

The International Network for ECOcritical and DECOLonial Research presents:

The Second International Symposium  
**ECO/DECOLONIAL ARTS:  
RE-IMAGINING FUTURES**

28<sup>th</sup> August 2018, 10:15 – 18:00

Venue: Konstfack University of Arts, Crafts, and Design (Stockholm),

room: MANDELGREN



Photo: Cecilia Åsberg

As the current ecological crises and different forms of oppression, discrimination and injustice around the globe demonstrate, the questions of the environment and the people, as well as of social and environmental justice, are not isolated from one another. These concerns and connections come to the fore in both implicit and explicit ways in the work of artists, activists and academics working with the issues of decolonisation, on the one hand, and ecology, on the other.

**The International Network for ECOcritical and DECOlonial Research** connects artists, activists and academics, who in their work, in both implicit and explicit ways, concentrate on these connections and concerns: the issues of ecology, on the one hand, and decolonisation, on the other.

The network was officially launched at the workshop ‘Eco/Decolonial Arts: Open-ended Poetic/Philosophical Forays’, which took place on 28-29 June 2017 in Linköping. The two-day event was focused on the developing of transversal dialogues between various ways of engagement with both decolonial and ecocritical/ecological perspectives. The slash [‘/’] in the name of the workshop (‘Eco/Decolonial’) refers to feminist scholar Karen Barad’s (2014) concept of ‘cutting together apart’ that points to the necessary entanglement of nature and culture; the environment and the human; epistemic, symbolic and physical violence towards nonhumans and humans alike; and finally, to the call for environmental and social justice.

The rich conversations that arose during the last-year workshop and still fuel the network’s activities have also inspired us to organise the second edition of ‘Eco/Decolonial Arts’ – yet, this time in a form of a one-day symposium. Thus, the upcoming event, scheduled on 28<sup>th</sup> August 2018 and taking place at Konstfack University of Arts, Crafts, and Design in Stockholm, will focus not only on the urgency of posing questions that combine concerns with the environment and decolonial critique in their broadest understanding, but also on the arts’ unique potential for a diverse, multifaceted, creative and critical query of what such transdisciplinary engagements might mean for reimagining a different future in a ‘more-than-human’ world.

## Programme :

10:00 - 10:30 - Introduction

10:30 - 11:05 - Katja Aglert, *Turning over the grounds of sguls and.*

11:05 - 11:40 - Vera Weetzel, *White tears and tear art. Reflections on whiteness and complicity in bio/eco art*

11:40 - 12:15 - Marietta Radomska, *Non/living Archives: Deterritorialising Death*

12:15 - 13:30 - Lunch break (self-paid basis)

13:30 - 14:05 - Madina Tlostanova, *On the way to a pluriverse? A Feetless Bird in a Vanished Forest-garden*

14:05 - 15:15 - Camila Marambio and Nina Lykke, *Vulnerable Story Telling. Queering cancer beyond the life/death hierarchy*

15:15 - 15:45 - Coffee break (self-paid basis)

15:45 - 16:20 - Cecilia Åsberg, *Why the environmental humanities needs art, worldly situatedness and integrative feminist theory-practices*

16:20 - 16:55 - Anne Gough, *Walking to Al Quds*

16:55 - 17:30 - Dalida Maria Benfield, *TBA*

17:30 - 18:00 - Final discussion: the future of the network (‘where do we go from here?’)

## Abstracts and bios:

### Turning over the grounds of sguls and.

By Katja Aglert

#### Abstract:

In this presentation I will share current experiments created in summer 2018, relating to my long term and ongoing artistic research practice performed together with diverse individuals of Spanish slugs. Thinking with the Eco/Deco contextual discourse, I will through these experiments discuss possibilities to perform new imaginaries of coexistence. Performance in the expanded field is part of the methodology and expression in these projects, and a more-than-human notion of performativity is suggested. Performance is applied as various forms of temporal experiments in order to explore possibilities to transgress disciplinary boundaries and reach beyond circular arguments. Or, with Donna Haraway's words: "de-stabilize our own stories, to re-tell them with other stories".

#### Bio:

**Katja Aglert** is an independent artist and researcher whose practice is transdisciplinary in nature, and includes both individual and collaborative projects. She exhibited widely in Sweden and internationally including solo exhibitions at Polarmuseet, Tromsø, Norway (2017/2018); Biologiska Museet, Stockholm (2016); FLORA ars+natura, Bogota, Colombia (2015/2016) Museum for Contemporary Art, Santiago, Chile (2015/2016); Marabouparken, Stockholm (2014). As artist she teaches regularly at institutions such as Stockholm University, and Konstfack University of Arts, Crafts, and Design. For more info: [katjaaglert.com](http://katjaaglert.com)

### Where We Are Now: A Dispatch From "Indigenous Knowledges and Sustainable Pasts/Futures"

By Dalida Maria Benfield

#### Abstract:

*Indigenous Knowledges and Sustainable Pasts/Futures* is a writers and artists residency being held in Bozeman, Montana, U.S.A., from August 24 - 30, 2018, organized by **Mountain Time Arts** (Gallatin County, Montana) and the **Center for Arts, Design and Social Research** (Boston, Massachusetts/Spoleto, Italy). The project convenes six distinguished Indigenous and Latinx scholars, co-facilitated by writers and artists Dr. Dalida Maria Benfield and Bently Spang. The themes of the work to be produced - which will be gathered in a series of online and print publications - cut across theoretical and historical genres, and include propositions for de-colonial narratives, ethical aesthetics and speculative histories at this critical time of climate transformation. A brief video presentation will share conversations and images from the gathering, highlighting key questions and moments of collective reflection. This will be followed by a ten minute live, online discussion with Dalida Maria Benfield and Bently Spang.

#### Bio:

**Dalida María Benfield**, Ph.D. (Panamá/USA), is a transdisciplinary scholar (Comparative Ethnic Studies, M.A. and Ph.D., University of California, Berkeley), artist, and theorist who researches and activates feminist and decolonial thought, pedagogies, and social change in the context of global media and information flows. She is Research and Program Director at the Center for Arts, Design,

and Social Research and co-founder of the Institute of (im)Possible Subjects, a transnational feminist collective of writers and researchers. Her current research and artistic practice includes trans-media exhibition and pedagogical projects such as "Migratory Times," "The Museum of Random Memory," "Losarchivosdelcuerpo" and "agua-cines," all of which create public platforms for critical media literacy and knowledge-sharing. She is also Core Faculty in the MFA in Visual Arts Program at the Vermont College of Fine Arts, U.S.A.

## Walking to Al Quds

By Anne Gough

### Abstract:

*The eye eats before the mouth* – Lebanese proverb

Photographs are never neutral. Photographs and post cards made from images of the Levant in 1900s, however, have been treated as objective documents of memory (Wehbe 2015). Ali Behdad and others argue that such photos are charged with subjectivity and often with the objective of a colonial project.

This exploration will explore the ways "landscapes are power materialized" (Mitchell, 2016) through a previously unpublished photo collection of the path of the Adonis Valley, Lebanon (circa early 20<sup>th</sup> century). A work-in-progress research, I am curious about how nature-cultures are made and reproduced? Who is permitted and who is prohibited? What is erased and what is revealed? I will begin with framing the way Lebanon has been researched, known and categorized. I then offer an approach to eco/decolonial dialectics through visual culture. The core of this presentation are the archival photographs in conversation with contemporary photographs of the same landscape

### Bio:

**Anne Gough** is a PhD Candidate with the Environmental Humanities Laboratory at KTH Royal Institute of Technology in Stockholm Sweden. She collaborates under the theme Xenophobic Natures. She completed field work in Lebanon in 2017 and was affiliated with the Department of Landscape Design and Ecosystem Management at the American University of Beirut.

## Vulnerable Story Telling. Queering cancer beyond the life/death hierarchy

By Camila Marambio and Nina Lykke

### Abstract:

The presentation will give a snapshot of our twin autophenomenographic research and poetic writing project, in which we are currently engaged. The project is unfolding as a joint book, *Sandcastles*, in which we reflect on and, through sharing, try to come to terms with our different stories from Cancerland: Camila's story of having been close to cancer death and coming back, and Nina's story of being a compassionate companion to her beloved life partner, who died from cancer some years ago. Through storytelling and diffracted readings of queerfeminist-materialist, posthuman, eco-critical and decolonial approaches, we try to rethink and reimagine cancer's bodily powers of horror in critically-affirmative ways. This implies trying to unlearn and transgress neoliberal cancer discourses on the sovereign 'I's "heroic wars on cancer" and its epistemologies of ignorance regarding cancerous geographies of oppression. Moreover, the process includes a rethinking and reimagining of a caring ethics as well as of the body as grotesque (Bakhtin 1984), vulnerable, and in an open kinship relation with the more-than-human-world, instead of bounded against it.

**Bios:**

**Camila Marambio** is the founder and director of the nomadic research program *Ensayos*, which focuses on the political geography of Tierra del Fuego. She is a PhD candidate in Curatorial Practice at Monash, Melbourne and received her MA in Curatorial Studies from Columbia University as well as a Master of Experiments in Art and Politics from Science Po in Paris. She was previously the Artistic Director at Centro Cultural Matucana 100 in Santiago, CL, curator in residence at Kadist Art Foundation in Paris, the Watermill Center in New York, and Gertrude Contemporary in Melbourne.

**Nina Lykke**, Professor Emerita, Gender Studies, Linköping University, Sweden. Co-founder of Queer Death Studies Network, and The International Network for ECOcritical and DECOlonial Research. Current research: queering of cancer, death, and mourning in queerfeminist materialist, decolonial and eco-critical perspectives; autophenomenographic and poetic writing. *Recent publications*: Queer Widowhood. *Lambda Nordica*. 2015:4; Academic Feminisms: Between Disidentification, Messy Everyday Utopianism, and Cruel Optimism. *Feminist Encounters*. 2017:1(1); When death cuts apart, in: Juvonen & Kohlemainen: *Affective Inequalities in Intimate Relationships*. Routledge, New York 2018; Rethinking socialist and Marxist legacies in feminist imaginaries of protest from postsocialist perspectives. *Social Identities. Journal for the Study of Race, Nation and Culture*. 2018:24 (2). Website: <https://ninalykke.net>.

**Non/living Archives: Deterritorialising Death**

By Marietta Radomska

**Abstract:**

The processes and imaginaries of what is commonly framed as ‘the Anthropocene’ combine and expose the erasure, consumption, oppression, colonisation, and exploitation of different kinds of bodies: human and nonhuman, organic and inorganic, individual and multiplicitous. Some of them are always already rendered ‘bare life’ or commodities to be consumed. While death as both an event and a process underpins the questions of the current environmental crisis and the accompanying cultural imaginaries, its understanding remains fashioned and arranged very much according to the conventional Western idea of the autonomous human subject.

By bringing select philosophical perspectives and new-media/bioartworks into dialogue, this paper aims to focus on the possibilities of moving beyond the hegemony of the human, ‘deterritorialising’ death, and exploring ethical potentials such a deterritorialisation may open up.

**Bio:**

**Marietta Radomska**, PhD, is a Postdoc at Linköping University, SE; visiting researcher at the University of Helsinki, FI; co-director of the Posthumanities Hub; founder of The Eco- and Bioart Research Network; co-founder of International Network for ECOcritical and DECOlonial Studies; and a founding member of Queer Death Studies Network. Her current research project focuses on ecologies of death in the context of contemporary art. She is the author of the monograph *Uncontainable Life: A Biophilosophy of Bioart* (2016) and has published in *Australian Feminist Studies*, *Somatechnics*, *Angelaki* and *Journal of Curriculum and Pedagogy*, among others.

**On the way to a pluriverse? A Feetless Bird in a Vanished Forest-garden**

By Madina Tlostanova

**Abstract:**

Many insights of Western/Northern eco-critical and new materialist movements have been for many centuries an integral part of the indigenous and colonized (and therefore excluded from the



modern/colonial knowledge production) people's relational cosmologies and ethics. Presumably innovative ecological ideas formulated within the modern/western sciences or at their intersections with humanities, are increasingly critical of the original ecology as a typical modern/colonial discourse with its persistent subject/object and human/nature divisions and ultimately consumerist agendas of conservation for better exploitation. Yet these lagging Western discourses are often a depoliticization, a trivialization if not a caricature of the original land-based and indigenous ontological designs of the world. As a decolonial subject, I prefer to delink from the agenda of the modern/colonial scholarship and contemporary art production, which have finally "discovered"/appropriated the critical take on the human/world/nature complex after the points of defuturing have been already passed. I am more interested in bottom-up decolonial art, thought and activism which inevitably focus more and more on the rights to life (as opposed to the increasingly meaningless paradigm of human rights) which can be seen as a fruitful merging of ecological and decolonial issues and particularly knowledge production, spatial and corporal memory, mourning, and mechanisms of aesthesis and re-existence. These intuitions, anxieties and ideas are much better expressed through art, fiction, and cinema, than through any unavoidably logocentric academic discourse.

**Bio:**

**Madina Tlostanova**, PhD, is professor of postcolonial feminisms at the Department of Thematic Studies (Gender studies) at Linköping University, SE. Tlostanova focuses on decolonial thought and art, postsocialist studies, non-Western feminisms. Tlostanova has authored ten scholarly books and 268 articles translated into several languages. Her most recent works include *Postcolonialism and Postsocialism in Fiction and Art: Resistance and Re-existence* (Palgrave, 2017) and *What Does it Mean to be Post-Soviet? Decolonial Art from the Ruins of the Soviet Empire* (Duke University Press, 2018). She has also authored two novels and several short stories, the latest being a novella "A woman with no dog" (Tel Aviv, 2018).

## **White tears and tear art. Reflections on whiteness and complicity in bio/eco art**

By Vera Weetzel

**Abstract:**

Through my projects, in which tears are a core component, I aim to transform human-animal and human-environment relationships, as well as to make space for these different relationalities within a framework of the western natural sciences. Going through these processes, I am confronted with my own positionality, and ask what it means to work from a white, western, middle class position, that is, a position complicit in the disruption of human-animal relations and central to processes of pollution, species endangerment, resource extraction, and other forms of environmental harm. I follow here Audra Mitchell's analysis of white tears in the context of species extinction, as discussed in the 2017 blogpost 'Decolonizing against extinction part III: white tears and mourning'<sup>1</sup>. Mitchell discusses tears and emotions of white people in relation to species extinction, and says that white tears "offer white people confronted with injustices in which they're implicated release, relief and a sense of having 'responded' to the suffering of others." Here, I reflect on whiteness and complicity in bio/eco art, and explore how tears might be employed critically instead.

**Bio:**

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<sup>1</sup> Mitchell, Audra. Decolonizing against extinction part III: white tears and mourning. December 14, 2017. <https://worldlyir.wordpress.com/2017/12/14/decolonizing-against-extinction-part-iii-white-tears-and-mourning/> (Accessed July 5 2018)

**Vera Weetzel** is a PhD candidate at the Gender Studies unit of Linköping University, with their project 'Watery Connections'. In this project, Vera uses bioart to interact with other organisms in less hierarchical ways, in order to develop collaborative interspecies research practices. Vera holds an MA in Gender Studies as well as an MSc in Biomedical Science from Utrecht University, where they worked on topics such as bioart, laboratory animal models, and heart development. Their current interests include posthumanism, new materialism, feminist science studies, feminist biology, critical animal studies, bioart, contemporary art, and transgender studies.

## **Why the environmental humanities needs art, worldly situatedness and integrative feminist theory-practices**

By Cecilia Åsberg

### **Abstract:**

Taking into account intersecting trends in political, academic, artistic and popular engagements with environmental issues, this paper concerns the emergence and unexplored feminist directions of the environmental humanities as an academic field of inquiry in Sweden. As I have argued elsewhere, problems such as the disenchantment (alienation or intangibility) of nature along with the apocalyptic and techno-fetishistic framing of the environmental situation, along with compartmentalization of environmental issues from other spheres of concern (such as health or social justice), cannot be addressed without the integrative approaches of the environmental humanities. Especially when they work as forms of more-than-human, or multispecies humanities or as "feminist posthumanities". This puts of course the integrative meaning of the adjective "feminist" in focus (along with the prefix of the "post" as in post-humanities). This renewed attention to ecological subjectivity and situated agency in the feminist registers is needed because the predominant disciplinary and non-feminist frameworks for comprehending ecological subjectivity, that of humans and nonhumans, and its ethical relationship to world, territory or land are impoverished. Given that environmental humanities is not entirely new, my objective is to propose a specific shift in attention in this transformative field of the humanities that could invigorate and address this impoverishment by turning to feminist art and feminist theories of agency and situated knowledge. Sharing with many an interest in Donna Haraway's works and especially her notion of situated knowledges, I will focus especially on how multispecies feminism, art and theories of agency/ecological subjectivity have been combined in works and writings by Kathy High, Lindsey Kelley, Katja Aglert and Janna Holmstedt for purposes of discerning still uncharted directions for the environmental humanities in relationship to ethical relationships to world, territory and land, technoscience and ecological subjectivity.

### **Bio:**

**Cecilia Åsberg**, PhD, guest professor of STS, gender and environment at KTH Royal Institute of Technology in Stockholm 2018-2020, and since 2015 Professor of gender, nature, culture at Linköping University. Founding director of the Posthumanities Hub, and of the Seed Box: An Environmental Humanities Collaboratory, and associate editor of the journal *Environmental Humanities* (Duke University Press). Recent publications: "Feminist Posthumanities in the Anthropocene: Forays into the Postnatural" in *Journal of Posthuman Studies*; *Animal Places – Lively Cartographies of Human-Animal Relations*, (Routledge, eds with Jacob Bull and Tora Holmberg), and *A Feminist Companion to the Posthumanities* (Springer, ed with Rosi Braidotti).

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