aggression towards the other.”²⁴ Living in a predominantly man-made world distorts our relationship to our surroundings and to other living beings. Our physical environment alters our sense of connection with the world. Commodities function like fantasies, Brennan claims, closing the subject off from the movement of life. They create a fantasmatic world, which makes the subject more aware of what it has made, rather than connected with, or part of, what has made it.²⁵

A subjective sense of difference between an animate and an inanimate environment (regardless of possible difficulties in defining what is alive and what is not on a molecular level) drives me to perform landscape, to look, like many others, for ways of engaging with living environments. However, by turning these encounters into video works I actually participate in closing off the viewer into a digitally and electronically produced world of representations. The impact on me as a performer, encountering the living environment, and the impact on the viewer, encountering the video works, could be diametrically opposite.

An environment of commodities that materializes our fantasies is costly; according to Brennan, we pay a price for our temporary excitements in the depletion of shared natural resources. The consequence of living in a high-tech built environment is that one has to be a subject to repel its deadening effects, which are deceptive, since they speed up one’s conscious tempo and appear to form a world of rapid motion with a pulse that can be taken as energy itself. Nevertheless, the deadening effects of this environment more and more make everyone an object, she claims.²⁶ When I am condensing time in my video works, in order to make it visible, compressing a process of one year into twenty minutes or less, am I, despite my conscious attempts to the contrary, actually participating in this technological speeding-up of experience?

²² Brennan, 2000: 189.

²³ Brennan, 2000: 36.

²⁴ Brennan, 2000: 174.

²⁵ Brennan, 2000: 175-176.

²⁶ Brennan, 2000: 187.



On the Bird's Rock 2. Video Still, 2011
Image Credit: Annette Arlander

Mediated Liveness

The environment has an impact on our sense of what is alive, of liveness, too. The so-called liveness debate can be approached from several angles.²⁷ One is the discussion of how documentation relates to practice as research in the UK, summarized by Piccini and Rye (2009).²⁸ Another discussion concerns the role of documentation in performance art.²⁹ Documenting a live performance means to make it inanimate, in order to thus preserve its life in some form for posterity. That is what I do in the examples described above.

Another dimension is the relationship between the live and the mediated in performance summarized by Philip Auslander (2008), who claims that there can be no unmediated performances, since performances are actually techniques of mediation in a broader sense. He describes the concept of liveness as a moving target, though the word live is traditionally used to refer to “a performance heard or watched at the time of its occurrence, as distinguished from one recorded on film, tape etc.”³⁰ Though we can speak of so called live recordings as well.

²⁷ See Phelan, 1993; Auslander, 1999; Rebecca Schneider “Archives Performance Remain” in *Performance Research* vol 6.2, summer 2001: 100-108 and Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire* (Durham; Duke University Press, 2003).

²⁸ Piccini and Rye, 2009: 34-49.

²⁹ See for instance Auslander 2006, or Amelia Jones *Body Art / Performing The Subject* (Minneapolis; University of Minnesota Press, 1990).

³⁰ Auslander, 2008: 109.

Auslander presents Steve Wurtzler's schema, which distinguishes between three different types of liveness, based on the spatial or temporal co-presence between performers and audience. The first mode, the so-called classical live, is based on temporal and spatial co-presence. The second form of live is based on temporal simultaneity, like in the use of telephone, "live" radio, "live" television, and so forth. The audience witnesses the performance as it happens, but performers and spectators are not spatially co-present. The third form of live is based on temporal anteriority and spatial co-presence, as in lip synching or stadium replays, where the audience is spatially present but hears what has been recorded previously. The fourth category, the recorded (or the non-live), is based on temporal anteriority and spatial absence, as in motion pictures or film, recorded radio and television. The audience shares neither the temporal frame nor the physical location with the performers and experiences the performance later (this fourth category describes the final form the performances in my examples take as well).³¹

Another way of looking at the spatial-temporal schema is to think of it in terms of representation and presentation, following Margaret Morse in her seminal text on the space of video-installations.³² Representation and presentation are often discussed in the sense of representation portraying or standing for something that is not present (i.e., words, signs, etc.), whereas presentation is referred to as displaying something "as it is" (i.e., color, sound, etc.). But we can think of representation-presentation in terms of time and space as well. For example, narratives use representations of "there at that time" as in "once upon a time there was," whereas performance art and real time video try to present the "here and now." Other combinations are possible, too. We could say "here at that time" is the logic of heritage sites, while "there now" is the logic of the telephone or webcam. The latter coincides with Wurtzler's second form of liveness described above. In combining my performances for camera with live performance I have experimented with both spatio-temporal dimensions, "here at that time," as well as "there now."³³ Whereas a traditional live performance takes place "here and now," video installations like *Year of the Tiger* show "there at that time." Such a neat division, however, is crumbling today.

Auslander refers to recent work by media theorist Margaret Morse, who insists that our understanding of liveness is increasingly produced by temporal (rather than spatial) co-presence, and through an entity's ability to interact with us and respond to us. Moreover, he cites Nick Couldry, who proposes online liveness and group liveness to be new forms of liveness. Couldry maintains that the experience of liveness in these cases is not limited to specific performer-audience interactions, but to "the feeling of always being connected to other people, of continuous, technologically mediated co-presence with others known and unknown."³⁴ The word "live" thus increasingly refers to connections and interactions between human and nonhuman agents.³⁵

And here the relevance of Brennan's ideas can be considered once more. Our understanding of liveness as interaction could be conditioned by the foundational fantasy, seeing ourselves as subjects in a world of objects that are supposed to serve us and respond to our needs. If the experience of liveness is understood more and more as a function of interaction, of receiving a response from a technological device that simu-

³¹ Steve Wurtzler, "She Sang Live, but the Microphone was Turned Off: The Live, the Recorded, and the Subject of Representation." In *Sound Theory Sound Practice*, edited by Rick Altman (New York and London: Routledge, 1992). Pages 87-105. Quoted in Auslander, 2008: 110.

³² Margaret Morse, "Video Installation Art: The Body, the Image, the Space-in-between." In *Illuminating Video: An Essential Guide to Video Art*, edited by Dough Hall and Sally Jo Fifer (Reading, PA: Aperture, 1990).

³³ For example in the sound work "Sitting on a Rock" presented as part of the exhibition Year of the Horse on Harakka in 2003, or in the performance "Sitting on a Rock at Muu" 2003.

³⁴ Nick Couldry, "Liveness, 'Reality' and the Mediated Habitus from Television into Mobile Phone." In *The Communication Review* 7 (2004): 356-7. Quoted in Auslander, 2008: 111.

³⁵ Auslander, 2008: 111.

lates the reactions of a living entity, how does this alter our relationship to living beings that do not respond to us in an instant? A robot will surpass a tree in terms of immediate interactivity, to be sure, and also help maintaining the foundational fantasy. If we expect the world to constantly respond to us, in order for it to feel alive to us, this will alter our relationship to the environment.

The forms of interaction afforded by the environment are not “pre-programmed to support an enjoyable play experience.” How can we appreciate creatures that are not mammals or machines and somehow recognizable as potential co-performers interacting with us, if we do not feel them to be alive? A tree is very much alive, though it cannot provide us with the experience of liveness as interaction. Some kind of interaction is actually taking place, in an exchange of oxygen and carbon dioxide, for instance, but on a microscopic scale that is imperceptible to us, or on an energetic level, as Brennan proposes.

It is this literal dimension of liveness, aliveness, that I find personally interesting, rather than the supposedly immediate performer-spectator exchange of traditional performances, which tends to neglect the surroundings. It is this dimension that resonates with the ideas of Teresa Brennan concerning our relationship to the living or not-so-living environment. She sees a crucial difference in the ability of an entity to participate in the cycle of producing new entities through the disintegration that characterises organic life. Most commodities, including DVDs in this case, cannot reproduce themselves nor degenerate into biodegradable waste. On the level of physics the distinction between animate and inanimate, organic and inorganic, might dissolve; but on the level of human experience it is often clear. Even though we can crave machines that respond to our actions and feel them to be more alive than trees or plants that do not react to our every whim, our body can probably sense how organically alive our surroundings are. According to Brennan, we respond energetically to our environment, consciously or not. Moreover, the energetic connection between individuals and the environment has reciprocal consequences; psychical and contemplative resistance will also have effects, she claims. If we take seriously the indissolubility of the individual and the environment, then every action and every thought will necessarily have an effect.³⁶ Her assertion that every action and every thought has an effect is alarming and potentially reassuring. Our ways of making art and research do make a difference. What we repeat, and how we repeat it, has an impact.



On the Bird's Rock 3. Video Still, 2011
Image Credit: Annette Arlander

³⁶ Brennan, 2000: 191.

Impact?

In terms of effects, what is the impact of *Year of the Tiger*? As with any work it seems reasonable to think of impact on two levels. First, the effects of the creation process; and second, the effects of the reception process. In live performance these are said to coincide but that is rarely true. Many performances are prepared and even rehearsed in some way before the actual presentation for an audience. And that creation process has effects, sometimes unforeseen side-effects, like a heap of waste, too.

In relation to *Year of the Tiger*, the effects of the creation process, the performances in the landscape, can be discussed, since the work on site is completed. The reception process remains open, however. The installation was shown to the public for the first time in January 2012.³⁷ “For the first time” is crucial. One motivation for creating performances for the camera, rather than actions for a live audience present at the site, is that a wider outreach is possible. Works that can be shown again and again in ever new contexts have the capacity of engendering ever new responses and thus of producing unforeseen effects. To assess the impact of an artwork without acknowledging this capacity, without taking the future into account, seems absurd. To predict that future is impossible; works that were almost completely neglected by their contemporaries have had an impact on later audiences, as many avant-garde movements have shown.

Without claiming any avant-garde status for this work I will conclude by briefly looking at the possible effects of *Year of the Tiger* during the creation process in 2010. As mentioned above, Barbara Bolt proposes to look at results or transformations as discursive, material or affective. To these useful distinctions I propose some further differentiations in terms of the recipients of the effects, such as: a) the impact on the environment; b) the impact on the performer or artist herself or himself; and c) other possible effects.

The material impact on the environment in this case is comparatively small regardless of the repetition (once a week) and the duration (one year): some broken branches, trampled moss, disturbed birds and traces on vegetation. Small paths were created on the cliffs showing the route where a human being had walked every week. By now, more than a year later, the traces have vanished. The broken branches remain broken, but branches do break in storms or snow as well. Thus we can say that no lasting environmental consequences have been imposed.

A weekly contemplative practice might be expected to have both material and affective effects on the performer. Extreme weather conditions, a winter with unusual amounts of snow, for instance, created problems with freezing toes and fingers, and made the project seem more like a sports endeavour at times. The chosen outfit (thick white sweater) was truly problematic in summertime, with a profusion of sweat as a side effect. The choice of working with the old stone base of a house surrounded by vegetation on two sides produced only one (noticed) attack by a tick, which proved benign. From the working notes it seems that changes in the weather and negotiations with nesting birds or birds aggressively protecting their young were my primary interest. The overall affective impact on the performer was mainly invigorating, sometimes calming, sometimes refreshing, due to repeated contact with organic elements and a living environment. The meditative effects of repetition I have discussed elsewhere.³⁸

Among other effects that are both discursive and affective (though perhaps more linked to reception), we could include the preview of one take of the performance that was presented to the research community at the Theatre Academy in spring 2011. I could not participate in person, so I recorded a short introduction and a soundtrack for the video material, which showed in its entirety one unedited sequence in deep

³⁷ The exhibition *Year of the Tiger* was shown in gallery Jangva in Helsinki 11th January to 29th January 2012. <http://www.jangva.fi/>

³⁸ Arlander (2009), “Event scores for performing interruptions” in Tiina Mäntymäki and Olli Mäkinen (eds). *Art and Resistance*. Proceedings of the University of Vaasa. Research Papers 290, 2009: 153-168.

snow (later edited to form *Round of the Tiger*). Unlike *Year of the Tiger*, with the performer lying motionless on the ground and the landscape constantly changing around her, the focus in this version is on the action, the performer struggling through the snow. I asked the viewers to write short comments on what they had seen and experienced, which would then be given to me for a “dialogue with delay.” Some of the comments were general, but some were pertinent, such as the simple question “what is changing?” If we think in terms of impact, we could add: what changes due to this activity? In the situation, in the image, in me, in the world? Such questions come close to Bolt’s idea of recognizing and mapping the transformations that have occurred. The question “what is changing” was probably prompted by my referring to Brennan in the voice over speech: If we take seriously the indissolubility of individual and environment, then every thought and every action has an effect.

So what is the effect of this action? Should we think of effect in terms of the “results” of an agenda, or rather as “damage” to a previous situation of affairs? Or as a sensory and affective “experience” tasted by the participants (including the performer)? Or should we think of effect in terms of comparing what remained undone due to repetition? What did not take place because this action took place? A question that is almost impossible to answer.

In terms of the possible effects on current discourses on art or artistic research, the impact of the creation process has so far been rather small; I have described it only in a few contexts, and this is the first published account. In terms of damage to the environment, the impact was fortunately small, too. The affective impact of the creation process on the performer, however, albeit difficult to ascertain, was more noticeable. The impact of the artworks (like all artworks capable of producing new events) however, cannot be determined in advance. To my knowledge the video installations have not produced strong material, discursive or affective reactions or other effects, yet. Fortunately their future and potential impacts remain open. Paradoxically and problematically their survival and future life depends on their existence in the form of digital representations, as inanimate objects.



On the Bird's Rock 2. Video Still, 2011
Image Credit: Annette Arlander

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